

# DION AND THE SIBYLS

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

"Permit me to mention, my Caesar," said he, "that I have formed such an admiration for the magnificent cousin of the self-sufficient lad who has just retired, and I feel also such interest in his mother and sister, that I could wish by every means to serve, benefit, and please that family. In addition to these accidental sentiments, I am naturally so soft and so weak, if pretty and helpless women appeal to me, that I shall greatly rejoice either never again to see the ladies to whom allusion has been made or to be able to promote their welfare if I ever do behold them again. I owe it to my master to throw whatever light I can upon the nature of the various instruments under his hand, in order that he may choose each for the work which it is best suited to perform with efficiency."

As regards both the future and the past, there was a masterly diplomatic skill mixed with the audacity of his speech, or rather in its audacity itself—a skill far beyond the cleverness of such a youth as Marcus Lepidus. He who had just helped victims to escape a pursuing tyrant, and was trembling lest his interest in them should be discovered by the tyrant in question, was not likely at that very moment to attract the attention of the latter to the affectionate or kindly feelings which he cherished for those very victims. Here, then, safety was obtained for the past. Nor was one who entertained such sentiments suitable or eligible agent for furthering the designs of Tiberius in the present case. And here, therefore, immunity was at the same time secured for the future.

"You are bold," said Tiberius, in a low voice.

"Better, my master," replied Paternus, with an air of humility, "that you should be displeased by a momentary boldness in words, dictated by fidelity, than that you should be really wrathful at unfaithful silence after it should have perhaps frustrated some design."

"You say what is reasonable," replied the prince. "I will speak with Sejanus."

Velleius no sooner heard the words than he respectfully took his leave.

## Chapter VII.

The available force of the empire had been hastily collected at Ferrara (Forum Allieni); and Germanicus Caesar had been busy from daybreak in a boat among the Liburnian galleys which he had collected in the port from the opposite seaboard of the Adriatic, the shore of Illyricum (now Dalmatia). The commander-in-chief had both a precautionary and an aggressive design, in the execution of which these galleys, which had once before played a memorable part at the sea-battle of Actium, were to be used. After stationing, freighting, and manning the galleys, and giving orders for the employment of them in a certain contingency, he returned to the shore, mounted his horse, and held a review of the legions. The review over, he addressed the troops in a spirit-stirring speech. Germanicus was rather an eloquent man, and, above all, he was facile and ready. He was just closing his short improvisation, when he noticed in the distance, coming toward the camp at a trot along the Bologna Road, a dust-covered rider. There was no mistaking either the horse or the horseman. Germanicus recognized his newly-appointed staff-officer, Paulus Lepidus Aemilius; and concluding that he had hastened forward to report the safe arrival of the expected treasure, he turned again to the troops, and told them that he would distribute a bounty within a very few days, the value of a fortnight's pay, but not deducted from nor interfering with the regular pay; and this to all.

Although Germanicus obtained against the Germans great success (and his surname), the military incidents which follow are imaginary in their particulars, contrivances, and sequence, and are not offered to students, or submitted to critics, as history.

At so pleasant an announcement, an immense shout arose among the legions; and it was in the midst of the cheering that Paulus reached the camp, and, uncovering his head, saluted the commander-in-chief, who was

riding forward to meet him, after having thus committed and pledged himself before the legions.

"Welcome!" said Germanicus; adding in a low voice, "The treasure is not far behind, of course? It will be here to-night, I suppose?"

"I regret to say, general—" began Paulus.

"What!" interrupted Germanicus, with considerable excitement of manner, "have you not brought the treasure? Is not the money here?"

"No, general," returned Paulus; he pleased to hear what has occurred."

"Did not the Jew fulfil his undertaking?" again broke in Germanicus.

"He did, and delivered to me the treasure; and in all particulars, except one, general, I fulfilled your orders."

"What was the 'one'?" asked the Caesar, with an exceedingly dark and wrathful face.

"I did not carry the money in an iron box."

"Go on; tell me everything. I will hear you to the end," said Germanicus, compressing his lips and clinching his right hand.

"The facts are very soon told, general," resumed Paulus. "We could muster but ten legionaries, making with Chaerias, Longinus, and myself, our whole escort. By some means, it transpired from the Jews house that a large treasure was about to be sent to the army, and a number of desperadoes in the Suburra determined to waylay us. Indeed, we were attacked by seventy armed men, not far from the town of Sora, beyond the other end of Lake Thrasymene, reckoning from here."

Germanicus could no longer control his excitement; he exclaimed:

"And so they took the treasure from you; and you are here alive, unwounded, reporting your little adventure!"

"I think somebody else, general," said Paulus, "would have reported that result for me; the treasure is safe."

"In the name of the Sphinx," exclaimed the astounded commander-in-chief, "explain yourself; you did not defeat seventy armed men with fourteen?"

"No, general; we parleyed, and argued, and gained time, and finally surrendered the iron chest and the wagon containing it; but the money was not there. It was the only point in which I ventured to deviate from my instructions."

As our adventurer then told the various devices he had employed, and the fortune which had attended them, Germanicus listened with the deepest attention, and whenever Paulus seemed, through modesty, to abridge or hasten over his narrative, called for particulars, and asked many minute questions.

When the whole story had been told, and all his enquiries had been answered, Germanicus said:

"I only hope I may show such good generalship on a large scale as you have shown on a small one. It is likely I shall be able to give you an important post soon."

He then called to an officer, named Pertinax, and bade him conduct Paulus to his quarters, and to present him as their centurion to the fourth centuria of the legion to which he was assigned. He said Paulus would need refreshment, and could consider the time his own till daybreak, when there would be an escort of fifty horse ready for him, and placed under his orders, at the west gate of the camp.

After which he chuckled, and cried out gleefully:

"It would be an amusing scene to witness the division of yonder plunder. What will the knaves do with it?"

"Perhaps," said Paulus, "fight with, instead of over their respective shares."

The general rode off laughing heartily, and Paulus, thus far successful, followed his new guide, the centurion of the name of Pertinax.

## Chapter VIII.

A Council of war was sitting. It consisted of the most silent, discreet, and gossip-scorning officers of a certain rank in Germanicus's army. The scouts who, riding small hardy African horses, had gone forward seventy, and some of them even a hundred, miles beyond the Venetian territory

into that of the Rhaetian Alps, had brought back an important piece of news. The substance of it was this: at the top of Lake Garda (then called Lake Benacus), the barbarians, according to their custom, had broken into two large bodies. Partly on account of the greater facility of obtaining sustenance and plunder, because they would waste a wider area of country; partly in order to march more rapidly; partly from a radically false and bad strategic motive, they had there divided, intending to ravage both the borders of the lake, and to take the imperial army as if in a pair of tongs, or a forceps, at the southern end. Meanwhile, a large sail-boat had come across the Adriatic from Illyricum, conveying two or three of the Roman officers who had escaped from destruction. These officers, being examined, had stated that the whole of that province was for the moment lost, that the garrison had been massacred, and that the barbarians, who at first had intended to cross the sea in galleys and land an immense force near Ravenna, or south of it, near Portus Classis, finding that the Liburnian craft had been all withdrawn to Italy by the prudence of Germanicus, were now swarming through Histria, round the head of the Adriatic.

The tidings agreed. Germanicus explained his plan as detailed below, and asked his council their advice upon it, remarking that he had forty thousand effective men, and that the hordes with whom they were to contend might perhaps number three times as many.

"But half three times as many," added he, "make only sixty thousand men; and we know from long experience that we are generally equal to twice our own numbers. We must, however, avoid being struck by all that vast horde simultaneously; and I conceive that we have now an opportunity of fighting the barbarians in two separated armies, successively, with the whole of our own force. They have committed a mistake, and frequently the best thing a general can do is to wait for such mistakes, and take advantage of them."

"A few miles north of Verona, there is a narrow marshy, and difficult pass, between the eastern shore of the lake and the river Athesis (Adige)."

"I have sent forward the best part of one legion, with plenty of spears and axes. Any number of wild Germans, marching upon us between the lake and the river, will there be checked and brought to a stand for weeks by such a force as I have sent, when it shall be well established behind earth-works. I mean at once to march, with every available man remaining, round the southern end of the lake, and to turn northward by our right hand, so as to meet our visitors on the other, the western shore, where they will not seize us in a pair of tongs, as they hope and have said, but must fight us front to front. If we beat them effectually, as I calculate we shall, we can return rapidly; and being near this end of the lake, and having four times a shorter road, we shall reach our detached legion above Verona long before the fugitives on the opposite route can rejoin the assailants of the detached legion. We will then change the defence of that position into offensive action."

"You have heard my plan," concluded Germanicus. "Give me your advice. I require the youngest present my new message-bearer, Paulus Lepidus Aemilius, to speak the first."

(To be Continued.)

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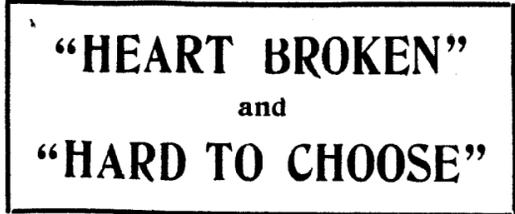
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One of the pictures is called

### "Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened, but one of the merry little companions of the woeful little maid who has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures, suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities of childhood. It is called

### "Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been playing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

The two pictures together will people any room with six happy little girls, so glad to be alive, so care-free, so content through the sunny hours amidst their flowers and butterflies, that they must brighten the house like the throwing open of shutters on a sunny morning.

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