

DION AND THE SYBILS

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

This, in a general way is known; and it is likewise known that Tiberius Caesar was so deeply impressed by the despatch of the Jerusalem governor, arriving in his hands about the same moment, as we shall find in the next chapter, when a strange incident (narrated by Plutarch took place, that he suddenly convened the senate in a formal indiction, and proposed to them to raise a temple to Christ, and to rank him solemnly among the gods of the empire! But not such nor of such acknowledgments was to be the kingdom of the "jealous" and the only God.

Aglaia and Paulus and Esther had assisted at a memorable pantomime. They had beheld the mounted soldier who rode with a memorable letter to the sea coast; they had seen the vain effort of him who had offered the people a choice between Barabbas and "the desired of nations" to call the great of the earth into his perplexities, to quiet his awakened conscience, to turn aside from the dread warnings whispered to his soul, to lull—by futile means—an all too late remorse.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In our last chapter Paulus and his Athenian mother had obtained through Esther's recital of her waking dream or vision, one little glimpse at that prison, that place of detention, which she had termed "the dim, vast house," "the vast, dim city," and the "dim vast kingdom."

The vague notion she could give of that scene of immurement cannot be expected to prove interesting to so large a number, as Mr. Pickwick has caused to feel an interest in his glimpse of the "Fleet Prison," once famous in London. But such interest as the former house of detention commands is of a different kind, and those who may experience it are a different class. Plato (as a great critic observes) has been translated from age to age into some dozen great modern languages, in order that he might be read by about a score of persons in each generation. But that score are the little fountains of the large rivers that bear to the sea the business of the world. Few are directly taught by Kant, Sir William Hamilton, John Stuart Mill, Cousin or Balme; but the millions are taught and think through those whom they have taught to think. Between the good and evil originators or conservators of ideas, and the huge masses who do all their mental processes at third hand, stand the interpreters; and these listen with bent heads, while they hold trumpets which are heard at the extremities of the earth.

Paulus lingered in Jerusalem. Weeks flew by. Spring passed into summer; summer was passing into autumn; and still, from time to time, as in the evenings, mother and son sat among the flowers on the flat roof, Esther would join them.

One night, she had hardly appeared, when Longinus the centurion followed her, bearing a letter for Paulus, which, he said, had just arrived at Fort Antonio, by the hands of an orderly, from the governor. The letter was from Dionysius of Athens, now 'l'un des quarante,' a member of that great Areopagus of which the French Academy is partly a modern image; and it was written immediately after his return from a tour in Egypt, and a cruise through the Aegean Sea, among the famous and beautiful Greek Islands, to resume his duties as a teacher of philosophy and a professor of the higher literature at Athens.

Paulus, after a word with his mother and Esther, desired Longinus to favor them with his company. Sherbets and other refreshments were brought. They all sat down on the semicircular wicker settle at the corner of the roof, under the bowerlike branches of the large rhododendron; a small lamp was held for Paulus by the Jewish serving man, and Paulus read the letter aloud to that sympathetic group. Extracts we will give, in the substance, concerning two occurrences. The first, as the reader sees, the listening circle learned from Dionysius; but we have it in reality from Plutarch, upon whose narrative Eusebius and many other weighty authorities and grave historians have commented.

The captain and owner, for he was both, of the vessel in which Dion sailed back from Egypt to Athens was an Egyptian of the name of Thramnus (some call him Thamus). He said that a very weird thing had happened to him in his immediately previous trip, which

had been from Greece to Italy. Dion was at that time at Heliopolis, in Egypt, with his friend, the celebrated philosopher Apollonides, who, though (like Dion himself) only between twenty and thirty, had already (in this also resembling Dion) obtained an almost world-wide fame for eloquence, astronomical science, and general learning. When Thramnus had neared the Echinades Islands, the wind fell, a sudden calm came, and they had to drop anchor near Paxos. The night was sultry; every one was on deck. Suddenly, from the lonely shore, a loud strange voice hailed the captain: "Thramnus!" it cried. None answered. Again, louder than human came the cry, "Thramnus!" Still none answered. For the third time, "Thramnus!" was thundered from the lonely coast. Then Thramnus himself called out: "Who hails? What is it?" Shrill and far louder than before was the voice in reply: "When you reach the Lagoon of Paulus, announce then that the Great Pan is dead."

Thereupon everything became silent, save the sluggish wash of the waves under the vessel's side. A sort of council was at once held on board; and first they took a note of the exact date and hour. They found that it was exactly the ninth hour of the sixth feria, or day in the month of March, in the fourth year (according with Phlegon's corrected and checked astronomical chronology) of the two hundred and second Olympiad: in other words, this, being translated into modern reckoning, mean six in the afternoon of Friday, the 25th of March, in the thirty-third year of Our Lord.

Dion breaks off in his letter here to remark: "You will learn presently what happened to me and to Apollonides, and to the whole renowned city of Heliopolis, at the same hour exactly of that same day; and it is the coincidence between the two occurrences which has fixed them so deeply in my mind."

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Well; he proceeds to say that Thramnus, having asked his passengers, who happened to be unusually numerous, whether they considered he ought to obey this mysterious mandate, and having suggested himself that, if, on their reaching Palus, or Pelodes the wind held fair, they should not lose time by stopping, but if the wind were

To be Continued

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