

face, together with tedium and suffering. On the whole, it was a face both terrible and silly." And his soul was scarce less ugly than his body. Whatever germs of humanity, tenderness, or virtue were implanted in him by nature had long since been overwhelmed by mountains of egotism, profligacy and crime. At the head of perhaps the mightiest empire the world has ever seen, Nero was a dastardly coward; even in crime he had no courage, for with power to act openly, he chose to commit his infamous deeds always under cover, so that appearances might be preserved. He had no strength of character, no stability; "in his head plans change as do winds in autumn;" and his favorites could, by a little flattery, obtain almost any boon. But it is as a public singer and musician that the "Divine One" poses most despicably before us. We can easily imagine what efforts it must have cost the courtiers to keep sober faces during the exhibitions by the great Imperial buffoon; but the thought that a moment's inattention or a single smile meant ignominious death must have aided them considerably in counterfeiting that look of admiring rapture so pleasing to the "Heavenly musician." In Nero we search in vain for anything commendable. His life was but a series of debaucheries and crimes, and we feel glad when it has ended; we feel relieved when the world is at length rid of that monster who "killed his mother, his wife, and his brother, who burned Rome and sent to Erebus all the honest men in his dominions."

But, though Nero is the central figure, though his influence is felt in almost every incident recorded in the novel, he is not by any means the only important character. Petronius, Vinicius, Lygia, and Chilo Chilonides

are brought before us even more frequently than the emperor. Vinicius is the hero of the tale, Lygia is the heroine; both are beautiful as the flowers in spring; in the very beginning of their troubles they enlist our sympathy on their behalf, and carry it with them to the very end. Having spent the early years of his manhood amid camps and battles, Vinicius possesses the qualities of a soldier rather than those of a courtier; his muscles are strong but his wit is dull; for him arms are ever preferable to arts. His innate irascibility united with the deference claimed by his high birth made him stubborn and impetuous, and his pagan ideas led him to look upon every show of opposition to his will or his desires as calling for immediate vengeance. But what a change is wrought in him as the softening influence of Christianity begins to act upon his soul. At first he "wished to accept the religion of Lygia, but his nature could not endure it"; still occasional rays of light penetrated the darkness which surrounded him; he was groping for an exit and could not find it. In time, however, he began to notice that his nature was different from what it had been; "formerly he had measured people and things only by his own selfishness, but now he was accustoming himself gradually to the thought that other eyes might see differently, and that justice did not always mean the same as personal profit." He no longer treated his slaves as miserable beasts; he no longer delighted in the feasts, the debaucheries, and the license of the Palatine, and his sentiments towards Lygia had given up the form of sensual passion for that of pure and wholesome love.

And worthy, indeed, was the object on which he bestowed his affections.