

DION AND THE SIBYLS.

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

"The most famous in Italy is a Greek physician not five thousand paces from here at this moment," said the landlord. "But he would not come to everybody; he is Tiberius Caesar's own doctor."

"You mean Charicles," replied Paulus; "I almost think he would come; my mother is a Greek lady, and he would surely be glad to oblige his countrywoman."

"Then write you a note to him," said Crispina, "and I will send it instantly."

Paulus thanked her, said he would, and withdrew.

When he proposed to his mother to dispatch this message to Charicles, she hesitated much. Agatha was better, he found her in comparatively good spirits. It would do to send for the doctor next day. An urgent summons conveyed at night to the palace or residence of the Caesar, where Charicles would of necessity be, would cause Tiberius to enquire into the matter and would again draw his attention, and draw it still more persistently to them. He had already intimated that he would order his physician to attend Agatha. They did not desire to establish very close relations with the man in black purple.

It is wonderful even how that very intimation from Tiberius had diminished both mother's and daughter's anxiety to consult the celebrated practitioner, to whose advice and assistance they had previously looked forward. There were parties in the court and cables in the political world; and among them, as it happened, was the Greek faction, at the head of which his ill-wishers alleged Germanicus to be. Graculus, or Greek coxcomb, was one of the names flung at him by his enemies. What the Scotch and subsequently the Irish interest may have been at various times in modern England, that the Greek interest was then in Roman society. Of all men, he who most needed to be cautious and discreet in such a case was an adventurer, who, being himself a Greek, owed to his personal merits and abilities the position of emolument and credit which he enjoyed. who was tolerated for his individual qualities as a foreigner, but who, if suspected of using professional opportunities as a political partisan, would be of no service to others, and would merely lose his own advantages.

"Let Tiberius send Charicles to us," continued Aglais, "and our countryman and friend may be of service to us, even in the suit which we have to urge at court. But were we now to show the Caesar that we confide in Charicles, we should only injure our countryman and not benefit ourselves."

"How injure him?"

"Thus," replied the Greek lady. "If your claim for the restitution of your father's estates be not granted for justice sake, I must make interest in order that it may be granted for favor's sake. As a Greek I shall be likely to induce no powerful person to take my claims under his protection except Germanicus, the friend of Athenians. Now, it is a fact which I have learned for certain that Tiberius hates Germanicus, whom he regards as his rival; and that whosoever is patronized by Germanicus, him Tiberius would gladly destroy. Behold us in a short while the clients and retainers of this same Germanicus, and let Tiberius then remember that his own physician has been, and continues to be, intimate and confidential with this brood of the Germanicus faction. Would not Charicles be damaged, perhaps endangered? But, if we wait until the Caesar himself sends us the doctor, as he said he would, we may then gain by it and our friend not lose."

"Mother, you are indeed Greek," said Paulus, laughing; "and as

Agatha is in no actual danger, be it as you say. Do you know, sister, there is nothing the matter with you but fatigue and fright? I am sure of it. You will recover rapidly now, with rest, peace and safety."

"Mother," says Agatha, smiling "we have forgotten, amid all the consultation about my health, to tell brother the curious discovery I have just made."

"True," said Aglais; "your sister has explored a very odd fact indeed."

"Why brother," says Agatha, "we found you in this large sitting-room, when we entered, though we had left you below-stairs, near the cistern."

"Found me?" said Paulus.

"Yes," added his mother, "found you concealed in this room by Tiberius."

"Concealed by Tiberius?"

"I will not leave you in suspense and longer," said the young girl, laughing. "Look here," and she led him to a table behind the bench on which she had been sitting, and directed his attention to a bust, or rather a head of Tiberius, modelled or moulded in some sort of pottery.

"That," said she, "when I first sat down stood upon yonder table opposite to us. I recognized the face of the man who had spoken to me under the chestnut-trees, just before you assisted me back to the carriage. I abhor the wicked countenance, and not choosing to let it stare at me like a dream where it was, I rose and went to remove it to the stand where you now see it behind my bench. Well, only think! I took it, so, with my hands, one under each ear, and lifted it, when lo! it came away, and left your own dear face looking at us thus!"

As she spoke she lifted the terra cotta face, and beneath it a much smaller and more elegant piece of sculpture in white marble was disclosed presenting the lineaments and image of Paulus himself. He started and then his sister replaced the mask of Tiberius with a laugh.

"Was I not speaking true when I said that Tiberius had concealed you here?" said his mother.

"The Caesar, very true, has me in his head and well secured," said Paulus.

At that moment the door opened, and Crispina entered to ask whether the letter for the physician was ready. They told her they had changed their minds and would not, at least that night, send any letter, Agatha felt and looked so much better.

"Then I will at once order your supper to be brought," said Crispina; "and, as you are evidently people of distinction, would you like music while the meats are carved?"

"Certainly not," said the Greek lady.

"Not a carver, neither, mother," interposed Agatha; and, turning to the hostess, she begged that they might be treated as quietly and left alone as much as possible.

"That is indeed our desire," said the Greek lady.

"In that case," replied the hostess, "my own daughter, Benigna, shall attend to you. Nobody shall trouble you. You are in the rear or west wing of the house, far away from all the noise of our customers, who are sometimes, I confess sufficiently uproarious. But Crispus is not afraid of them. When tomorrow's sun rises you will be glad to find what a beautiful country extends beneath your windows, even to the waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea. You will behold, first a garden and beehive; beyond these are orchards; beyond them fields of husbandry and pleasant pasture lands, with not a human figure to be seen except knots and dots of work-people, a few shepherds, and perhaps an angler amusing himself on the banks of the Liris in the distance."

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"Oh!" said Agatha, "I wish soon to go to sleep that we may set out quickly toward the beautiful country tomorrow morning."

"Will you not like a little bit of something very nice for supper first, my precious little lady?" quoth the good hostess; "and that will make you sleep all the better, and from the moment when you close your pretty eyes in rest and comfort under poor Crispina's roof, to the moment when you open them upon those lovely scenes you won't be able to count one, two, three,—but just one—and presto! there's tomorrow morning for you!"

Agatha declared that this was very nice; and that supper would be nice; and that everything was comfortable; the rooms particularly so.

"Then a delicate little supper shall be got ready at once," said Crispina. "I'll call my brisk Benigna to help me."

Before quitting the room, however, the landlady, whose glance had rested chiefly upon Paulus during the conversation, threw up her hands a little way. She then combed herself, and, addressing Aglais, asked,

"What names, lady, shall I put down in my book?"

"I will tell you when you return," replied Aglais; and the landlady retired.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Let us show her the marble likeness," suggested Paulus, in an eager whisper, with the air of a child devising mischief.

While they were discussing this topic, a gentle knock was heard at the door, and then a very pretty girl of about fifteen, with an open, sweet countenance, and a remarkably modest, cheerful bearing, presented herself, with a sort of tray with various articles for supper arranged thereon.

"May I come in? I am Benigna," said the girl, courtesying.

"Come in, Benigna," said the lady.

"Come in" added Agatha, in Latin, but by no means with so good an accent as her mother's. "You seem like your name; you seem to be Benigna."

The girl looked at the child with a sweet, grateful smile, and immediately proceeded to prepare a table and three covers for supper.

"Do you know Greek?" asked Aglais.

"No, lady," replied the daughter of the house. "My father is quite a scholar; he was one of the secretary slaves in the great house before he got his freedom, and my mother has learned much from him; but I have been brought up to help mother in the inn, and have never had time to learn high things."

Agatha clapped her hands and exclaimed.

"Then I'll talk my bad Latin to Benigna, and she shall make it good."

The girl paused in her operations and exclaimed,

"I thought Latin came naturally to one, like rain, and that it was Greek which had to be worked out and made, just as wine is."

The landlady, carrying various articles, entered, as her laughter uttered this valuable observation, and she joined heartily in the laugh with which it was greeted. Benigna gazed round for a moment in amazement, and then resumed her work, laughing through sympathy, but very red from the forehead to the dimples round her pretty mouth.

The supper table was soon ready.

To be Continued.

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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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