

The Last Night

317

to gain a look from her. But the beautiful Greek woman was insensible in her rage, as if she had at her side someone she had never seen before. They were followed by a discordant crowd, armed citizens, women brandishing knives and darts, naked youths with no other defence than a spear. They poured out like a stampeded herd, their bronze corselets and their helmets with broken crests shimmering in the firelight, their weapons dyed in blood, and displaying through the tatters of their clothing emaciated limbs which seemed to dance in their loose skin, dried and wrinkled by hunger.

They passed out of Saguntum on the lower side, marching in the glare of the burning city straight upon the camp of the besieger.

A cohort of Celtiberians hurrying towards Saguntum was routed, put in disorder, harried by this troop of desperate beings who ran with lowered head, striking blindly at everything before them. Farther on they encountered other troops who advanced in battle form to meet the sally, and they collided with the line of shields, unable to stand in a struggle hand to hand.

The Saguntines, debilitated by the long siege, their strength exhausted by hunger and sickness, could not withstand the clash. The Celtiberians wounded mercilessly with their two-edged swords, and the company of sick men, women, and children, fell rapidly beneath their blows.

Actæon, fighting with his shield before his face and his sword raised against two vigorous soldiers, saw Sonnica receive a stab in the head and drop her weapons, doubling up in agony.

"Actæon! Actæon!" she cried, forgetting her