

DION AND THE SIBYLS.

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

That son, some years before the date of our narrative, had been engaged in a conspiracy against Augustus; and the conspiracy having been discovered by Maecenas, the youth had been put to death. Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, the father was exculpated from all knowledge of this attempt on the part of his son, but had ever since lived in profound retirement at a lonely sea-shore castle some twenty or thirty miles from Crispus's inn, near Monte Circello; a silent, brooding, timid man, no longer very wealthy, entirely without weight in the society which he had abandoned, and without any visible influence in the political world, from which he had fled in some terror and immense disgust.

As Sejanus rode slowly up to the inn door, a centurian came out of the porch with the air of one who had been waiting for him. Saluting the general, this officer said that he had been left behind by Velleius Paterculus to say that the sister of the youth whom Tiberius had placed under the charge of Paterculus had fainted on the road; that being unable to proceed, she and her mother had taken a lodging in the inn; that the youth had at once begged Paterculus to allow him to remain instead of proceeding to Formiae, in order that he might attend to his poor sister for whose life he was alarmed, giving his promise that he would faithfully report himself, and not attempt to escape; that Paterculus considered himself justified, under the circumstances, in acceding to so natural a request; consequently that the young man was now in the inn, along with his mother and sister; and that he, the centurian, had been ordered to await Sejanus' arrival, and inform him of what had occurred, so that he might either confirm his subordinate's decision, or repair the mistake, if it was one, and cause the youth to go forward at once to Formiae according to the letter of Tiberius' original command.

"It is well," said Sejanus, after a moment's reflection. "This is not the sort of lad who will break his word. Carthaginians and rubbish like them, knew long ago how to believe a Roman knight and patrician, and this lad seems to be of the Regulus breed. Does the Caesar himself, however, know of this?"

"I had no orders to tell him," answered the centurian; "and if I had had, it would have been difficult; he passed at full gallop a quarter of an hour ago, his head down, not so much as looking aside."

Sejanus then put the following question with a sneer.

"Has a god or a stranger, with two attendants on horseback passed this way?"

"No god, unless he be a god, and he had no attendants," said the astonished centurian.

"You have not seen three figures on horseback, nor a flash of bluish light."

"I certainly thought I saw three figures on horseback, but I could not be sure. It was on the farther side of the way, general, which is broad," continued the man apologetically, "and there was no sound of hoofs; my impression, too, was gone in a moment. As to a flash of bluish light, there are several flashes of red and white light inside the inn kitchen, and they make the road outside all the darker; but there has been no flash in the road."

"Good! now follow me."

As Sejanus rode on in the direction of Formiae, the centurian and the soldier behind him,

CHAPTER VI.

The inn, it is well ascertained, never become a common institution in classic antiquity. It was utterly unknown in anything like

its modern shape among the Greeks one cause being that the literary Greeks gave less care to their roads and communications than the administering, fighting, conquering, and colonizing Romans always did. Even among the Romans the army trusted to its city-like encampments from stage to stage. Centuries passed away during which the private traveller found few indeed, and far between, any better public resting-houses along the magnificent and stupendous highways, whose remains we still behold indestructible, from England to Asia Minor, than the half-day relay-posts, or mutationes. At these the wayfarer, by producing his diploma from the proper authorities, obtained a change of horses.

Travelling, in short, was a thousand-fold less practised than it is among us; and those who did travel, or who deemed it likely that they should, trusted to that hospitality which necessity had made universal, and the poetry of daily life had raised by repute into one of the greatest virtues. Years before any member of your family supposing you to belong to the age through which the events of this narrative are carrying and to carry us, years before any of our circle quitted your roof, you knew to what house, what smoky hearth in each foreign land, to what threshold in Spain, Gaul, Syria, Egypt, Greece, the wanderer would eventually resort. A certain family in each of these and other lands was your hospes, and you were theirs; and very often you carried round your neck, attached to a gold or silver chain, a bit of elder or oak (robur) notched and marked by the natural breakage, the corresponding half of which hung day and night round the neck of some friend living thousands of miles away, beyond rivers, mountains, wild forests and raging seas. These tokens were the cheap lodging money of friendship. Very often they were interchanged and put on in boyhood, and not presented till advanced age. He who had thrown the sacred symbol round the curly head of his playmate on the banks of the Tiber, saw an old man with scanty white hair approach him, half a century afterwards, at Alexandria, or Numantia, or Athens, and offer him a little bit of wood, the fractures of which were found to fit into those of a similar piece worn upon his own bosom. Or the son brought the father's token; or a son received what a father had given. And the stranger was forthwith joyfully made welcome, and took rank among dear friends. Forthwith the bath and the supper introduced him to his remote home amid foreign faces. To be once unfaithful to these pledges, was to become irreparably infamous. The catiff who thus sundered the ties of traditionary and necessity-caused and world-like kindness, became an object of scorn and reprobation to all. It was enough to mention of him, *tesseram confregit hospitalem* ("that man has broken his token-word of hospitality"); with that all was said. Traces of this touching custom appear to survive in some of the ceremonials of rustic love, amid many a population ignorant that the ancient Romans ever reigned over Europe.

But if inns in year eleven, were not what they have been in mediaeval and modern Europe, nevertheless a few existed even then (*cauponae*); and a more notable establishment of this kind never flourished in any part of the Roman Empire than that to which our story has now brought us. It was the exception to manners then prevalent, and the presage of manners to come long afterward. It used to be commonly called the Post-house of the Hundredth Milestone, or, more briefly, Crispus's Inn. The public room of this place of

entertainment was not unlike the coffee room of a good modern inn, except that it was necessarily far more full of incident and interest, because the ancients were beyond comparison more addicted to living in public than any modern nation has ever been.

An Englishman who makes a similar remark of the French, in comparison with his own countrymen, has only to remember that the modern French as much excel the ancient Romans in fondness for retirement and privacy and domestic life as the English believe themselves to excel the French in the same particular.

An inn did not trouble itself much with the triclinium, a chamber seldom used by its frequenters. Even the manners of the triclinium were out of vogue here.

In Crispus's public room, for instance, there was one and one only table, arranged with couches around it, upon which some three or four customers, while eating and drinking could recline according to the fashion adopted in the private houses of the rich and noble. All the other tables stood around the walls of the apartment with benches and settes on each side, offering seats for the guests. The inner seats at these tables were generally preferred, for two reasons; the occupants saw all that passed in the room, and besides, had the wall against which they could lean back.

When Velleius Paterculus, having left Tiberius and Sejanus in the meadows near the Liris, took charge of the Praetorian squadrons and of Paulus, he directed a Bata-vian trooper to dismount and give his horse to the prisoner. Paulus willingly sprung upon the big Flemish beast and rode by the side of the obliging officer who had given that conveyance. Thus they proceeded at an easy amble until they reached the post-house, to the porch of which the noise of four thousand hoofs, suddenly approaching along the paved road, had brought a group of curious gazers. Among these was the landlord, Crispus himself.

A halt, as the reader must have inferred from a former incident, was occasioned at the door by the intimation conveyed to Paterculus that Paulus's sister had fainted, that she and her mother intended to seek a lodging at the inn, and that the mother and brother of the invalid would both feel grateful to the commanding officer if he would permit Paulus, upon pledging his word not to make any attempt to escape, to remain there with them.

"As to the ladies," said the urbane literary soldier, "I have neither the wish nor any orders to interfere with their movements. But you, young sir, what say you? Will you give me your word to regard yourself as being in my custody till I expressly release you? Will you promise not to abire, evade, excedere, or erumpere, as our friend Tully said?"

"Tully! Who is that?" asked our hero.

"What, you a half Greek and not know who Tully was! Is this the manner in which Greek youths, or at least youths in Greece, are educated! Is it thus they are taught in Greece, to which we go ourselves for education. In that Greece which has forbidden gladiatorial shows, and diminished the training of the body to have more time for that of the intellect.

Paulus blushed, seeing he must have betrayed some gross degree of rusticity, and answered,

"I know I am ignorant, I have been so much occupied in athletic sports. But I will give you the promise you ask, and keep it most truly and faithfully."

"I will trust you, then. Go a little, my friend, into the athletic sports of the mind, which are precisely those Greece most cultivates. You are of a great family now, fallen down. The muscles of the arm, the strength of the body, a blow from a cestus, never yet raised that kind of burden off the ground. You fence astonishingly well—I noted your parry just now; but the fence of the mind is everything, believe me. By the way, I see the excellent Piso, whom you hammered down after the parry, as one puts a full stop to a pretty sentence, is being carried into the same post-house."

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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