

CHAPTER X

THE LAST NIGHT

FIGHTING on the walls with the defenders of the upper part of the city late in the afternoon Actæon saw Rhanto coming down a street near the ramparts.

He had not seen the shepherdess since his return to Saguntum, and now he noticed the changes wrought by the sufferings of the siege, and by the grief which was breaking her reason.

She walked absorbed, with bowed head, unconscious of her surroundings, and in her tangled hair were little faded flowers which at every step dropped their withered petals. Her torn and dirty tunic gave glimpses of her emaciated body, which still preserved the grace and freshness admired by the Greek. Pain had matured her figure; her eyes dilated by dementia, seemed to fill her whole face, shedding a mysterious light about her, an aureole of fever.

She advanced slowly, raising her head at times, looking up at the men on the wall, and finally stopping at the foot of the stone steps she murmured in a supplicating voice, like the convulsive sobbing of a child:

"Eroton! Eroton!"

Behind the mantelets of the besiegers the defenders noticed fresh activity, as if a new attack against the city were being attempted, but in spite of it the Greek