

# DION AND THE SIBYLS.

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

## CHAPTER II.

Our chronicle commences in Campania, with the Tyrrhenian Sea (now the southerly waters of the gulf of Genoa) on a traveller's left hand if he looks north. It was a fair evening in autumn, as we have remarked, during that age and state of the world the broad outlines of which we have briefly given. Along the Appian, or as it long afterward came to be also called, the Trajan Way, the queen of roads, a conveyance drawn by two horses, a carriage of the common hackney description, not unlike one species of the vettura used by the modern Italians, was rolling swiftly northward between the stage of Minturnae and the next stage, which was a lonely post-house a few miles south of the interesting town of Formiae—not Forum Appi, or the Three Taverns, a place more than fifty miles away in the direction of Rome, and upon the same road.

Inside the carriage were a lady in middle life, whose face, once lovely, was still sweet and charming, and a very pale, beautiful child, each dressed in black ricinim, or mourning robe, drawn over the top of the head. The girl was about twelve years old, or a little more, and seemed to be suffering much and grievously. She faced the horses, and on her side sat the lady fanning her and watching her with a look which always spoke love, and now and again anguish. Opposite to them, with his back to the horses, wearing a sort of dark lacerna, or thin, light grey coat, of costly material, but of a fashion which was deemed in Italy at that day either foreign or vulgar, as the case might be, sat a youth of about eighteen. The child was leaning back with her eyes closed. The youth, as he watched her, sighed now and then. At last he put both hands to his face, and, leaning his head forward, suffered tears to flow silently through his fingers. The lacerna which he wore was fastened at the breast by two fibulae, or clasps of silver, and girt round his waist with a broad brown, sheeney leather belt, stamped after some Asiatic mode. In a loop of this belt, at his left side, was secured within its black scabbard an unfamiliar, outlandish-looking, long, straight, three-edged sword, which he had pulled round so as to rest the point before his feet, bringing the blade between his knees, and the hilt, which was gay with emeralds, in front of his chest.

The Romans still very generally went bare-headed, even out of doors, except that those who continued to wear the toga drew it over their heads as the weather needed, and those who wore the penula used the hood of it in the same way. But upon the hilt of the sword we have described the youth had flung a sort of petasus, or deep-rimmed hat, with a flat top, and one black feather at the side, not stuck perpendicularly into the band, but so trained half round it as to produce a reckless, rakish effect, of which the owner was unconscious.

"Agatha," said the lady, in a low, tender voice, the delicate Greek ring of which was full of persuasion, "look up, beloved child! Your brother and I, at least are left. Think no more of the past. The Gods have taken your father, after men have taken his and your inheritance. But our part in life is not yet over. Did not your parents too, in times past...did not we too, I say, lose ours? Did you not know that you were to live longer than your poor father? Are you not to survive me also? Perhaps soon.

With a cry of dismay the young girl threw her arms round the lady's neck and sobbed. The other while she shed tears, exclaimed:

"I thank that unknown power, of whom Dionysius the Athenian my young countryman, so sublimely speaks, that the child weens at

last! Weep, Agatha, weep; but mourn not mute in the cowardice of despair! Mourn not for your father in a way unbecoming of his child and mine. Mourn not as though indeed you were not ours. My husband is gone for ever, but he went in honor. The courageous grief, that cauter without voice or tears, which would slay his child, will not bring back to me the partner of my days, nor to you your father. We must not dishearten but cheer your brother Paulus for the battle which is before him."

"I wish to do so, my mother," said Agatha.

"When I recover my rights," broke in the youth at this point, "my father will come and sit among the lares, round the ever burning fires in the atrium of our hereditary house, Agatha; and therefore courage! You are ill; but Charicles, the great physician of Tiberius Caesar is our countryman, and he will attend you. He can cure almost any thing, they say. And if you feel fatigued, no wonder, so help me! Minime mirum mehercle! Have we not travelled without intermission, by land and by sea all the way from Thrace? But now, one more change of horses brings us to Formiae, and then we shall be at our journey's end. Meantime, dear child, look up; see yonder woods, and the garden-like shores."

And having first tried in vain to brighten the horn window at the side of the vehicle, specular cornucum, (glass was used only in the private carriages of the rich), he stood up, and calling over the hide roof of the carriage, which was open in front—the horses being driven from behind—he ordered the rhedarius, or coachman, to open the panels. The man, evidently a former slave of the family, now their freedman, quickly obeyed, and descending from his bench, pushed back into grooves contrived to receive them the coarsely-figured and gaudily colored sides of the travelling caruca.

"Is parvula better?" he then cried, with the privileged freedom of an old and attached domestic, or of one who, in the far more endearing parlance of classic times, was a faithful familiaris—that is a member of the family. "Is the little one better? The dust is laid, now, little one; the evening comes; the light slants; the sun smiles not higher than yourself, instead of burning overhead. See, the beautiful country! See, the sweet land! Let the breeze bring a bloom to your cheeks, as it brings the perfumes to your mouth. Ah! the parvula smiles. Fate is not always angry!"

"Dear old Philip!" said the child; and then, turning to her mother, she added,

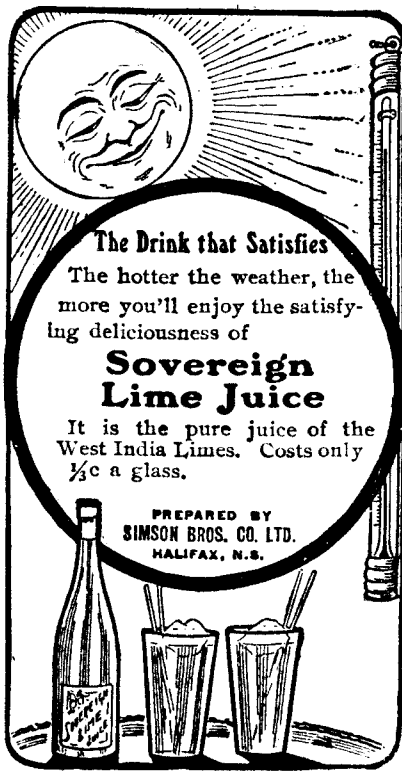
"Just now, mother, you waked me from a frightful dream. I thought that the man who has our father's estates was dead; but he came from the dead, and was trying to kill Paulus, my brother, there; and for that purpose was striving to wrest the sword from Paulus's hand, and that the man, or lar, laughed in a hideous manner, and cried out: 'It is with his own sword we will slay him. Nothing but his own sword!'"

The old freedman turned pale and muttered something to himself, as he stood by the side of the vehicle; and, while he kept the horses steady, with the long reins in his left hand, glanced awfully at Paulus.

"Brother," continued the child, "I forget that man's name. What is the name?"

"Never mind the name now," said Paulus; "a dead person cannot kill a living one; and that man is not in Italy who will kill me with my own sword, if I be not asleep. Look at the beautiful land! See, as Philip tells you, the beautiful land where you are going to be so happy."

(To be continued).



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## ARCHBISHOP LANGEVIN AND THE HOLY FATHER.

The Administrator of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, Very Rev. F. A. Dugas, lately received a most interesting letter from His Grace the Archbishop. He wrote from Rome, delighted with the half hour of private interview he had just had with His Holiness Pius X. The Holy Father, he writes, is not only kind, he is lovable. He warmly praised Mgr. Langevin for his strenuous labors and his valiant battles in the cause of truth. The conversation was carried on in Latin and in French.

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## A MINISTER'S WATCH AND A PRIEST'S WIT.

The Australian Catholic press tells a good story illustrating the ready wit of the late Father McKiernan, of Queensland. He was once travelling to a railway station in a buggy, accompanied by a Protestant minister. Both were anxious to be in time, but their watches disagreed, that of the parson being the slower. Its owner insisted, however, that it was correct, and added that he had great faith in it. Father McKiernan yielded the point, and they travelled along leisurely, thinking they would have ample time to catch the train. When they arrived at the station, however, they were late. Then the priest, turning to his friend, said: "You told me you had great faith in that watch of yours, it would be much better if you had good works in it—a practical proof that faith without good works is of no avail."—Ave Maria.



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"Snite 16?" inquired the messenger boy, with a smile as he handed in the package.

"It's none of your affair how old I am!" snapped the newly acquired domestic as she slammed the door in his face.—Detroit Free Press.

Harold—You shouldn't wait for something to turn up, old chap; you should pitch right in and turn it up yourself."

Rupert—But it's my rich uncle's toes, old chap, that I'm waiting for.—Tit-Bits.