

DION AND THE SIBYLS
(Continued from page 6)

foot. Some of these were bound countryward, but not one for every score of those who were bound in their own direction. No adventure befell them, and in less than two hours they arrived at their destination. It was easy to find the Mamurran palace, to the principal door of which, guarded by a Praetorian sentry on either hand, Paulus forthwith escorted Benigna.

There was no footway on either side of the street, and as they approached the door they heard the clang of the metal knocker resound upon the inside. At the same moment the sentinel nearest to them shouted "linita," (by your leave.) Two or three persons at this warning shrank hurriedly into the middle of the road; a Numidian rider made his horse bound aside, and the large folding-doors were simultaneously flung open outward.

Immediately appeared the very man in the dark-dyed purple robe of whom the little damsel was in quest, and upon whose personal aspect, already minutely described in a former place, we need not here dwell. A handsome gentleman, in middle life, with an acute and thoughtful face, who wore the Greek mantle called Xhaiva, (laena,) but differently shaped from an angur's, followed. Both these persons moved with that half-stoop which seems like a continued though very faint bow; and when in the street, they turned, stood still and waited. Then came forth, leaning on a knight's arm, and walking somewhat feebly, a white-haired, ancient, and majestic man, around whose person, in striking contrast with the many new fashions of dress lately become prevalent, a snowy woollen toga, with broad violet borders, flowed. Under this toga, indeed, was a tunic richly embroidered with gold, and having painted upon it the head of the idol called the Capitoline Jove, half hidden by a wide double stripe of scarlet silk.

When this personage had come into the street, all those who chanced to be there uncovered. Tiberius, the gentleman in the Greek mantle, and the knight himself upon whose arm the object of all this reverence continued to lean, did the same; and it was thus that Paulus, who had already guessed from frequent descriptions formerly received, knew for certain that he beheld for the first time Augustus Caesar, sovereign of three hundred million human beings, and absolute master of the known world. In a moment those who formed the personal company of the emperor resumed their head-gear; some soldiers who happened to be passing did the same, and proceeded upon their respective errands; but the inhabitants remained gazing until the group began to move on foot up the street in the direction of the temporary circus which had been completed by the knight Mamurra in some fields north-west of the town.

Paulus turned to Benigna and said, "You perceive the red-faced—ehem! the great man. He does not know you, though you know him. Shall I tell him who you are? Indeed, I have not come hither merely to stare about me; so wait you here."

He thereupon left her, and quickly overtaking, and then passing before, the group in which was Augustus, turned round and stood directly in their way, hat in hand, but all his sensations were different from what he had expected. He grew very red and shame-faced, and felt a sudden confusion that was new to his experience. As it was impossible to walk over him, they, on their part, halted for a moment, and looked at him with an expression of surprise which was common to them all, though indeed not in the same degree. The person who seemed the least astonished was the emperor; and the person who seemed more so than any of the rest was Tiberius. Some displeasure, too, seemed to flash in the glance which he bent upon the youth.

But Paulus, though abashed, did not lose presence of mind to such an extent as to behave stupidly. He said:

"I ask our august emperor's pardon for interrupting his promenade, in order to report to Tiberius Caesar the execution of an order.

Yonder is Crispus's daughter, illustrious sir," he added, turning toward Tiberius; "she has come hither according to your own commands."

"True," said Tiberius; "let her at once seek the prefect Sejanus, who will give the necessary instructions."

Paulus's natural courage and enterprising temper had carried him thus far; but his design of accosting and directly addressing Augustus Caesar now seemed, when he had more speedily found an opportunity of doing so than he could have dared to hope, a strange and difficult undertaking. How he should procure access to the emperor had been the problem with him and his family heretofore; but now, when the access was already achieved, and when he had only to speak—now when his voice was sure to reach the ears of the emperor himself—he knew not what to say or how to begin. He had thought of splendid topics, of deductions which he would draw, certain arguments which he would urge—a matter very plain and easy; in fine, a statement simple, brief, and conclusive; but all this had vanished from his mind. There before him, holding back the folds of his toga with one white hand, upon the back of which more than seventy years had brought out a tracery of blue varicose veins—a modern doctor would call them—with the other hand, which was gloved, and grasping the fellow glove, laid upon the arm of the knight already mentioned, stood the person who, under forms, the republican semblance of which he carefully preserved, exercised throughout the whole civilized and nearly the whole known world, over at least two if not three hundred million souls, a power as uncontrolled and as absolute for all practical purposes as any which, before him or after him, ever fell to man's lot; enthusiastically guarded and religiously obeyed by legions before whom mankind trembled, and whose superiors as soldiers had not been seen then and have not been seen since; the perpetual tribune of the people, the prince, senator, perpetual consul, the supreme judge, the arbiter of life and death, the umpire in the greatest concerns between foreign disputants travelling from the ends of the earth to plead before him; the dispenser of prefectures, provinces, proconsulates, tetrarchies, and kingdoms; treated by kings as those kings were themselves treated by the high functionaries whom they had appointed or confirmed, and could in an instant dismiss; the unprincipled, cruel, wicked, but moderate-tempered, cold-humored, cautious, graceful-mannered, elegant-minded, worldly-wise, and politic prince, who paid assiduous court to all the givers and destroyers of reputation—I mean, to the men of letters. There he stood, as we have described him, holding his toga with one hand and leaning upon Mamurra's arm with the other; and Paulus stood before him, and Paulus knew not what to say; hardly, indeed—so quickly the sense of bashfulness, confusion, depression had gained upon him—hardly how to look.

"If you have heard," observed Tiberius at length, "pray stand aside."

Paulus, who, while Tiberius was speaking, had looked at him, now glanced again toward the emperor, and still hesitated, made a shuffling bow, and stood partly aside. "What is it you wish to say?" asked Augustus, in a somewhat feeble voice, not at all ungraciously.

"I wish," said Paulus, becoming very pale, "to say, my sovereign, that my father's property in this very neighborhood was taken away after the battle of Philippi and given to strangers, and to beg of you your justice and clemency to give back that property or an equivalent to me, who am my dead father's only son."

"But," said Augustus, smiling, "half the land in Italy changed hands about the time you mention. Your father fought for Brutus, I suppose?"

"My father fought for you, my lord," said Paulus.

"Singular!" exclaimed Augustus; "but this is not a court of justice—the courts are open to you."

At this moment Sejanus and one

whom Paulus presumed to be in Rome, Cneius Piso, attended by a slave, appeared from a cross street. The slave approached quickly, holding a pigeon; and having caught the eye of Augustus, who beckoned to him, he handed the bird to the emperor.

Paulus withdrew a little, but lingered near the group. Augustus, disengaging a piece of thin paper from the pigeon's neck, said: (To be Continued.)

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