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BRENNUS-THE BARBARIAN.

A TALE OF ROME IN THE DAYS OF PAGANISM

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(From the Banner of the South.)

CHAPTER I.

Beautiful in its lonely grandeur rose the palace near the mountain pass, and graceful were the forms of beauty that flitted around its walls; but, lovelier far than all, Oh! Aruns, was thy fair daughter. Lovely were the flow-ers that bloomed around the fairy fount in; but Virgilia was the queen of beauty. Yet the chill wind will fade the delicate flowers, or the parching sun crumble them into dust; guard well, then, thy flower, oh! Aruns, from the chill winds of poverty and the scorching sun of

Far enough removed from the city to avoid its attendant noise and bustle, the stately palace of Aruns, a wealthy citizen of Clusium, afforded a most delighful retreat for his only child. A rare loveliness had been bestowed upon this favored child of fortune, and many were the suitors who knelt before her; yet, still, the sweet Virgilia turned away, and would even fly in alarm from one of them, the impetuous Lucius, a young noble of Clusium. Proud and haughty in spirit, Lucius swore by his gods not to be turned from his purpose; and most dangerous is a man when he yields himself a slave to his own evil passions.

"Why, why does the fair Virgilia turn from me?" he asked of his friend Caius. "Look at me; am I not fair and tall in stature? Are not my eys bright, my muscles strong? Is not my form perfect? have I ever been defeated in single combat? Have not the gods showered wealth, youth, and beauty upon me? Why then does the fairest of the fair despise me?'

"Venus alone knows," answered Caius, with a slight grimace; "you forget, Lucius, that Virgilia, also, possesses these gifts of the gods in abundance, and can sec a more graceful form than thine at any time, by consulting her mirror. It may be that some more favored lover hides thy perfections from her eyes."

"There is no truth in thee Caius!" exclaimed Lucius, angrily; "full well thou knowest she has no favored lover. Closely have I searched with my eyes those who come near her, and, by Eros! I am willing to swear she loves none

"Nay, let us not make many words about gilia?" the matter," answered Caius; " let me full into a disagreement. I know not if she loves; in truth I care not if she loves, for my heart bows not before her!"

"Aye! thou lovest and art happy; and, in the sunshine of that happiness, overlook thy friend's distress." said Lucius sullenly.

"Thou willfully misunderstand me Lucius," said Caius kindly; "I would do much for my friend, but thou dost not bear patience with me. I believe that Virgilia loves. We may not, yet, have seen her in company with the favored one, but-"

"Whom does she love?" interrupted Lucius impatiently, "thinkest thou of any one?"

"No, no, of no one," replied Caius; "I have never yet seen her with the one she loves, yet, still, I say I doubt not there is a favored lover!"

"I will watch, and if there is - let him beware !" cried Lucius. "Come, Caius, let us home." seek the house of Aruns, or rather of Virgilia, for to tell the truth, though Virgilia is most dear to me, yet the noble Aruns is no favorite of mine, no, nor of any of us; he is too lenient with those low Plebians and will soon fall into disgrace among the Patricians."

"You speak truly, Lucius; he would deny the young nobles their little pleasures, and speaks loudly of the rights of Plebians!"

Conversing thus, the young men left the

house of Lucius.

And why was the beautiful Virgilia so insensible to the attraction of Lucius. He was attractive, for, indeed, he spoke truth concerning himself, when he enumerated his own

graces to Caius. Let us precede the young man to the home of Aruns. Not into the home, just yet, for see, there is Virgilia, wandering along yonder mountain path, with only one attendant at her side, a young slave maiden, called Nyda. The sun is very low in the Heavens, and the cool breeze of evening steals over them. Folding the soft silver veil around her, Virgilia walks softly onward; now a huge rock bars the way, only a little footpath winds around it. Will she venture there? Unhesitatingly she treads the path, and now she and her companion are hidden behind the huge boulder. A few steps onward and they reach the mouth of a little cave, a natural eleft in the mountains, but so beautiful by art as to seem the grotto of a fairy stayed too long! Come, Nyda, let us hasten!" queen. Enter! Low couches are placed on two sides; on the third a small white marble altar has been erected; on, it stands the image of the God of love, surrounded by freshly culled flowers of every hue and shape. With smiling path that wound along the mountain side, lip, and glowing cheek, Virgilia adds her offer. With rapid steps Virgilia and Nyda tro ing of sweet flowers to those already laid upon the path that led to their home, and were all see thy father now, and carry thee with me? | hood, to be placed among the virgins of Vesta,

the altar, and then looks eagerly up the moun- most breathless when they entered the large | Yet, no! The thought is that of a fool! He tain path, as if awaiting some one. She is; and, behold, he comes! Bounding over rock aed ravine, with hardy grace, the young wor-rior soon reaches her side. He is large and

He, too, has come to sacrifice on the shrine of Love, for his hands are full of flowers .-Virgilia moves, smilingly, away, and the offering is made.

Turning from the cold image of Love, to the living, breathing, reality before him, the the warrior kneels before Virgilia. And she? Oh, we see by the very blush, the speaking eye, that Virgilia loves, and the loved one is before her.

"Dearest Virgilia," murmured the young man, gazing up into her face. The words were common onough, for the tale of love is as old as the world, and ever uses the self same

"Not at my feet, Brennus," said Virgilia, resting her hand on his head; "come sit here beside me, and tell me why thou did'st not come yesterday."

As the moments sweep by and they sit there conversing, we detect a difference in their from the lovely Virgilia to follow Aruns to the speech, for he speaks her language with an accent on his tongue as if he were of a different elegant room in the house. The floor was

"But my father is kind, and is not proud," said Virgilia, in answer to an expressed fear of her lover, that her father might look with angry eyes upon their love.

callest it, and I-thou knowest not what I am, one of these, with his friend at his left hand.-

"Oh, I am sure thou art good and brave, what more is required?" asked the maiden

" A noble name," answered Brennus.

"Thou canst win one!" cried Virgilia.
"But, listen to me, Virgilia," answered her lover; "I will tell thee more of myself than thou hast yet heard. Thou art an Etruscan, I am-a Gaul! Our nations are not friends."

"Oh! but we are friends," cried Virgilia, clinging to his arm; "Etruscan, Gaul, or Roman, what is it to me? If thou wert a Roman, then, indeed, my father might look angrily upon me, for he hates these Romans, who have wrested so many of our cities from us .-But I, who love you, care nothing for these things."

"But knowest thou what we are called, Vir-

"Barbarians!" murmured the girl.

"Yes, Barbarians! And wouldst thou, Virgilia, the daughter of a haughty noble, give | turn !" thyself in marriage to a rude barbarian?-Wouldst thou cross those lofty mountains to seek a home with me?"

"I would, dear Brennus; thou dost wrong my faithful heart by the doubt. I know not how far away thy home is, I know not what thy station is there, but this I do know, Brennus, I know that I love thee, and am willing to share thy lot whatever that may be."

"My own Virgilia," murmured the lover, clasping her to his bosom, "thou dost trust me, and never shall thou mourn that trust .-My home is far, oh! far away from here!-Think not, dearest, that I seek my home every evening when I leave thee here; no, I have a little cot among the mountains, where I stay; it would take me many days to reach my

"Yes, I know thy home is far away; tell found this spot?"

"By chance, Virgilia," replied Brennus .among the mountains till the evening came on, and, then, to my surprise, found that I had lost my way. My adventurous spirit led me on; the gods whispered of a brilliant future; I found a ravine in the mountains; followed its many windings, and, when my heart began to fail, chanced upon this spot. 'Twas only a little cleft in the mountains then, yet, still, it seemed as if the hand of man had been here, for the entrance was closed with yonder flat rock. I cast it aside, and, whilst sitting in the shadow, heard sweet voices. Thou knowest the rest; thou wert wandering in the mountain path with thy maiden. I saw and loved thee ! And thou! hast thou not told me that

I am dear to thee?" "Oh! I have, and thou art. But tell me, Brennus, do not thy friends long for thee?-Do they not fear that some ill hath befallen

"Doubtless they do," answered Brennus; and I will return to them some day, when I can make up my mind to leave thy dear side."

"Ah! but I must leave thee, Brennus; for, see, the hour grows late, the shadows of evening already darken the path; I have already

"May the gods shelter thee!" exclaimed Brennus, as they hastily left the grotto; then, lifting his spear from the ground, he, also, left the cave, ascending the almost imperceptible

With rapid steps Virgilia and Nyda trod

entrance hall. There, reclining at his ease would not consent, for he knows not but that upon the silken cushion, was Lucius, awaiting the appearance of Virgilia. Near him stood his friend Caius, who looked a little appre"Brennus may be the vilest of the vile."

"I, also, sometimes tremble," said V
"but I will keep within the house, sought her to remove her veil.

"Aye, but thou has now entered the house, and there is no reason why thou shouldst now conceal thy face!" said Lucius, seizing the veil, and trying to remove it with gentle hand.

"My will is sufficient reason," answered Virgilia, holding its folds closely against her face.

"Assuredly," answered Lucius, withdrawing his hand.

At this moment a wide door was thrown open, and a slave summoned them to partake of the evening meal. Lucius had eaten in the house of Aruns many times, and well knew the delicate wines and costly luxuries that would be set before him. Lucius was a devoted slave to wine, and even now hesitated not to turn supper-room. This was the largest and most paved with blocks of marble, and rare mosaic. the ceiling painted with glowing colors, and upon one of the walls hung a large mirror of polished steel. A long table stood in the centre of the room, with two couches on either "Yet, he is a wealthy Patrician, as thou side. Lucius immediately threw himself upon A young slave advanced with a silver basin, into which Lucius dipped his fingers, and then turned his whole attention to the table. Soft music filled the air while they ate, yet no soft-ness entered the heart of Lucius. While par-his pleasure." taking of the bread of Aruns, he was plotting against his happines.

CHAPTER II,

The bright sky bore in its limpid blue the still brighter sun. The dew was scarcely dried upon the flowers, yet Virgilia was already try!" said Nyda, con abroad. To-day she is to see Brennus, for he the basket of flowers. has sent a special message to her. Well may you think that her steps were not slow, for the clapsed her in his arms as she entered the only a poor barbarian?"

come back, Brennus, wilt thou not?"

"Shall I swear it, Virgilia?"
"No! oh no!" I know thou wilt return; I did but ask to hear once more the sweet assurthee again?"

"Once more, dearest," answered Brennus; meet me here to-morrow morning; after I have seen thee I will go hence, for a time only; when I come back again I will ask thy father for thee, and thou shalt go home with Brennus

"Do not call thyself such names, Brennus, thou art no barbarian!" said Virgilia, reproachfully.

"Deceive not thyself, dearest," replied Brenme, then, dear Brennus, how 'twas you first nus; "my countrymen are indeed rude, and if my manner seems soft to thee, 'tis only becauso I cannot be rude in thy dear presence. I am "Yet, no! the gods sent me! I was hunting a warrior, Virgilia, and my hand is more used to grasp the spear than flowers."

"And, yet, thou dost hold the flowers tenderly, Brennus," said Virgilia, smiling, "as if thy hands were used to them, thou dost not east them aside, as Lucius doth."

"Who is Lucius?" asked Brennus, eagerly. "A young Noble of Clusium whose father is a Roman. He would have me for a wife, Brennus, if I would listen to his words."

"And thy father, Virgilia; how favors he the young noble's suit?"

"Have I not told thee that my father favors not the Romans?" "Aye, I had forgotten that; but, tell me, have you nothing to fear from this noble? Is

he wealthy? Is he powerful?" "Oh, yes, both wealthy and powerful. His father, at Rome, is the most powerful of the haughty Patricians, who trample on the rights of the poor. My father likes not this young

Lucius, for Aruns is a just man, and would give to all their due. Though a noble my father has but few friends among the Patricions. because he will not trample on his dependants as they do."

"What dost thou tell me, Virgilia?" cried Brennus, in great alarm, "thy father is not liked, is looked upon with suspicion, and this proud and cruel noble desires thee for a wife! Thou dost alarm me dearest! Oh! for my sake keep close to thy father's side, lest this Lucius should attempt to carry thee off. What Two hours afterward the weeping Virgilia shall I do? Would it not be best for me to was borne away from the home of her child-

"I, also, sometimes tremble," said Virgilia; "but I will keep within the house, for only strong, with flowing flaxen hair, and ruddy hensively at the lowering brow of Aruns - last night, after he had broken bread in my facomplexion. His attire is a rude armor, which hand of Virgilia, in softly spoken words bemise myself to him. He spoke then of his mise myself to him. He spoke then of his suspicions; he told me that I loved another .-"The veil is not out of place, most noble Lucius," replied Virgilia; "I have been walk- could not harm thee, and I hoped he would would then leave."

"And did he so?" asked Brennus.
"No; he became angry, and swore by the gods that no other should have me. Oh! he was very angry, Brennus, and I trembled before his rage."

"Tremble no longer, sweet one, I will think over this until to-morrow morn. For not; and now, farewell."

"I will not fear; but didst thou say this farewell was for the last?" asked Virgilia.

"For the last time! The gods forbid!— Nay, I said not so, sweet flower. I will re-

"Ah! 'twas thus I meant it," said Virgilia, smiling faintly; "and now—" she bent her head on his shoulder, and her farewell was lost in the heavy sigh that broke from her heart.

"To-morrow," whispered Brennus, and placing his love in the arms of Nyda, he ascended the mountain path with fleet steps.

"The flowers are fading on the altar," said Nyda, striving to attract her mistress' attention.
"Aye, even as my hopes are!" replied Virgilia, with a heavy sigh.

"Be not so sad," said Nyda, kneeling beside her fair owner; "remember the noble Brennus hath promised to see thee again tomorrow. Look! The place is in disorder; let us bring fresh flowers and sweet perfumes,

"Brennus is no noble, good Nyda; yet, thou sayest well. We will trim our altar and scatter the pertumes. Your basket is without, Nyda, bring it in."

"I would give my life a sacrifice to the gods but that Brennus is a noble in his own country!" said Nyda, confidently, as she brought in

"My poor girl, I fear thy sacrifice would have to be made," said Virgilia. "I do not birds were searcely swifter than she. Early as | think that Brennus hath even wealth in his own she was Brennus was there before her, and country. Didst thou not hear him say he was

"Aye, I heard the words, and marked the "Oh! dearest Virgilia, I must leave thee! proud look on his brow while he spoke them. Too long have I lingered here, and now I must He is so grand and beautiful he must be a

"Please thyself with bright dreams, Nyda,

Returning to the house Virgilia found the slaves huddled together, with looks of wild alarm in their eyes, and her usually stately father, pacing the outer court with rapid, un-

"'Tis for thee, my daughter, that I grieve," said Aruns, drawing a roll of parchment from his bosom, "behold my child, this time the lot has fallen upon thee; thou must become gossips ceased. one of the attendants in the temple of Vesta!" "Who bids this, my father?" cried Virgilia, with ashen lips.

"Those whose authority may not be resisted," replied Aruns; "and even if we were disposed to try to evade it, 'twould be too late, for see, those who are to guard thee to Clusium are already here."

"Am I to spend my life in dreary loneliness within the temple of Vesta?" moaned Virgilia, while the petted slaves of the household gathered around with sobs and tears; "tell me, my father, is there no way for me to escape."

"But one, my child," answered Aruns; " the father of Lucius is all powerful; he holds the decrees of life and death in his hands; he can save thee if he will."

"Lucius! Then, indeed, I am lost!" cried Virgilia, in an agonizing voice. "'Tis from his hand comes this blow; there is no hope for me! Oh! Brennus, why art thou not here to help me!"

"Upon whom dost thou call, my child? I know of no god whom we call Brennus," said Pontifex, if I mistake not," said Brennus Aruns in great alarm; "surely thy heart doth | coldly. not wander after strange gods ?"

"Oh no, 'twas but a friend I named," said us enter the house.'

"We are ordered not to let the maiden pass from our sight," said one of the men who had come with the fatal message.

"What! wilt thou not even let her prepare for her journey?" asked Aruns, angrily.

"My lord will not be angry with his slave," answered the man; "he knows that I have but "Follow her, then !" said Aruns turning.

CHAPTER III.

Brennus was prompt to keep his appointment, but, alas! Virgilia was not there to meet him. Nyda, alone, the weeping Nyda, erouched on the floor of the grotto,

"What ails thee, girl, where is thy mistress?" asked Brennus, lifting Nyda to her

"Alas! most noble Brennus, they have taken her away, to place her among the virgins in the temple of Vesta!"

"They! Who?" cried Brennus, his cheeks flushing; "was it her father?" "Aruns! No, my master weeps for his

daughter," said Nyda, indignantly; "my mistress thinks that Lucius bath a hand in this

" Lucius! What the noble who sought her hand? Come Nyda, set me on the road to Clusium; I will tear my love from his hands!"

"But she is not in his hands; said I not that she was to be placed in the temple of Vesta? Alas, my lord! she is lost to thee forever!" "Not so! cried Brennus, with a scornful

laugh; "she is lost to me but for a time, I will try to rescue her with my own hand, Nyda; if I cannot—then we will sacrifice to the gods, and try other means. You can give me a dress, Nyda; see, my clothes are not fashioned like those of your countrymen."

"I can give you all you want," answered

Nyda; "Come back here when the day grows late, I will have all things in readiness for thee. Beware lest thy speech betray thee, Brennus, and more grief fall upon my lady's

"This Lucius, Nyda, how else do you name him?" asked Brennus, not heeding her warning words.

"Lucius Fabius," said Nyda.

"Lucius Fabius," repeated Brennus, slowly, as if to stamp the name upon his memory. "Go then, Nyda, I will be here before you and await your coming."

Nyda lingered not longer than was absolutely necessary, but still Brennus was there before her, impatiently awaiting the promised dress. The broad mantle flung over his own dress and a change of shoes was all that was necessary to hide the peculiarity of his dress, and as she shades of evening deepened, Brennus followed Nyda down the mountain path.

"Should you not succeed, return to me; if you are pursued, fly thither, I can conceal you," said Nyda, as Brennus turned his face toward Clusium,

"Pray to the Gods for me," were the last ords of Brennus,

The strong athletic young warrior felt scarcegilia, tears sparkling in her eyes; "yet, I will live upon thy promise to return. Thou wilt and the place seems lonely."

but they are only dreams, as thou wilt find.—

ly any fatigue from his long walk as he entered the streets of Clusium. He soon found the small temple dedicated to Voeta and the place seems lonely." days hung around the doors, yet not one wor I could be hear about the idol of his heart. On the third day, t'was whispered among those who worshipped in the temple, that some of ance. Art thou going now? Will I not see even, footsteps. Hastening to his side, with the virgins were to be sent to Rome, in obean undefined fear at her heart, she besought dience to the command of the Pontifex, who him to tell to her the cause of his troubled who this year was the father of the young Roman whom we have found at Clusium, Lucius Fabius. Brennus listened intently, but to his anger and confusion, two young nobles entered the temple, and the conversation among the

"Lucius, thou hast hurried me without cause," said the smaller of the two men.

The name immediately arrested the attention of Brennus, who, bending over one of the gossips, asked in a whisper;
"How is your young noble named?"

"Lucius Fabius," answered the person addressed, with a stare of astonishment.

Turning on his heel, Brennus left the temple, and stood in the outer court. In a few minutes, Lucius and Caius came forth. Brennus threw his foot forward, Lucius stumbled over it, but did not fall, for Caius caught his

"Slave!" cried Lucius furiously.

"Slave in thy face!" answered Brennus scornfully. Instantly Lucius drew his short sword from his belt. "Be not so rash, Lucius; see'st thou not

that the man is a stranger, and knows thee not," said the more cautious and humane Caius. "'Tis Lucius Fabius, the son of the Roman

"See he knows me! Slave, thou shalt die!" and blind with rage, Lucius rushed upon his Virgilia, turning away. "Come, Nyda, let foe. Brennus was not armed, yet even so he was a full match for the young Roman. With one sweep of his powerful arm he laid Lucius at his feet, and stood over him, with a smile o contempt flitting around his lips. Not long did our brave Brennus enjoy his triumph, in a moment his arms were seized and bound with heavy thongs. The Gallic warrior, a stranger and alone, stood bound among a group of young nobles who were thirsting for his blood. Cruel men they were, who promised themselves rare sport with the stranger.

"We will take him to the Governor!" cried

"No! no! we will not let him out of our