and there is a broad band of embroidery upon its edge. Her arms and neck are bare. I can tell that she hath been fretting. There are dark rims round her eyes. Her hair seemeth darker than it was before.

Her left hand is held out over the arm of her chair—it looketh lovely—so soft and cool. Gold bands clasp her arms below the shoulder and at the wrist, and, sometimes, she doth move her left hand fretfully. . . .

I knew not if I should go and approach her by the slaves’ door. Then, hearing the sound of a woman’s voice and seeing that she had not any of her own women behind her, methought to remain within call as had been my wont when she received any but familiar friends.

And as I moved to the edge of the curtain, I saw that she who spake before my domina was the woman Salome and that the child was there with her.

I understood not how Salome had obtained entrance. That should have been on the part of Chabrias which seemed strange to me, unless it had been otherwise, by Paulinus’s command. I knew not then that Paulinus was absent from Rome for a night or two. . . . But I scarce thought of Paulinus: I thought only of my domina.

The woman Salome had made urgent excuse—or so I guessed. Now, I mind me that, later on, Aeola told me she had come more than once, had tried to throw herself in my domina’s way and that, until to-day, Valeria had denied her admittance.

Later I heard that ’twas by means of a letter which she brought that Salome had reached my domina’s presence. Methinks the Greek boy Gregorio took the letter and that Salome followed after him. My mind is not clear. . . . I was not there at the beginning. . . .

And yet I know that I must be there. . . . I see it all as a picture clear before me.

That woman standeth before Valeria—a few paces off, nearer to the fountain. Between the two, and beside my domina, there is a marble table and upon it a basket of fruit, a jug of wine and glasses and a dish of snow. One of the glasses is but half-filled. My domina hath offered it to the woman—that is usual: I had thought my domina would have asked her to sit down; mayhap, the woman would not. . . . She standeth with her arms folded. She too is proud, but there is no dignity in her pride. . . .

Thou knowest, she is a handsome woman—shorter than my domina and plumper, her skin darker, a flush upon her cheeks. Her eyes are dark and bright—very pretty, long-shaped eyes with a look in them that I like not, and they have thick brown lashes which almost hide the eyes when they droop.

She is wearing a red robe—not dark red, ’tis geranium colour: her shoe-thongs are red and she hath a gossamer veil with a narrow gold border fastened by gold pins to her hair and twisted round her neck. . . . Now, in talking, she doth turn her head from side to side, as if to free her throat, and shaketh the veil back over her shoulder. . . .

I listened not at first to what she said. . . . I waited, seeing ’twere not fitting I should put myself forward, and I watched, thinking that the Domina would see me and call me when she knew I was there: and I wondered why the woman had come and if there were mischief about Licinius.

The child was running gently about—he was a quiet little fellow—pulling, mayhap, a blossom down and smelling it and, sometimes, running
towards his mother and away again. And then, again, he crept round
the wall, playing with the creepers and would look from his mother to
the domina, seeming attracted and yet half-frighted—more frightened at the
doma than of his mother. And now he hath come near. . .  He is
touching the fruit, pulling at the grapes. A pretty little boy, dressed simply
in a white tunic. Meseems that, in the picture, he is all there is of innocence
and pure, sweet beauty. He doth greatly resemble Licinius. In both, the
hair groweth after the same fashion upon the forehead. . .  I see my domina
look at him—she bendeth a little. And now—it is so strange . . .  I see her
not as a picture. I can feel the living heart-beats of her. . .  I can read
the living mind. . .  She doth compare the boy with her own sons. . .
She would have liked to see that look upon the face of a child of hers who
had for father Licinius Sura. . .
The little boy doth lift his eyes to her and smile and then turn away
afraid. . .  And now with her right arm she maketh a quick movement
. . .  'tis half to send him from her . . .  and yet methinks that had his
mother not been there she might have drawn the child within her arms
and have kissed him for that look of his father in the smile.
But now with the sweep of her arm, backward, she doth overturn the
half-filled glass, and the glass is broken on the marble, and the red wine
spills and leaves a deep stain, like unto blood adown the side of her robe
and upon her embroidered shoe, and lieth on the marble floor in a little pool
as of blood.
She doth take no heed of that but sitteth still and straight again, and
so far do her thoughts travel that she appeareth scarce to hear what the
woman is saying. I can see the thoughts as they rise and change and float
away, and all are of doubt and pain and bitterness. I can feel that the
woman's letter hath wrought upon Valeria, and that she doth suspect
Licinius of hiding somewhat from her. She is thinking that there hath
been strangeness in his manner of late; that he sheweth not the same
pressing desire to be at her side as when first their love renewed itself. She
feareth that he may fail her once more, and she is resolved that to-night
she will learn the truth. To-night she is free to have his company and had
urged him to pass to her, after dark this evening, through the private door
in the wall, as hath been his wont.
But, then, he did try to put her off, and when she questioned him, he
told her no more than that the secret mission on which he had come to
Rome doth oblige him to be beyond the Aventine by nightfall. Then,
when, in sore displeasure, she had combated the excuse, he yielded and
said that he would come later if he could. She feareth, yet dare not fear,
that he is wearying of the perils and restrictions of her love—wearying
even of its very ardour. But 'tis hard for her to believe that the woman,
Salome, may have drawn him back again. For she knoweth, with a woman's
knowledge, that never could Licinius Sura love the lowborn freedwoman as
he hath loved the highly-placed Valeria. Notwithstanding, she knoweth,
likewise, that the bonds of nature and custom are strong, and, for long,
Salome had been as Licinius's wife. . . . And, Salome is the mother of
Licinius's son.
I am certain that ever, beneath her scorn, my domina hath felt deep
jealousy of that woman. Though the feeling slept when naught disturbed
the love of Licinius for herself, always hath that woman stood between them:
always hath there remained the sting. . .  This, I discern with that strange
Sure vision which doth sometimes come to me. And I read in the other woman’s thoughts—which rise, likewise, and seem writ in clear dark signs on the face of the picture—that she doth know of this jealous feeling and that, thereby, she findeth her own strength. She is clever, that woman... and she hath no true pride. There is nothing she would stop at doing to secure her end.

Now, my domina doth seem to draw within herself and, sitting up stiff and cold as though she had scarce heard or understood the woman’s prating, she doth ask the purport of this visit. For, saith she, hitherto she hath refused an interview because it had seemed to her that, between those two, there could be nothing of like interest, but that since, from the letter she hath read, there appeareth to be somewhat of urgency which might concern her friends, she is prepared to consider whatsoever the matter may portend.

Whereon, the woman answereth that, verily, the matter doth concern one who was the friend of Valeria... And then she doth mutter something about knowing not if the friendship be like to continue... The woman hath a rude and angry air as of claiming for herself certain dues. ’Tis then that she doth rear her head and shake the scarf from about her neck; and there is deeper redness in her cheeks and a curious light in the corners of her eyes—I did tell thee they were long and narrow eyes... Now, standing bold and upright, she sayeth that she hath not come to plead, and that the Domina will be no more troubled by such pleadings. For, saith she, her pleadings to Licinius have prevailed and, once more, her husband is all her own as in those earlier days when their son Marcus was born to them. She knoweth not, she saith—and, meseemeth, her words held insolence poorly veiled—whether this renewed union be partly due to the Domina’s relinquishment of him whom she hath not the power to retain, or whether it be that Licinius hath, of himself, turned away from those passing love-pleasurings which did amuse him for a time. But, be that as it may, she hath come in courtesy to inform the Domina of the fact... And full claim hath she—or so she saith—to uphold the rights of herself and of their child. For not only hath she been the wife of Licinius during so many past years, the boy—and she pointeth to him—being more than four years old, but in Judæa, recently, Licinius hath taken her back to wife, and there is another child coming to them.

’Tis a bold and clever game and the sword doth pierce Valeria. Oh, had I but been with her!... Never, could I have reached her, would she have let that woman speak.

I know not if it be true—that which the woman said. I am telling thee the feel of the picture and of the woman. She doth feel to be fleshy and false... And yet, meseemeth, she hath a certain justice to her cause. Licinius would have been less to blame had he openly repudiated Salome and taken away my domina. He hath not acted fairly by either woman.

But oh! it is dreadful that Salome should be standing there watching my lady suffer... Yet I feel that, surely, my domina’s natural dignity will uphold her now.

If she would but pause to think!... If she would but give herself a chance!... I can see that something brave and loyal is rising up within her—something which doth tell her that she is unworthy in thus lending ear to such a tale of the man she loves... If only she would let that speak!... And, then, she doth remind herself—I can read the thought—that he hath deceived her in small things, and why not in great ones?... And
that were she to ask him for the truth, he would not give it her. Hath he not kept from her his secrets? Those secrets which he hath shared with Salome! And she remembereth the cloud that hath lain between them these last days. . . .

Perhaps it seemeth to thee strange and not fitting that I should thus read the heart of my mistress; and sometimes, indeed, have I wondered if it were right. But always have I felt that she is mine own, in the spiritual sense, and that I, of all others, know her the best. . . .

Moreover, she had been less like to believe the woman's tale, had it not been spoke in straight and simple fashion. Salome hath told that which covereth all. She hath been with Licinius in Judaea . . . she is to bear him another child. . . . Oh, is it true, that which the woman hath said? I fear me that it may be true. . . . Wait. . . . Mine eyes do turn away. . . . They may not read in my domina's heart the agony of that thought. . . .

Wouldst thou have me find out if the woman hath spoken truth? I cannot now. . . . I can only see the picture as from beyond. . . . Of myself, down here, I know naught. If I did know I should understand better. . . .

And still the woman faceth my domina, arms folded, staring impudently at my lady. . . . Now she doth unfold her arms and toucheth with her hand the head of the child.

The boy hath strayed to my domina and, again, he doth stroke the embroidery on her robe. . . . She taketh no notice of the child. Her head is drooped. One hand lieth across the marble window-sill: the other hangeth at her side. . . . The child is conscious of her sorrow. In sympathy, mayhap, he doth put his little fingers down the back of her hand. . . . Her hand twitcheth at his touch and my domina doth draw it quickly away. . . .

The woman is angered and pulleth round the child's face towards her own. . . . Oh! That woman is cruel. . . . She sayeth somewhat of the boy being so like his father that none could mistake him for aught but the son of Licinius Sura.

The woman knoweth where to stab. Yet is there true feeling in her voice and, though I am against her, meseems that she is not wholly false. She is doing the last thing that she can do in the cause of herself and her son. . . .

Now she talketh fast and wildly and seemeth scarcely to guess whither her frenzied utterance might lead her. . . . For she is telling something very strange to my domina. . . . I cannot get it right. . . . She is betraying the secrets of Licinius—revealing that he is a conspirator—a plotter for the cause of Judaea against the Roman State. . . . Oh, that is a dangerous game! Her mind appeareth not clear upon the matter. And yet I know not whether it be all false. She hath a motive behind. . . . Mayhap it be that, herewith, she doth put somewhat in the hands of my domina to bring to him hurt and punishment. . . . But how can she wish to punish Licinius! Yet, methinks, that rather would Salome make Licinius suffer than that Valeria should not suffer through him. . . .

And, as the woman raveth, my domina turneth on her a look—sharp, wild, incomprehending, but as though the mad words had touched in her some spring of fierce and desperate adventuring. . . . 'Tis but for a moment and her face becometh marble again, but the boy, seeing the movement and the look, goeth nearer to the Domina and again toucheth her robe.

Then, doth his mother pull him roughly away and the boy is frightened
and clingeth to his mother’s skirt while yet he looketh over his shoulder at
Valeria.

And the woman doth watch my domina out of those narrow, wicked
eyes. . . .

There seemeth not a drop of blood in Valeria’s face. Her features are as
though cut in marble save that her white lips tremble a little. But she
gaineth courage to steady herself. The pride in her doth sustain her spirit.

Gravely, her eyes do regard the woman, going slowly from the head of
Salome to her feet. And soon, the insolent stare of that other doth drop
before her gaze. . . . Then, bowing her head politely, my domina answereth
with ice-like dignity and with no falter, now, of lips or voice.

In this wise doth her speech shape itself—That the information her visitor
hath brought—albeit not entirely unknown to her—hath still for her some
interest: and that the wife of Licinius Sura—as, rightly or wrongly, the lady
may please to style herself—should now rest satisfied, seeing that it is always
well for husband and wife to dwell in love and concord. But for herself,
she saith—one whose upbringing and conditions of life are of a different
order—she is convinced that love, whether within or without the bond of
marriage, is a thing not worth the troubling after . . . a distraction ‘tis
true, but for the hour only; and, after its passing, a fresh distraction
taketh its place. Yet since Licinius and his . . . companion . . . do hold
another view of love, Valeria doth hope it may yield them happiness. For
her own part, she is wearied by such form of amusement, and men have
ceased to interest her in that manner. . . . Verily, she doth consider herself
more fortunate than many a Roman matron, in that her husband doth not
too frequently seek her company. . . . As for bartering peace of mind and
the joy of calm, intellectual pursuits for the embraces of any man, she hath
seen the folly of such pleasurings and desireth them no further.

Then, again, she doth make a distant gesture of politeness and saith that
she hath an engagement a short time hence and that, since there can be
nothing more to discuss, she would bring this interview to a close.

Thus, in stately manner, she giveth the signal of dismissal, holding herself
erect and looking clear before her. Her hands press the arms of her chair.
Her head is high. She hath the air of being mistress of herself and of the
atmosphere. . . .

I am glad. . . . I am glad . . . my domina!

The woman standeth uncertain, abashed and yet defiant. . . . Now,
her face weareth a sullen look. Her eyes send forth a glance of baffled rage,
which doth fall beneath my domina’s strange unliving gaze. Then, she taketh
the boy by the hand and turneth as if to leave the court. . . . But before
passing beyond the fountain the woman stayeth her steps and, again, with
arrogant mien and the evil light burning in her long black eyes, she doth
face the Domina, her right arm raised as of one about to speed a parting
shaft barbed with deadly intent. She speaketh and there is daring insolence
in her tone. ‘Will the Domina permit me to deliver a message with which
I am charged by Licinius Sura?’

And, as my lady bendeth her head, uttering no word, the woman
continueth:

‘I have to say that Licinius hath received the Domina’s letter reminding
him of the promise she did exact from him—against his better judgment—
to be at her house this evening. And having no trustier messenger—for
the Domina is aware that Licinius hath now but a slave or two for his service
---he doth send the reply through my lips. I am bidden to tell the Domina that he doth regret he cannot keep the appointment, seeing that important business calls him elsewhere.

With the insult there cometh suddenly a great stain of red upon the marble whiteness of my domina's face. But she moveth not nor speaketh. And I, hearing the woman, would fain cry out, 'Thouliest,' so sure am I that Licinius did never send that message. . . . But I dare not. . . . And the woman, who hath waited a few moments, with a look on her face, meseems, of malicious expectation which changeth to somewhat of angry disappointment, doth proceed with her prating.

'Truly,' said she, 'it be a matter of weightier import than such pretty dalliance as he hath of late indulged in—and one that shall occupy Licinius Sura not only this night but many other days and nights in the future. . . . For, at dark, he goeth forth to the secret meeting-place of the Christians, there to confer with a certain high leader among that powerful body; one who hath a great following in Rome and in Asia Minor, and by whose aid the safe and swift carrying out of my husband's plans will be assured.'

Oh, now, do I need no more certain proof that the woman is lying to serve her own wicked ends than that she doth thus show her ignorance of that meek and gentle Body of the Church and of the Blessed Teacher who cometh to visit it. But I like not that she should name the Christians; and though I cannot believe that Licinius and this woman have any true association with them, her words do make me wonder. Yet, methinks, perchance some whispered breath of the Teacher's coming may have reached the woman's ear and she hath taken it to fit her purpose, as a fighter, whose weapons are spent, will snatch at any chance stick with which to do a hurt.

. . . And there be somewhat over-bold and reckless in the woman's voice and bearing which doth convince me of her falsity.

And still my domina moveth not. . . . But I see that a tremor doth faintly stir her limbs, and again in her eyes that wild and questing look, her mind seeming to cast about for deliverance from her agony. . . . And still, the woman, as if maddened by Valeria's scornful silence, doth prate stormily on, weighing not the perilous import of her revealings.

'Haply,' she sayeth, 'thou didst not believe when I told thee of the doings Licinius doth hide from thee but wherein I am his counsellor and his helper at need. Haply, thou knowest not that Jewish blood doth run in the veins of us both. 'Twas to serve my husband's interests that I stayed behind him in Judea and, at his command, have followed him to serve them by his side in Rome. 'Tis Licinius's nature that in my absence and for lack of man's work, he should turn to that love-pastime which hath ever been his folly, so long as it might chance to hold him. But now that duty, perforce, hath brought him to his senses he knoweth well that my love is the staff upon which he may most safely lean. And to-night it will be I and not thou, Domina, who shall await his return and the news of his prospering. And in my arms, not thine, shall he find comfort and fellowship in his labours for the reinstatement of our country and the welfare of our children.'

'Twas thus she spake—or somewhat in such fashion, for so great were my anger and my wonderment that I was like not to have taken in all her words. And when she had thrown her gibe, and still my domina answered not, she dropped her bold eyes and her insolent mien and then, smitten, methinks, by the white scorn upon my domina's face, she took the child
again by the hand and, turning her about, she went forth from Valeria’s presence.

All is quiet now in the court. I hear the fountains plashing and the distant murmuring through the heat-mist from the Campagna below. And I can hear the sound of the woman’s footsteps on the marble and the quicker pattering of the boy’s feet . . . and then, the movements of the door-keepers and of attendant slaves speeding from their waiting-chambers. But none of the Domina’s women may come before her until she giveth the summons. I, alone, have had that privilege . . .

Yet, to-day, do I seem afar-off—so long have I been parted from her nor had she given sign of desire for my return . . . And my mind seemeth all in strange confusion. Scarce can I tell whether it be with my bodily eyes or with the eyes of dream that I see her sitting there transfixed, and her gaze stark as that of a dead woman.

Well do I know that, verily, the sword hath pierced to her soul, and my domina’s pain is my pain; and my heart yearneth to her as, it seemeth to me, would yearn the heart of a mother to her nursling. Yet, can I do naught to relieve her suffering . . . naught . . . naught!

At last, she stirreth. A spasm doth shake her body, and she taketh her two hands from the arms of her chair, by which she had seemed to be holding herself in control, and she clutcheth her breast tight on its left side, swaying as if in agony greater than she hath strength to endure . . . Oh, my domina! . . . my domina!

Yet better for Valeria, methinks, that sharp, deep sword-thrust which destroyeth at a stroke, than lingering death by the slow poison of her ill-requited love . . . And I minded me how I had seen her prostrate, in bitter anguish, before Demeter’s shrine; and how, after time had passed and Licinius Sura had not yet come back into her life, she had recovered strength sufficient to find some measure of content in her lot . . .

Now, she maketh a strange, wailing, choking sound which doth tear my heart . . . Alas! the sword hath not slain her love . . . I cannot bear it . . . Oh, thou must not look . . . No one should see her like this . . .

She hath flung her arms across the window-sill and her head lieth upon them, and ever she maketh that terrible gasping moan . . .

I can feel that her mind is all darkness and confusion, and—worse far than that—doubt made certainty . . .

Oh, would I could tell her that the tale be not true . . . Could I but have reached her before the woman came . . . But I did not know . . . I can only see the picture . . . and now darkness riseth and covereth it from my sight . . .

The darkness doth confound my vision . . . There are some things not clear to me—some things of which I have no understanding . . . But I will go back—I know what thou dost want . . . I can go back and get thee what is needed.

This I would that thou shouldst comprehend . . . If thou hadst a bird whose wings were grown and then some one did clip them—well that is how it is with me—like the dropping of myself right down through space into one small cell . . . Methought I had done with it all . . . When I am up here it doth not seem that any of this were me . . . But I know that to get what thou dost want, it must be I, myself, who bring it . . . I must take up the old garment and put it on again . . .

Thou knowest that when a dreadful thing be past, if it were undeserved thou art lifted above the pain . . . It was I myself who had to go through
that pain. For the best part of me was Nyria then. And I knew that I need not go back. . . . But I will go—I am going. . . . Thou must hold me. . . . Oh!—it was so horrible. . . . I cannot do it now. . . ."

NYRIA (resuming): "I did turn me away, for it hurt me sore to see my lady's suffering. And as I looked out on the terrace, meseemed that from behind a pillar I caught the flutter of a red feather, such as Gregorio doth flaunt in his cap, and the wave of a mantle that he weareth when walking abroad. And methought that in his jealous spying he had hidden there and watched for what might hap between the Domina and the woman who had gained her way into her presence. And it angered and grieved me that the eyes of that prying slave should perchance have beheld my lady in her dire distress.

But when I turned me again I saw that Valeria had lifted herself out of her abasement. . . . Ah! she is brave, my domina! Her head was raised: she sat upright in her chair, and though her face was marred by weeping and her eyes were wild and stared with vacant gaze before her she had regained her air of marble-cold composure. Distraught she seemed, yet turned to stone. . . .

Now at the door of the entrance from the slaves' antechamber Aeola appeared and cried out in amaze at sight of me, for she knew not that I had returned. I hushed her quickly, and whispering that I would speak with her when I had made my obeisance to the Domina, bade her remain without. 'Methinks, the lord Martial waiteth,' she said.

Then, at the voice of Aeola, my wits came back to me, and I felt as one who hath awakened from a fearsome dream. But yet I knew that it had been no dream. Now, I supposed that Gregorio had met with Martial who, by pretended right of cousinship, had taken upon himself to enter by Valeria's private gate, and, the terrace being free to Gregorio, 'twas, mayhap, on account of Martial that he lingered there.

And now, while Aeola went back to her place and by the slaves' door I entered the court to my domina, I saw Gregorio run quickly past the wide opening between the pillars and, likewise, I saw that Martial advanced from beyond the grape trellis and that Gregorio stopped and conferred with him.

My domina looked at me in a strange, unseeing way as, rising from my reverence, I said to her that being now restored to health I had hastened back to take up my service at her command. . . . But so wild and strange was her look that it seemed she did not know me.

'Tis Nyria, Domina,' I said.

'Nyria!' she said after me: and it was as though my name brought to her little meaning. And my heart was chilled at this and at receiving no word of welcome. But I knew that her mind was far away, and I understood how great had been the shock which put her thus beyond herself: and, methought, 'I am but a slave who hath been absent and whom she hath forgotten.' Thou knowest, she hath a certain hardness, and though I never felt any bitterness it hath been in my mind that she could not care much for me because—save for that one great love—she hath no power of deep affection. She was ever kind to me, but I knew, when she let me do things for her, that it was just because she wanted them done and could trust me to do them faithfully.
Again I made obeisance. 'The Domina hath no commands?' I asked her, and she answered, meseemed, vexedly—'None. I need thee not.'

And when I craved permission to absent myself until the morning-robing, so that I might attend the Christian meeting and hear the Blessed John who was come from Ephesus, she said again, 'I need thee not. Go whither thou wilt': and I knew not whether she had taken the meaning of my words.

Fain would I have lingered but I dared not. There was naught she would have let me do and the day was already far spent. Stooping, I kissed her shoe that was stained with the ruby wine like blood, and, seeing that she made no movement to keep me, nor spake further word, I betook me from her presence.

Then Aeola—leaving Corella and the other women in the waiting-room—went with me to get some food which we ate together and, afterwards, I sought my little chamber and prepared myself for the meeting, to which I went forth as the sun was setting.'
CHAPTER XII

THE BETRAYAL

The Commentator upon the super-physical Level, speaking through the lips of the Instrument, points out various influences, political and personal, which are in operation in Rome at this crisis of Nyria’s history and, further, describes how Martial cunningly extracts from Valeria the secret of the Christians’ meeting-place.

The Commentator: “Again, it is well that I should try to clarify the situation, of which, to Nyria, in the darkness and confusion of her mind, many aspects are obscure.

Picking up the political threads, I must go back to the late summer and winter of A.D. 94, when Licinius Sura was in Palestine and the trials took place of Rufus, Orfitus, Acilius Glabrio, and of Apollonius of Tyana, and others in connection with reported conspiracies hatched in Judæa.

First, however, I should like to give you some particulars of the man—Marcus Licinius Sura—whom you are trying to trace in history. I believe I am right in saying that you will not find him in any of the available historic records and that, by this means, except inferentially, you will not be able to establish his identity.

This Marcus Licinius Sura, Valeria’s lover (who must not be confused with the historical Lucius Licinius Sura, the friend of Trajan and, later, owner of the Sura villa), was the son by a Jewess of the elder Sura and was legally adopted by his father into the Licinian gens, of which there were other important branches.

The irregularity of his succession to his father’s estate—though common enough and, by the Roman law of adoption, counting for nothing—may have been a reason for the slightly invidious manner in which he was regarded in the more exclusive ranks of Roman society, and by members of his own family.

Now, the one of these whom Marcus Licinius most disliked and even feared was that Lucius Licinius Sura referred to, who was, in fact, absent from Rome serving under Trajan during most of the period with which we are concerned.

Lucius Licinius Sura, it may be said, did not trouble himself much about Marcus Licinius. The only thing which concerned Lucius was the villa overlooking the Circus Maximus, which he coveted and had already tried to obtain.

There was another of the family also mentioned by historians—one, Palfurius Sura, rather a low type of character but a full-blooded Roman, about the same age, I should think, as Marcus, with a round bullet-head, black hair and beady, black eyes—a bit of a dandy, but without his cousin’s fine manners and good looks. For Marcus’s Jewish strain, grafted on to the Roman stock, produced an uncommonly handsome man of brains and breeding. The Jew showed breeding in beauty of form and artistic tendencies. The Roman shewed breeding in a certain strong type of manhood.
This little fellow, Palfurius Sura, held some small post—that of a kind of chamberlain—about the court. I won’t say that he was exactly an informer, but I should think it likely that he was in with Regulus against Marcus. When he could reach the ear of Domitian, he made use of his opportunities. Domitian despised Palfurius Sura but listened to him.

Concerning the plot to place Nerva on the imperial throne, and the trial at which Apollonius—acquitted—made his sensational disappearance and the evidence against Nerva broke down, there is no doubt that Nerva did have knowledge of the plot[^1] and that he lent himself to the idea of becoming emperor.

But Nerva was a mere catspaw. Though kind to all those personally dependent upon him—his soldiers loved him—he was without courage or moral backbone. His tendencies were Christian. Whether he became a Christian before his death is a moot point. Anyway, if he did, he suppressed the fact.

But he had two pulls in his favour—one that he was a good figure-head: the other that Domitian was afraid—not of Nerva himself—you had only to look at Nerva not to be afraid of him—but because of the Chaldaean prophecy that Domitian must beware of Nerva. That prophecy was Nerva’s chief weapon: it gave him a sort of false courage.

Nerva held an appointment in Judaea and the chief reason of Apollonius’s impeachment was that he had gone to Judaea to visit Nerva. In reality, the object of Apollonius’s visit was to persuade Nerva to drop the plot, telling him that Domitian’s hour was not yet come and that there was no use in doing anything before that hour should strike.

Marcus Licinius Sura’s mission was, on the contrary, to foment the plot, secure Nerva’s co-operation and stir up disaffection in Judaea.

But rumours of Judaean machinations still filled Domitian with dread. The imperial mood was dark and incalculable. No one could tell who would be the next victim of Caesar’s suspicions. Licinius hesitated on his way back from Judaea. You will understand that, though he never wrote to Valeria, he kept up communication with Salome. She no longer lived at the villa but partly in a cheap lodging in Rome and partly in the country, Licinius supplying her with money for herself and the child.

Salome had a vulgar kind of cleverness and she had the interests of Licinius at heart. All she wanted was to get him back under her influence. She had heard through some underground channel that he was suspected of complicity in the Judaean plots and that were he to return to Rome he would be arrested and perhaps condemned. She resolved to start at once and prevent his coming.

To do this she raised money by selling her jewellery, took the boy with her, met Sura on the borders of Palestine and stopped him from going further, naturally making the most of the danger she had run and the danger she was helping him to avoid.

Of course the man was touched though he felt the woman a nuisance and, when she implored him to take her back to live with him, showed distinct disinclination to do so. He had enough on hand, as it was, and did not want to encumber himself with a mistress. But Salome knew how to play upon his weakness and soon their former relations were resumed.

Salome had never known the full extent of Licinius’s plotting. But she

[^1]: The Edessa plot against Domitian involving Nerva, Apollonius of Tyana and others. See Appendix 24, Bk. III.
had gathered enough to put two and two together and found out a great deal more than Licinius had ever intended her to learn. For, beneath his apparently candid charm of manner, Marcus Licinius Sura was a very secretive person.

Of course the complete resumption of his liaison with Valeria complicated the position as regards Salome. Marcus Licinius had a strong streak of recklessness in his nature or he never would have allowed his reawakened passion for Valeria to lead him into a danger which he might certainly have foreseen.

He had been chosen for the Jewish propaganda chiefly on account of his Jewish blood. There was sincerity in his desire to free his mother’s country, but another and more powerful incentive was the knowledge that the success of his enterprise would enormously enhance his own prestige and improve his worldly prospects. For Marcus Licinius Sura was, comparatively, a poor man.

The plotters were prepared to wait for definite action till their plans had fully matured. Meanwhile, Licinius Sura and Nerva were working in with the Christians, and Licinius had been deputed to scour the length and breadth of Judaea in order to ascertain the political bent of the people and, more especially, of the Christian population.

Before he went to Judaea, he had known nothing about the Christians except from outside report. Now, when he began ferreting round in the endeavour to ingratiate himself with the Judaean population, in order to study their mode of thought and investigate their religious grievances, he discovered among the orthodox Jews a stronger feeling of animosity against their Christian brethren than he had expected to find.

Sura was wise enough to see that this party spirit would interfere with his revolutionary scheme, and he realised that he knew too little of the Christians in Rome to judge of the nature of their support. After he had been about a year in Judaea, it seemed to him best that he should return quietly to Rome and study the conditions there. He understood that the number of Christians was increasing rapidly all through the empire, and that, with the exception of a few malcontent hotheads, they were a placable set, leading secluded lives, not coming before the public as spectators of shows and participants in holiday excitements, and asking only to be allowed to worship their—as Licinius considered—strange god, without molestation. Marcus Licinius Sura had no fanatical stuff in his composition, being rather an advocate of tolerance in the matter of religion, but he was superstitious, and the Chaldean prophecy might well have influenced his political opinions. In any case, he felt that this large and malleable section of the community might prove a useful factor in an uprising for the redistribution of power.

He thought that he could, at a given signal, command a united body of all the Christians in Rome, backed by several thousands in Judaea and more thousands in other parts of the empire, who would be delighted to accept liberty of creed at the hands of pro-Christian Nerva. And were these, again, backed by some of the leading spirits and combined with their followers among the better classes in Rome—then, he felt there would be every prospect of a revolt bringing about the downfall of Domitian and an era of peaceful government under Nerva and his successors.

But Licinius was not aware of the counterplot against himself nor of how closely he was shadowed.

Regulus and Martial had joined forces. Gregorio was a tool employed by both, though, in his heart, Martial had a contempt for the Greek boy and would not have been ill-pleased to dispense with his services.
Martial’s scent had become keener since he had discovered that Regulus, also, was after Licinius Sura. That came to his knowledge through Thanna. Not that Thanna had betrayed Regulus, but finding that Martial hunted the same quarry, though from a different motive, she had decided with Regulus, who was cunning in his profession of informer, that he should improve his acquaintance with Martial and make use of him as an ally. Martial was frequently with Thanna—that introduction having been effected by Gregorio—and the matter was freely discussed by the principals of the two parties.

Now, Regulus had long ago learned the object of Licinius Sura’s visit to Judæa and of his unostentatious return to Rome. He was aware that Licinius had only just escaped being included in the impeachment, some months before, of Nerva and his followers, and that he was now endeavouring to incite the Christians to aid in a general rising. He knew also that an important leader of the Christians was visiting Rome and that a special meeting of the Band had been convened. But so closely did the Christians guard their secrets that he could not find out where the meeting was to be held.

Regulus, after the usual practice of informers, had spies all over the city. It struck him that Valeria, on account of her relations with Licinius, might be in Sura’s confidence and that he might contrive to obtain through her the information he wanted. But he had not found it easy—though he had attended her winter literary parties—to get into sufficiently close touch with Valeria. Here, Regulus made use of Martial, promising a proportion of the State reward if Martial could put him in the way of having Licinius arrested in circumstances justifying the accusation of treason.

Martial had got an inkling that the assembly of Christians was imminent, but he too had found it impossible to ascertain the place of worship of the sect and to-day he was calling at the villa on the Cælian in the hope that he might by some means entrap Valeria, perhaps unwittingly, into giving him an indication. He guessed—but could not be certain—that Licinius would compromise himself by attending the Christians’ gathering, which he assumed would have a revolutionary bent. Therefore, all was ready for a surprise of the Christian camp if only they could be sure of their prey.

The visit of Salome to Valeria was an impetuous step on the part of the former, taken without the knowledge of Licinius or of Martial and his allies. Nor, of course, had Salome any idea of the assault they contemplated. Salome, as Nyria rightly conjectured, was not in the confidence of Licinius and, in reality, knew very little from him of his activities in Judæa and only by accident of his project for that evening. Most of what she did know she had learned by adroit questioning, putting two and two together, and by tampering with his correspondence. Had she not intercepted Valeria’s letter to him, she could not have put up the bluff she did put up or thus have shot her last bolt.

Naturally, the spying party did not want Salome to discover that Licinius was sought for by officers of the State. Her unconscious part in the affair was left to the diplomacy of Thanna, who represented to Salome that the sympathies of herself and Regulus were entirely with the discarded wife, as they pretended to regard her. Salome only knew of Regulus that he had been on Licinius’s track, in what was called the Edessa conspiracy, but she believed that was all past and did not realise that Regulus always hunted down any political suspect, from whose capture he hoped to derive pro-
fessional profit, with a keener and more implacable spirit of vengeance from the fact that he had once eluded the informer's vigilance.

Thanna only spoke of Regulus to Salome as a kind and generous lord to whom she was sincerely attached, and took care not to arouse suspicion or fear in Salome's mind.

Thus, Martial on his arrival at the villa to see Valeria was somewhat taken aback to find that Salome was just before him. It had been planned that Gregorio should admit Martial so that Valeria would not be able to avoid seeing him. Gregorio, therefore, ran to inform Martial who had waited while the Greek boy did his eavesdropping.

Martial had come in by the private gate and remained out of sight in Valeria's garden. It would not have been dignified for Martial to be caught spying through the fretwork of the court, whereas Gregorio, if he were seen, could easily explain his presence.

As Salome was making her exit, Gregorio rushed back and in a few words told Martial the gist of the conversation. Then it occurred to Martial that unless he saw Valeria at once, Salome's visit would have so upset her that he might not be able to see her at all, and he bade Gregorio announce him without preliminary warning.

During those few minutes, Nyria was speaking to Valeria and, when Nyria went out, Gregorio brought in Martial, who was astute enough to perceive that Salome's course of action had prepared the ground for his own."

COMMENTATOR (continuing): "Now, with regard to the scene between the two women which Nyria has just described, you will understand that the girl had barely recovered from the effects of that malarial fever, aggravated by worry of mind, for which Stephanus had sent her to the purer air of the hills; and being, as you know, one of those curious half-disembodied creatures for whom there was at all times but the thinnest veil between physical and non-physical existence, she was in, her present condition, more liable than usual to confuse them with each other.

Hence, her uncertainty, at moments, as to whether she were really present in her body on that occasion or was viewing the scene, as she says, 'in a picture' or 'from the Beyond.'

She had, in fact, arrived almost immediately on the opening of the scene and had stood in the rear seeing and hearing everything but not fully taking it into her everyday consciousness. For, not having yet spoken to Valeria and being ignorant of the doings at the villa during her absence, she was largely making use of her intuitional faculty.

Then, the final catastrophe, falling upon her so soon afterwards, blurred later her physical memory, and this accounts for the occasional incoherence of her utterance.

Immediately upon the Salome scene, came the scene between Valeria and Martial—which is of great importance in the sudden development of the tragedy—a scene that Nyria did not witness and of which she knew nothing when setting forth for the Christian meeting, but of which the result—when it was realised—intensified her bewilderment.

I will give you the colour and actual detail of what passed—not as Nyria had she been present at the time, would give it, but with sufficient of the spirit and of the dialogue to enable you to depict the scene."

...
In presenting the following scene, I have followed the above instructions and—seeing that although the Commentator's words were spoken through the Instrument's mouth, Nyria herself had no part in them—I have ventured, while dealing faithfully with the indications supplied, to adopt, in very limited measure, the novelist's method and to fill in gaps, here and there, where the verbal setting appeared to be inadequate.

When Gregorio ushered Martial into the court and retired again behind its creeper-screened fretwork, Valeria was sitting vacant and distraught as Nyria had left her. She did not appear to have heard the poet's name, and Martial, quivering with excitement, found it difficult for the first minute or two to compose himself as an ordinary visitor.

Martial had a temperamental peculiarity not often noticeable because he was seldom nervous and it only overtook him at a crisis when he was not sure of his ground. The peculiarity was that at such times he seemed physically unable to keep his body still.

He advanced to Valeria with an airy, curvetting movement and slightly exaggerated bow, and his opening remark was a fulsome compliment, such as—she had already told him—she disliked to receive from her friends. And Martial, delighted at the implication of friendship with her, had tried to get himself out of the habit of making them.

But now, 'Most Exquisite,' he began, 'to this poor poet who has been tramping the streets of Rome, thou in thy pale green robe resting amid fountains and with flowers around thee and at thy feet, dost verily resemble a goddess in her shrine.'

Valeria made no answer. She just looked at him with eyes that did not seem to see him, though, in a dull way, she knew that he was there.

Martial realised her mental condition. His glance was keen and his wits were alert. He seized the significance of the scene—saw the red pool of spilled wine beside the broken glass on the marble pavement, the stain, like blood, upon her dress and her embroidered shoe and some fresh-gathered flowers which Salome, when she pulled the boy roughly away, had shaken out of her child's hand to the floor, at the Domina's feet. And, most of all, was he impressed by the attitude and appearance of Valeria herself, as she sat limp and huddled in her cushioned, inlaid arm-chair, her hands hanging loosely by her sides, her neck—usually suggesting statuesque dignity—sunk between her shoulders, her face white and death-like; the only live thing in it, her eyes, which stared out from between red-rimmed lids, the eye-balls flushed, and with the look of a ferocious animal rousing slowly to the desire for prey.

Her silence embarrassed Martial. He made one or two of those curvetting steps and, performing another bow, delivered some further florid remark upon the contrast her delightful interior presented to the thunderous heat outside.

'The atmosphere, it would appear, is in sympathy with the mood of Rome itself,' he said, 'for, assuredly, the seething passions of the city are likewise gathering up for a storm.'

Valeria still only stared blankly at him, and he went on in this strain, saying, 'That there has been much ferment beneath the surface in Rome
of late, and that to all thoughtful minds it would be cause for thankfulness did
the tempest burst, so that it bring about justice and the redress of wrongs.'

And, while Valeria remained silent, he added, meaningly, 'I speak of
redress for private as well as for political wrongs, and I speak, not of justice
in the future but of immediate justice.'

Valeria made no response. All Martial’s powers of observation were
focused upon the one point. He could not help making fussy movements,
thus working off his own agitation but never losing sight of his aim, and
deliberately weighing every sentence that he uttered. ‘The Most Noble
Valeria must feel with me that it would indeed be an offence against the
gods if, in Rome—once the nursery of truth and loyalty—perfidy were not
punished and justice paid where justice is due.’

There crept a flicker of comprehension into Valeria’s blind, suffused eyes.
She murmured heavily one word, ‘Justice.’

Martial saw that the thought had found entrance to her mind and dwelt
upon it. ‘Ay! Justice, dear lady. Is it not a decree of the old Greek gods
that justice must be meted to those who have justly suffered?’

‘Suffered.’ . . . She spoke in a husky whisper, as if groping after a lost
cue. Martial’s eyes never left her face. He continued, enunciating his
words with great distinctness:

‘The thing which doth move me most, Valeria, is that suffering which
comes to a noble heart from having put too great faith in fickle man. I
pray that the gods may preserve thee from this anguish of misplaced faith.’

Again she repeated after him the word ‘Faith.’ . . .

It was plain that the chords of her emotion vibrated only on certain notes;
and he proceeded, speaking slowly and impressively:

‘Thou knowest well, Valeria, that suffering of the kind I mean falls most
often upon women. Yet a high-born woman speaks not of her wrongs but
conceals such wounds, and, in proud silence, endures her humiliation. In
this, I honour her, though, methinks, that to accept outrage dumbly, is an
offence against eternal justice. Compensation is a law of nature and, for
my own part, gladly would I aid one who had suffered insult wrongfully in
order to obtain a just revenge.’

The word ‘revenge’ appeared to pierce to her intelligence. She repeated
it to herself twice in the same hoarse whisper, and Martial felt that those
single words, one after the other, had hammered their way into her brain
and were linking an incomplete chain of thought. Going nearer, almost
grovelling before her, he exclaimed fervidly: ‘Oh, would that it were in
Martial’s power to protect those whom he adores from pain—or, if too late
to shield, that he might avenge their wrongs!’

She seemed to be listening intently, the stony set of her features relaxing.

‘Were the wrongs thine, for instance, dearest lady,’ Martial cried—‘if,
by unhappy chance, sorrow had fallen on thee through the treacherous
cruelty of one whom thou hadst trusted. Then, verily, mightst thou
command Martial’s arm to strike a blow which, haply, thy woman’s hand
hath not strength to deal.’

A sudden, wild look of understanding came into Valeria’s face. Martial
noted it triumphantly. But his direct overture caused in her a certain
recoil. Her nobler self sensed a temptation against which she unconsciously
rebelled. And this revolt of her soul was translated for the moment into
physical revulsion from the cringing creature before her. She drew back
and raised her arms, trembling as she uttered a shuddering ‘A . . . ah!’
Martial perceived that he had erred and, in an instant, was erect again standing a pace or two from her, now dropping his somewhat theatrical manner and speaking with an air of calm reasonableness. 'I am foolish,' he said quietly, 'to talk thus to one so highly placed as the Domina Valeria. How should any wrong befall such an one for which her most devoted friend could find cause for vengeance? A man must needs wait for some possible emergency in which to prove his loyalty to thee.'

Valeria's upraised arms dropped, but not limp as before. She sat in her customary attitude, with her elbows and hands resting on the broad arm of her chair, her attention fixed upon the man as if she were trying to grasp his real meaning.

Martial looked at her keenly and changed his tone. 'Strange that this subject should have arisen,' he said. 'I came not here to speak of personal vengeance, though it is true that my mind has been full of the question of political vengeance. Haply, Valeria, 'twas that which made me think how ill I could bear it did anyone act perfidiously by thee.'

But he did not then press that point further. He turned as he spoke and took a stool near her. Now, his gesticulatory restlessness seemed to have abated. He was no longer nervous, for he felt more sure of himself and of her. He began talking with almost an appearance of unconcern, nevertheless, studying her closely the while, and, presently, going back to the subject he had started on arrival—the seething undercurrents of sedition in Rome—saying, in a quiet persuasive manner, 'I know that thou dost seldom care to bestow thine attention upon State matters, Domina, but all must surely now be interested in upholding Caesar who, whatever his private life may be, claims as Cæsar the service of all true Romans. Mayhap, thou hast heard that he is sore disturbed by rumours of another plot against him and is anxious to discover if they be well-founded, though, I am told, that he is prepared to deal most leniently with the offenders if they belong, as 'tis said, to the conquered Jewish race. Suspicion pointeth to the Christians; but I scarce think that among that rabble there can be any persons of sufficient note to instigate a conspiracy. It would be a good thing, however, if a party of Christians could be caught worshipping or conferring together so that Cæsar might assure himself as to whether there be any truth in these whispers of a rising in that quarter. Most likely, the tale is false and the Christians would find their case the better for their innocence being publicly asserted.'

Valeria's brows were drawn together over her drooped eyes. Martial waited to see if she would speak, before he said, tentatively: 'Such action, if it be but the fluttering of a nest of silly fanatics, may alarm malcontents and lighten the clouds over Rome—to say nothing of easing Cæsar's anxiety. Well would it be if the minds of peaceful citizens could be cleared of doubt. It doth make heavy hearts to think that one who has, perhaps, been held dear, and in close, familiar intercourse by some of us, may be proved a traitor, having repaid our trust with deceit and our love with treachery.'

Again the thrust pierced Valeria's torpid brain. A slight moaning sound forced its way from her throat. 'Nevertheless,' said Martial, 'far better is it to know the truth and to wipe out such traitorous friend or lover for ever from one's life.'

Valeria made a sudden movement. Drawing herself together, she lifted
her elbows from the arms of her chair and put both hands up to her forehead as if to brush something away. Then, clasping them against her breast, she leaned forward, her lips parted but making no sound.

. . . There was a long pause . . .

Then Martial bent forward too, and said with emphasis:

'I have it in my mind to search out the meeting-place of these Christians and to supply a small body of them for the stilling of Caesar's fears.'

This time, Valeria addressed him, bringing out her words slowly and hoarsely.

'What . . . wouldst . . . do?'

'Do, dear lady? Take a dozen or so to Caesar's basilica and there let them answer for themselves.'

'But haply . . . haply . . .' she gasped, 'Caesar . . . might . . . condemn.'

'Ay! Condemn them to tell the truth and then pack them off as he did those youths of the house of David—dost remember? . . . Caesar harms no riff-raff of that sort. He doth reserve his vengeance for such as are worth it. Run thy mind, Domina, over the names of those that he hath sent to death and thou'llt see they were Romans and all men of note, and that others against whom the charge was not proven, he left unharmed.'

'True,' she answered. And then slowly, 'But if, haply, there were a Roman citizen among the Christians . . . of more note than they?'

Martial shrugged. 'He would receive a lesson and one deserved, for a Roman citizen of any note should understand that such associations are not befitting a man of position. But Caesar sickens of the shedding of blood. He might only frighten the fellow by one of his fantastic tricks. Or, at worst, he might give a sentence of banishment for a few months. Then, time would be allowed for cool reflection and the whole affair be soon forgotten.'

Valeria leaned back, her brows drawn close, her eyes again drooped, her hands folded upon her lap and showing the blue veins on their whiteness so tense was their clench.

Martial affected to dismiss the matter.

'It may not be easy to find the nest of these Christians. . . . And yet . . .'

He bent his chin between his thumb and forefinger, his gaze glued to Valeria's face as he affected to consider. . . . 'And yet, I have bethought me that I might. . . . Their place of meeting for the worship of their crucified God is, report says, outside the city . . . among the underground tombs. Methinks I can guess the whereabouts. . . . One would take the road that passes down . . . below . . . below the Esquiline. . . .'

'Nay,' she interrupted, rousing suddenly, putting out her hand and pointing before her: 'The path passes down behind the Aventine, where it joins one that circles the hill's base, having come forth from the city by a road. . . . But I know not the road for I have not been that way.'

'Nay, nay, the Most Noble Valeria doth not of course enter those low parts of the city,' rejoined Martial with forced quietude. . . . 'But the path behind the Aventine. . . . Perchance thou hast come upon it in thy rambles?'

'Ay,' she answered in an absent voice, her eyes following where her finger slowly pointed. 'There is a knoll—far beyond the houses—a wild, unfrequented knoll which jutted out some way past the Navian Gate.2 Thou

1 Grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, brought before Domitian. See Appendix 25, Bk. III.

2 The knoll which jutted out some way past the Navian Gate. See Appendix 26, Bk. III.
canst gain it by winding along the descent, leaving to thy right the road which goeth to Diana's temple and taking thy way leftward to where the hill seemeth to divide.

' Ay . . . ay . . . and then ?'

' Then, mount to the knoll by a steep goat-track that takes thee to its verge —it's a lonely spot far from any habitation and only goats wander there for the herbage,' she answered dreamily.

' And then ? ' he repeated with ill-controlled eagerness.

' When thou art on the hill-brow which doth face the Tiber's course and the tombs of the Appian Way thou'lt see, close beneath thee, a landslip and a ledge of crumbling wall over which thou mayst watch the Christians as they pass along a narrow path below . . . .'

' And whither—whither go they ? . . . And how to reach them ?'

' They wind along the path descending and disappearing where lie the ancient quarries which are worked no more. Methinks, there is another goat-track descending to that path, but it is very steep and I have but seen it from above.'

Breathless with excitement, he asked, ' And at what time go they thither ?'

' Towards nightfall, mostly, methinks,' she answered in the same dreamy voice.

' And how may a man find their meeting-place ? ' Unable, now, to keep still, he had risen, and his question came low and imperatively as he bent over her: but he tried to maintain a level tone lest by raising his voice he should break the spell that seemed upon her. She still pointed with her finger, slowly tracing the direction.

' The lower path doth turn, I have been told, and if thou followest it along the Quarries' edge thou'lt reach a little valley betwixt the sides of the hill. There, the red rocks arise on either hand like walls, and they close in and strew the open space . . . Then, as thou goest—I have been told . . . .'

The finger stopped.

' Ay, ay—thou wert told ? —Then—as thou goest—is it there, the meeting-place ?'

' Go where the rocks draw close '—she pointed again—' thou'lt find a crevice by which a man may enter though creepers cover it. I have been told it is by a great twisted thorn . . . But go not in, lest thou lose thyself amid the labyrinth of caves. I have been told, likewise, that only those who have learned the clues come forth alive.' She paused, her hand uplifted, her eyes, with a fierce gleam in them which startled him, straining as if they beheld something that was not there: and on her lips was a strange smile.

Martial's blood ran free again. He had been like to choke in his anxiety. ' Thou hast told me all but this,' he said. ' Knowest thou when the Christians next meet ?'

' To-night,' she answered. . . . ' To-night he will be there. He goeth to hear the stranger speak and, haply, to enlist his aid. But she—she awaiteth his return.' Valeria's voice broke in a horrible raucous sound that convulsed her throat.

' Be content,' cried Martial. ' She will await him long. To-night, at least, he shall woo solitude within the cells': and Martial burst into an impishly exultant laugh.

Now he understood the nature of the shock that had turned this cold, proud woman into an emotional puppet which he had cleverly moved to serve his purpose.
And she had served it well. He had succeeded far beyond his hopes. Never could he have believed that Valeria was capable of this blind passion of love and hate. Now he knew. He read her right through. His poet’s brain seized the picture which filled her frenzied imagination—the picture of her triumphant rival waiting... waiting in vain for Licinius’s return.

And, in truth, that was the only thought alive in her. It was like a lurid light in the blackness of her hell. What did the Christians matter to her?... What did anything matter but that she must do something swift and deadly?... Something to avenge the insult which had humiliated and maddened her. She never gave a moment’s consideration to Nyria. She had been out of her life these many weeks past. Nyria, whom she had trusted to do things for her that she would have trusted to no one else, was of no use to her now. If Valeria had even taken in the fact of the girl’s return and of her request to be allowed to attend the meeting in the Christians’ chapel, the whole episode had made so little impression upon her that Martial’s visit had wiped it from her remembrance.

Martial, individually, was nothing to her either. She never noticed him as he made excited movements round her chair, almost gibbering in his delight at having done so well for himself.

Primarily, the man was after money. He saw his lean purse refilled by this lucky stroke. Two thousand sestertia! He could count on that—or more—from Paulinus for proof of Valeria’s infidelity. And if his information should lead to the trapping of Licinius Sura there would be the share of Regulus’s big reward from the State. A double stake for the winning.

In his exultation, he forgot to act his part. He made a false step. Going eagerly towards Valeria, he bent over her and put his hand upon her arm, clutching it with more force than he was aware of.

' Domina, I thank thee. By Até we shall have them now. Thou and I should stand high in Caesar’s favour after this. He hath no great love for Licinius Sura. And thou—thy revenge is in thine own hand and in mine. . . .'

The pressure of the man's fingers upon her bare flesh, roused Valeria as a rough touch might startle a somnambulist out of her sleep-trance. She gave a violent start and, staring dazedly at Martial, seemed for the first time to recognise him, while the utterance of Licinius Sura’s name, which he had hitherto avoided, made her realise, in part, the significance of his words.

He delayed no longer. ' Forgive me, Domina,' he said. ' It draws on to sunset and I must hasten, for there are preparations to be made.'

Again, he bowed to her profoundly, and taking his cap waved it in a flourishing salute while, literally dancing down the court, he went out beneath the grape-hung archway. Valeria had risen from her chair. As she turned her head towards his retreating figure, she glanced down upon her arm where the red mark of Martial’s clutching fingers shewed upon her bare flesh.

The sight of that mark seemed to unlock her brain. She gave a stifled shriek, and an expression of horror and awakened comprehension came upon her face. She advanced mechanically into the middle of the court and, with her arms raised a little before her, stood motionless, watching Martial disappear along the terrace. There was a dreadful wonder in her gaze.

' What have I done? ' she said. ' . . . What . . . have I done? '

Then, as she stood there, her face changed. Out of its dark terror and puzzlement, grew a horrible look of exultant vengeance, and then the face was slowly lightened by the evil counterpart of a smile. Her arms dropped.
Her face, with the evil smile still upon it, thrust itself forward in an avid, mocking way.

‘She waits for him,’ Valeria said. ‘Ay... but the waiting will be long.’”

COMMENTATOR (resuming): “Let me help you a little further in unravelling the tangled threads by giving you a few words about Aeola. You will see my reason for this later.

Aeola, you understand, was the only one of the slaves in Valeria’s household in whom Nyria placed confidence. This, because of the manner in which they had first been brought together during the Domina’s illness at Saturnalia time and, afterwards, by the gradual closeness of Aeola’s attendance with Nyria upon their mistress, which made it inevitable that Aeola should gain some knowledge of the relations between Valeria and Licinius Sura.

Aeola was a tender-hearted, impressionable being and very susceptible to Nyria’s influence. Thus, when Nyria became a Christian, Aeola wished to learn something of the new religion and, in the beginning, Nyria took her to two or three of the services though, Aeola being outside the pale of the Church, had to submit to the restriction imposed upon any friend of a member of the body when going to the chapel—that she should be blindfolded so that she might not discover the secret of its position.

The result was that Aeola became deeply interested in Nyria’s religion, and, infected by Nyria’s enthusiasm, and perhaps impressed by the fact that persons of such high degree as the Domina Domitilla and her husband favoured the new faith, she was receiving instruction and it had been settled that she should soon be baptised.

But Aeola cared more for Crispus than for any religion; and, moreover—sweet loyal little creature as she was—had not the stuff in her for real staunchness to a more or less proscribed creed. However, Crispus, though he regarded the Christian tenets with contempt, nevertheless made no opposition to Aeola’s new predilection, for, seeing that Nyria had improved enormously in health and mental tone and that she insisted upon attributing her improvement to having become a Christian, he thought Aeola could get no harm from sharing to a small extent in her advantages, though, for his own part, Crispus declared the old gods were good enough for him. But then, apart from his devotion to Aeola, Crispus was wrapped up in his profession and was working hard to obtain the privileges appertaining to the gladiatorial vocation.

For I think I am right in saying that a gladiator who had distinguished himself above all other gladiators at a certain number of provincial shows, was entitled to claim the silver prize—a considerable sum of money in silver set apart from State funds to provide rewards for combatants at the public games. And, further, that he who vanquished the existing champions at the great games in Rome received the golden prize, which meant, not only a very large sum in gold but, also, the right to retire, if he pleased, from future public contests. And this was the ambition of Crispus in order that he might gain money enough to buy Aeola’s freedom and keep her in comfort as his wife.

Now, that is all I wanted to say about Aeola’s affairs, and Nyria will again take possession of the Instrument.”
CHAPTER XIII

SPAKE THE BLESSED JOHN

Nyria tells of how she went forth to the meeting-place of the Christians to see
the Blessed John, and of how Thanna overtook and warned her of certain
evil that should befall: then of the coming among them of the Blessed John
and of the comforting words he spake concerning the Love of God and the
duty of love among men.

NYRIA: "Now, when I left the house, though my heart was heavy for my
doma, I felt wellnigh happy because I was going to see the Blessed John,
and because I was glad to be again with mine own people. In truth, so the
Christians seemed to me, for, thou knowest, to one who hath no kin, 'tis joy
to be thus attached. And we, being taught to look upon each other as
brethren, though, so far, I had had no great commerce with the Christians
save in the chapel, yet I had grown, from worshipping with them, to feel
myself one of their body. Therefore, was I very glad to be once more with
them.

And, likewise, when I tried to remember that which I had seen since my
return and the taunting words Salome had spoken—in the which, alack!
my reason told me there might well be somewhat of truth, seeing how oft
Licinius had failed my domina—yet was my heart a little eased concerning
Valeria. For, verily, though I mourned because of her present suffering, it
seemed to me that in the end she would be happier were that ill-boding love
altogether removed.

For I feared, indeed, that naught but trouble would come to her from
dealings with Licinius Sura.

But my mind was greatly confused concerning that evil woman's tale and
I scarce could tell if all that had seemed to happen were real or whether,
mayhap, the fever had got hold of me again, as, verily, it might have done,
seeing that I had made the long journey in the heat and, save for a little
milk, had tasted nothing since daybreak. And I think there may have been
some cause in this. For I felt stronger and of clearer mind since I had eaten
with Aeola and had rested and prayed for a brief space in my own little
chamber.

Thus pondering, after having gone out through the little gate in the wall,
I walked down the hill, and I had not descended far when I saw Martial
before me and, with him, the boy Gregorio. Martial did anger me—I knew
it was not fitting for a Christian to be angered, but meseemed that Martial
bore himself not as a lord should—holding converse in such fashion with
slaves. I liked not to call him 'lord.'

He was walking—thou knowest he was not rich enough always to com-
mand a litter—and Gregorio walked beside him, laughing and talking over
his shoulder and seeming in great excitement. And as they went on in front
of me, I saw, approaching, two goodly figures of man and woman, of whom one was Thanna and the other her lord, Regulus.

Now I had not seen them before together, and I looked at the lord Regulus to see what like he might be toward her. But they, seeing Martial, did stop to speak, and just before they stopped, Martial turned and bade Gregorio leave him. That I knew by the sign he gave, and I saw that Gregorio was unwilling to go. Nevertheless, Martial compelled him, and he came back past me in wrath so that he scarce noticed me. Haply, he thought not to see me there, supposing I was out of Rome.

Then I, coming slowly down the hill, beheld that these two lords did talk freely before Thanna, who stood by them and did also speak, shewing much interest, and I heard Martial say that 'twas a pity Caesar was at Albanum. But the lord Regulus replied that he held Caesar's signed permit to do that which he himself should deem best. 'But,' said he, 'Caesar will return from Albanum to see the fun, for Caesar loves sport, and he hath had no such quarry of late.'

This I caught as I went by, not looking up, but Thanna must have seen me for she left the two lords and ran down the road behind me. Now, she overtook me near the gate of Licinius Sura's house, and just as she approached I did hear the voice of the little child within the court and, now, he seemed to be playing merrily, and I knew that the woman Salome had returned. Thanna called to me to stop; but when this I did, she, likewise hearing the sound of the child, glanced over the wall and said:

'Nay—haste thee on, Nyria—I would speak to thee, but not here. Go round yon curve...' The which I did quickly, for I had no mind to linger, seeing that time pressed for me and I was eager to be gone.

Now, I heard the lords' voices raised in some sort of discussion, and then they lowered them, suddenly, as Thanna ran back and spoke to them and, methought, I heard her say they should not speak thus loud, for walls have ears.

On she came to me, and put her arm in mine, and said that 'twas long since she had seen me; whereat I told her I had been out of Rome.

'And what did thy lady in thine absence?' she asked.

I said, 'My lady did right well.' But I had no mind to talk of my lady with Thanna, and, in truth, I felt sore that Valeria had not missed me, and though my domina was not one to open her lips freely, methought she might have shewn that she was glad of my return.

But I knew that she cared little for anght save Licinius and, methought, that perchance she had been vexed because of him. So now I kept silence. ... But, thou knowest, Thanna was never one to take a hint.

'Hast thou power with thy lady?' she asked. Whereat I shook my head. I would not say either way.

'I trow thou hast not,' said Thanna, 'for thou didst never make the most of thy chances, Nyria. Had thy mistress been mine, I'd have learned to rule her long since—even as I rule my lord.'

'Haply, I have not thy ways, Thanna,' I said.

'Thou hadst best adopt them if thou wouldst save suffering to thy domina and to thyself,' said Thanna. 'Look thee here, Nyria, I am minded to warn thee, though the gods alone know why I should, for it is in no one's interest save that of this milk-faced lady of thine. But thou carest for her I well know. See now, it is no secret that she hath stooped herself to the ways of other dames and visits, as a lover, at yonder villa. I would urge thee to
keep her away from Licinius Sura if thou canst, for, if thou dost not, no good to her will come of it.'

To that I answered Thanna that my lady was doubtless interested in Licinius Sura, seeing that there hath been long acquaintanceship between them, but that their friendship—if 'twere such—could be but of small account.

Now, I would have thee understand that when I spoke in such manner to Thanna, I had the belief that all was over between Valeria and Licinius Sura, and that thus 'twas permitted me so to say without taking on me the sin of lying. For I had never forgotten that lie I told Paulinus, and I desired not to lie again: and though no harm had come of it, yet the remembrance lay ever heavy upon me.

Whereon Thanna said, 'Then is she the more ill-advised, for even Roman ladies, who have seldom aught of wit at their finger-ends, place not themselves in such positions of chance as hath Valeria.'

The which, alas! I could not deny, but I liked not to listen to such words, and I suppose that I shewed Thanna I was displeased.

'Thou art foolish, Nyria,' said she. 'See, what doth Thanna gain by warning thee thus? Naught: and thou knowest, Thanna doth not disturb the broth unless there be gold at the bottom. 'Tis for thine own sake, for I would not have thee troubled by the sight of such sorrow as may fall on Valeria if she do persist in her ways. Thou knowest, this Salome hath claim on yonder half-breed lord—which she is like to make good, seeing that her tie of race-blood be a knot that secures the bond. Now,' she added, 'take my word for it, Nyria, Valeria had best leave Licinius to Salome, for Salome is no mean opponent to be reckoned with.'

After that, she said that she had a sympathy with likely love-affairs but that, for her part, she saw not why such as Valeria, who had a generous lord of her own and all else that a great Roman lady could desire, must needs spend herself upon this Judaean upstart.

Now, though I liked not Licinius and knew that Thanna said wisely, I would not hear any friend of my domina so spoken of, and this I told Thanna. But Thanna only laughed.

'I would thou wert but bent on thine own love-matter, Nyria,' she said. 'When doth Stephanus lift thee o'er his lintel? Nay, 'tis of little import to me, for, thou knowest, Thanna doth now consort with lords and hath mounted several steps higher than Stephanus standeth. Yet would she not neglect her friends. Bid Thanna to the marriage-feast and she'll come right gladly and with well-filled hands. Haply, her lord, likewise, since Regulus doth go where Thanna leadeth. Say, Nyria, would it not cheer thy heart, after thankless tending of such coarse brutes as the Most Noble Julia, and of this milk-and-water mistress of thine, to have a fair good merrymaking over thy espousals with Stephanus who, whate'er be his position now, is verily a man—and who, if he did take a wife of Thanna's wit, would speedily advance him to something higher.'

All this was so much words to me and no more.

'Tis kind thou art, Thanna,' I said, 'but I think not to marry Stephanus. I have no time for thoughts of marriage.'

'Alack!' she said. 'If women think not of that which doth concern them most and which is their best advantage, yet to which all may not attain, then must they indeed be fools. Now, Thanna is no such fool, seeing that she serves none without her full price, and right well hath Thanna
served Regulus this two years past—for the which Thanna's price is marriage, and she'll have it, too.'1

And, just then, Thanna looked over her shoulder and the lord Regulus glanced at her as he and Martial walked together on the other side and, methought, his look was tender and was proud.

'Come hither, I need thee,' he said, and held out his hand.

Thanna nodded as one who would come when she willed.

'Fare thee well, Nyria,' she said. 'Haply, thou and I must walk different roads. Yet hath Thanna done her best for thee. Prepare thy mistress, and bid her avoid Salome nor trespass upon her fields, else wilt thou and she have troublous matter to consider.'

And this she whispered ere she ran off.

Now, I walked slowly on behind them pondering upon what Thanna had said, and on what might be the danger she had threatened. And it seemed to me that it would not be well I should go back and warn Valeria, seeing that Salome and the boy had already been with her—of the which Thanna was ignorant—and knowing, as I now knew, that Valeria had for ever cast forth Licinius from her heart. Therefore, I went on my way. But, thou knowest, I would have turned me had I thought I could have served Valeria by so doing. Nevertheless, having seen her, methought that, for this night at least, I could do naught for my lady: and the voice of mine own people seemed to call me. Wherefore I hastened on.

My thoughts did turn on Stephanus since Thanna had spoken of him for Stephanus had been wont to walk oft to the Christian meetings. Yet I had not dared to call on Stephanus to-night, for I was still his patient and it seemed likely that he would be angry with me for adventuring myself thus.

Wherefore, seeing that the lords and Thanna hasted down before me towards the city, I took the road that brancheth off towards the knoll.

By this way, I climbed over the bit of hill and down through a broken place in the rock wall, and so joined the path above the Quarries. Wherefrom, I came down into the valley, the which is a small and pleasant place with short-growing grass that the goats had nibbled, and clumps, here and there, of shrubs and flowers, and opening, maybe two or three hundred yards away, towards the Campagna. And on either side were the rocks which rose high, shewing no opening to such as knew not where to look for it. But I myself did know it well and, even as I came down, there were a few in advance of me—Lucius and his aged parents and, here and there, others who spoke a word to me. But 'twas our way not to draw too closely together and each would slip by himself through the opening in the rocks, making sure that no stranger was in sight. Though, when one had once entered, there was a greater safety within the walls of rock, for the passages were many, and—unless one had oft traversed them as we had done—one had like to find oneself in straits, not knowing which way to turn. But I, being sure of my way, did walk on, yet lingering not to-night to read the tablets, for my heart was still full of Valeria and I could not help wondering how she bore herself. I was glad that Aeola might be within call, though well I knew that my lady would hold herself proud and cold as she had ever done and would not suffer that a slave should behold her grief. But I hoped that Aeola

1 There appears no record of Regulus being at this time a widower, but Pliny, in Letter 2, Bk. IV, comments upon his ostentatious grief at the death of his son and of his desire to remarry.
had learned somewhat and would wait without in the antechamber till our lady should give command for her entrance.

Now, I should tell thee that Aeola would have come with me that night if she could have obtained permission to absent herself. But Crispus was in Rome for a brief space and she expected him to come up that evening. She knew not at what hour he would come, else would she have persuaded him to take her to the meeting and, seeing that he had not yet arrived, she liked not to company me. Wherefore, Aeola did not apply for leave and was in attendance for the unrobing.

Thou knowest that Aeola and I had some food together before I started, and 'twas then that she told me of the Domina's doings and of how that woman Salome had been often to see her but had had not been received until to-day. Also, that she thought the Domina had not been so oft of late to the villa of Licinius Sura. For, thou dost understand, that by this time I did let Aeola speak to me of those matters, seeing that she was grown older and wiser, and that she would soon be married herself. ..."

NYRIA (resuming) : "Now I was about to take my place near the bottom of the chapel nigh to the door where I always knelt—unless for any reason I wanted to speak to Clement and then would I go up higher. But the chief elder, Gaius, was very stern and would allow none to linger. Likewise, he was one who did know the Blessed John and oft boasted that he had letters from him; and I feared lest he should drive from thence any who might stay too close upon the Apostle's road. Yet I did sorely desire to see the Apostle near, and to speak to him if it were possible. Wherefore, I drew me into the shadow of a pillar and knelt there waiting, for I knew that Clement would come that way and that, like enough, he would have the Apostle with him: and so it proved.

But they were not alone, for the Domina Domitilla was there and her two sons and Flavius Clemens. The boys walked on either side of her and one of them held the Apostle's hand, the which, when I saw it, though I loved the lady Domitilla, I had no eyes for any other than him. For he had a kindly look, and yet he seemed to me scarce of Earth.

The cave was dark, though torches were set about the chapel entrance. Many had gone in, but Gaius had seen me not, though he came often near the door as if waiting to welcome the Apostle. Wherefore, I had hid myself more closely behind the jutting rock, with my cloak over my head, and so remained kneeling while the Lord John and the Domina Domitilla approached to where I kneeled. Now Gaius had come forth again and did salute the Lord John, making a deep prostration, whereat the Apostle raised him and embraced him, greeting him as 'Well-beloved in the Lord.' Then I saw that Clement walked behind with Flavius Clemens, and the eyes of Clement, which went everywhere, did fall on me, and he drew me forth and led me before the Apostle saying:

'Brother, here is one who would fain bear her Lord on His cross as the Master doth desire; and well I know that thou wouldst greet this maid.' Whereat, I was wellnigh covered with confusion; but Domitilla smiled on me.

1 Can it be that the "Well-beloved Gaius," to whom St. John addressed his third Epistle, is identical with the Gaius of Nyria's story? See Appendix 27, Bk. III.
"Tis a child of mine in the Lord, and dear to me after these," she said, as she stood, putting a hand on each of her son’s shoulders.

Whereon, the great Apostle turned and glanced upon me, with the light of his mild blue eyes—which seemed to me like the eyes of one of those who did minister to that Lord Himself—full upon me.

"Verily," he said, "the Master knoweth them that are His and haply, thou, little maid, shalt have thy desire," and he touched my head, which touch seemed to me to bring a shaft of light all through my being so that I would have forgot all else and followed him. But Gaius, making his way among the crowd, did lead them further within and I meekly stayed me in my place.

And then it seemed to me that to-night I must draw nearer. Therefore, I went up nigh to the front of the people and we all knelt as Clement brought the Blessed Apostle round. But Domitilla, with Flavius and their children, knelt near the foremost of the throng.

Thou knowest, my heart was full of many things, for the strangeness and wonder of seeing him who had known Christ was enough to fill a maid’s thoughts: and likewise, as I knelt and bathed me in this peace, I did long most mightily to carry back that peace to Valeria. For it seemed to me that in such she would surely find a balm which might make her forget Licinius.

Now the ceremony began with the singing of a hymn which we all sang kneeling, while Clement led the Blessed John round among the people, proceeding at the topmost and passing in a circle from one side to the other and then remaining in the centre at the top again so that we might see him well: and Gaius bore his cloak behind and seemed as if he could not take his eyes from off the Teacher.

Though, verily, the Apostle’s mien was lowly and his look homely, but rugged and now worn as though he had passed through much of suffering. His cheeks were hollow and thin: yet was there the light of a bountiful compassion upon his face. His form was square and likewise rugged; he was not so tall as Clement but bigger built, so that, methinks, his arms had been brawny and his hands, as he gathered his robe, were larger and not so finely shaped as the hands of Clement. His hair was white, falling meekly in waves like snow upon his shoulders, and his beard, which descended over his chest, was white also. His eyes were very blue and oft-times they seemed to me to look beyond the earth. But the most wondrous thing about him was his voice which rang so loud and deep that it wellnigh filled the chapel, yet when he spoke softly it might have been followed anywhere, for all could hear it.

And I had a fancy that there were Twain that stood on either side of him and upheld him, who were dazzling bright and whose garments dropped dew. But haply, that was just a fancy of my brain, for I had had such visions sometimes and none others saw them. But the Apostle spoke not out of his own strength. That, well I knew, for such strength as he had had must now be long past. And yet there was a fire within him which was of milky whiteness and still burned like flame.

The hymn was of the golden city whereof he hath written. But Clement had written the words of the hymn and one among the ladies had made music for them.

1 For the disputed question of the personality of St. John see Appendix 28, Bk. III.
Then first, Clement spake a few words saying that he did present the Apostle who, after much suffering and long privation, had come from his own people that he might speak to us. Whereat, all cried with one voice:

'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

And on that, the Apostle bent his head and then began to speak. . . . It was chiefly of truth and love—and much about love—that he spake.

'My little children,' he said. 'Behold there is but one commandment that I give unto ye, for in this one lieth all other commandments whether greater or less. For it is, as it were, the womb of heaven wherein all good things that shall be born lie hidden. And this is that word which the Master Himself spake unto us who did stand nearest to Him on that night before He suffered. It is, that ye shall love one another.

For love is as the bond of God: the only fetter that He layeth on the flesh, the link that bindeth all mankind in one body and doth hold that body to the higher body of them that have gone before. Wherefore (said he), this one thing I would make clear unto you—that without love all faith and works be imperfect. . . . For who shall declare the nature of love?

It is as the Breath of God that goeth forth upon the surface of the globes, quickening all to life, and none can wholly understand it save such as have had that love of God dwell within them. And even they know it but dimly.

Yet, in the Light that shall hereafter be revealed, they shall know love as it is. Before, I gave a commandment for each one of ye that thou shouldst serve thy fellow-man and that thou shouldst look to the vengeance of heaven upon them that did suffer thee ill. Yet now this word I must take back from amongst you. For there is but one power, whether in heaven above or in earth beneath, that shall conquer; and this is love. . . .

My little children, my love verily have I given unto ye, whether I know ye or know ye not in the flesh. For the Master's love worketh through me to such as are called to be His. And this love I would that ye did shed abroad, forgiving each other all such wrong as may be done against you, and thinking only of that love which is mightier than any spirit of vengeance. . . .

For, who shall know when he may be called into the presence of the Master Himself, where is naught but love?

For the day of the Lord cometh, as ye have been told, in a way that ye know not and at a time that shall be unknown. And for you all, it may, haply, not come together. Yet, that day may shortly dawn for some of ye: wherefore, think ye, how ill it would be were ye called forth with the clinging weight of some deed of ill-nature impeding ye from His Presence. . . .

Now (said he) there be but these two things that I will put before ye who are well taught in the teachings of the Church by this faithful pastor. . . .'

And at that he did signify the Bishop Clement: and then he said:

'Remember only that God is Love and God is Truth. Wherefore go not before Him with the weight of any dark sin upon ye, but wearing the garment of truth and breathing forth love. . . . And look well unto yourselves that there be none among ye who should, haply, be as that son of perdition who was amongst us on that sacred night when the Master went forth to His shame and agony—and that, at the bidding of the most evil of the sons of men.

For if there be one among ye who shall so far fail in that which he oweth to his Lord and to his brethren as to plunge them into darkness and danger, behold, the state of that one shall be terrible as was his whose name we may not speak.
And though the prayers of the righteous should go forth, yet know ye not that such a soul shall be plunged into the darkness where he would have hastened his brethren? Therefore, in times like these it be needful that we should hold together in a bond that may not be broken. For, if the hands of the heathen be raised against ye, yet shall they not prevail if ye be gathered under the cross of Christ. But to him that would betray his brethren, even as Christ was betrayed, there is but little hope, though the Master Himself be all powerful and all merciful.

And yet (said he) fear not. For in the region where love is strongest, there be no room for fear, which shall be cast forth into outer darkness. Therefore, strengthen ye yourselves with love that your bonds be the bonds of love and not of fear.

Now, what I heard I did hear only in broken bits, for when he talked of love, I bethought me a great deal about different kinds of love, and my mind did wander towards Stephanus.

And when he spoke of how Christ doth care for the lambs of His flock and I longed that I too might have such care, it seemed to me that none but Stephanus had ever taken care of me and, methought, perchance 'twas wrong to wish for other care when that which was given me I would not allow. But I always felt that Stephanus's care did not satisfy me quite, and I knew not why. I could not make it out. Because, sometimes, I found in him so great sense of rest, and then there were times when I could not find that at all. I always knew how much Stephanus cared for me, but there were things in him which turned me from him, and then I would be sorry, for it seemed more my fault than his.

I was thinking of that and of the love of Valeria and Licinius and of my love for her. And then when the Blessed John spake of betrayal the sin did seem to me so terrible that I was thankful I had not betrayed Valeria. And yet I wondered what the Apostle would think if he knew that I had lied to Paulinus. And then he, seeming to answer my thought, said:

"For the love that a man beareth to his brother or to his mother—what be these but symbols of that eternal and boundless mystery of love—a love now unknown, yet of which man shall learn some day. And, behold, the love that a man beareth unto his wife is the symbol whereby Christ hath chosen to set forth His love for them that are His.

But I say unto you that the love that a man beareth unto his wife or his mother or brother—to him or to her that standeth nearest and closest to him—is yet but the faint shadow of the love of Christ which in His human manifestation He hath endeavoured to shed amongst us. Yet, not truly shall we understand that love till we are fitted to be with Him as He is and where He is—when, having accomplished all things, with the glory that shall be His own upon Him and the world beneath His feet, Christ shall shew us of the fulness of the love of God."

And it did seem to me that if Christ had said He were the door by which man could enter in, yet that now the door was John.

And at the end of the address Clement said the prayer, but the Apostle himself gave the blessing, with his arms outspread over the people. And, again, it seemed to me that the light of a dazzling Presence shone behind him, and I longed that I might have looked upon Him of Whom the Apostle had spoken.
And still his arms were raised in blessing when the people began to sing another hymn. . . . I cannot tell thee of that hymn, for the while, my thoughts were drifting around the chapel. . . . "Twas curved—the upper part of the cave, and went far back into darkness. . . . And there were torches, flickering . . . and the old man's arms made long, strange shadows.

And as my eyes went following the shadows into the dimness of the cave, lo! of a sudden, they beheld Licinius Sura. He stood within an archway—somewhat hidden by a pillar, seeming lost in thought and observing none. His head was lowered and his arms were folded beneath his toga, but I knew that 'twas verily Licinius and I wondered what did he there and if, having been in Judea, he had become a Christian. But that, I could scarce believe, seeing that my domina had been told naught of the matter. . . .

I have never read the thoughts of Licinius Sura. . . . I know not if I can. . . . I will try. . . .

He is not thinking of my domina. There is something pressing mightily at the back of his mind, but it toucheth not Valeria. . . . 'Tis something with danger in it . . . something that hath to do with another people—the giving of freedom to those oppressed by tyranny and the gaining of privileges now denied. . . . I know not. . . .

But, meseemeth, Licinius is not all selfish. . . . There be good in the man's heart. . . . But he is not strong enough to carry this thing through. He is like that in his love for my domina. He doth love her in his way, and yet his nature is not able to carry his love. . . . Methinks it is a certain spiritual weakness. But not in the sense of religion: he careth not for religion: he is here to-night, not for worship but for the furtherance of his plan. . . . And for that, I feel that he hath not within himself sufficient strength. Licinius knoweth not his own weakness because of the strange falsity that is in him. . . . Long, long, will it take for him to overcome these faults—many, many ages. . . . They will outlast, through and through, and cause much suffering to himself and to others also. . . . He will have to go through great pain here. . . . But not only here . . . not only in this life. . . . What does that mean? I know not . . . I cannot understand. . . .

I see it like a picture. . . . I was kneeling there and praying. . . . I was not thinking of Licinius except in thinking of my domina. . . . I prayed that he might be kinder to her and make her happier. . . . I cared not much for his happiness although, in truth, I never did care for anyone's happiness so much as for hers. . . . I never thought of anything mattering in comparison with that. . . . I was praying for her—and for some other things. There was that one thing I had thought of often—what should I do if there came a time when I should be in danger myself and have to stand firm. . . . And I could not quite tell. . . . I always knew that if it were anything that mattered for my domina, I could be strong enough, but I never could feel sure that, if I were tried, I should hold to the faith, myself. . . . I used to hope it might be so but I felt afraid lest, if I were in any sharp danger, I should want to save myself. . . . I prayed very much that, if such should come, I might be strong and faithful. Yet was I afeard.

There were prayers going on, thou knowest, for the Church and for all who were members of that Body. . . . I ought to have kept my mind upon them but I had not done so. I had my cloak over my arms and my head was down upon them, and I was thinking my own thoughts and praying my own prayers. . . . I know that that was wrong. For, when many are in
danger and a multitude be bound together, the thought of each should be for all—that all be held by the power of prayer so that none might fall away. . . . There were some that night, I did hear, who gave up the faith and fell back from the truth. And then, methought, that had my prayers not lacked in force that night, they might have helped a little to increase the bond of strength which held us all together. But I always felt that I was too small and weak to be of any account, save to help Valeria . . . .

But something dreadful did happen . . . something more horrible than was before . . . Her heart became changed and then . . . No. No, it cannot be . . . Valeria would not willingly do a cruel thing. There was ever in her—I know there was—such true gentleness . . . I cannot find out now . . . I will try, but not now . . . I am afraid to look from the Beyond. . . . I am afraid to know if Licinius were really unfaithful to my domina's love. . . . He did not love that woman as he loved Valeria. . . . And yet. . . . And yet, I fear me lest it might be true. . . . The clouds are gathering. . . . They dim the torches on the walls. . . . They hide the preacher from me. . . . All is dark . . .

There's another picture. . . . I see rocks. . . . It's outside the Quarries. . . . There are men in armour. . . . The torches shine upon the armour. . . . There is some great harm being done—some great betrayal. . . . I see the people who were praying. . . . Some are trying to hide in the shadows under the rocks. . . . Some are making for the city. . . . They put their cloaks over their faces. Oh, I do not want to look. . . . I am frightened. . . . Now, it is all moving. . . . One minute it is like a picture and I can't feel anything. . . . And the next minute, I can feel the ground and the rocks behind. . . . I can see the faces of the soldiers. . . . A-a-h! (shuddering). Let them not touch me. . . .