CHAPTER V

THE INTELLECTUALS IN ROME

Here, the Commentator upon super-physical levels discourses chiefly upon the political and social situation in Rome A.D. 93-94, and upon the attitude towards them of Nyria and of other persons in Nyria's story.

RECOROER: Next day, when the Instrument passed into the Roman personality and had begun to speak, I noticed with her first words a change in her voice and style—now seeming modern in comparison with Nyria's quaint old-world diction—which marked the intervention of the Commentator who, from a level above the physical, had spoken to me before through the lips of the Instrument.

The substitution was not altogether startling to me. For, in this Nyria-development, I had become aware of supervision, selection, guidance emanating from a Body of Control, of the nature of which—though I could not doubt the fact—I had then but a glimmering comprehension. Moreover, I recognised the balanced, impersonal style of the Commentator who, at an earlier stage, had in the same manner, given me advice as to the treatment of the Instrument.

COMMENTATOR (speaking through the lips of the Instrument): "I should like to sweep quickly over the general aspects of that summer and the winter following it, and to make a few remarks which may throw a clearer light upon the situation, inasmuch as it concerns Nyria's story of her life. For, naturally, the slave-girl's outlook was limited by her lack of education and by the restrictions placed upon her class.

Now, Nyria's estimate of Gregorio's character—as far as it goes—is perfectly correct. The lad's disposition was crooked like his undersized body, of which the limbs were disproportioned and one shoulder higher than the other, while the head was over-large for the rest of his warped frame.

As regards looks, however, his head was the best part of him. It was covered with thick dark curls, made glossy by unguents, and his face, with its flashing dark eyes and well-cast features, would have had a sort of beauty but for its frequent scowl and for something, at once furtive and arrogant, in its expression. He was inordinately vain of what he considered his attractive appearance, but his only real charm lay in his music. This had a certain curious rhythmic quality, and Valeria, when in her unquiet moods, liked Gregorio to bring his lyre and soothe her vexed soul with its harmonies..."

The trouble was that he had conceived a morbid passion for his mistress and that he nursed jealous enmity against anyone to whom she shewed regard. He hated the girl Nyria, and this Nyria felt though she did not realise the nature and full extent of his animosity.

And, as you know, love affairs between highly-placed ladies and their
inferiors—gladiators and even low-class slaves if they were handsome enough
—were no uncommon occurrences in Rome, and it was not such an out-of-the-way thing that a Greek slave-musician should aspire to his mistress's favour, though, of course, to Valeria, such an idea in connection with herself was unthinkable.

Just at this time, Gregorio was in a particularly morose and malevolent mood. . . . For his music of heretofore had lost its spell upon Valeria and the slave-boy was deeply hurt at being called so seldom to perform before her. Moreover, his habit of prying and eavesdropping had led him to suspect more than vaguely the cause of her preoccupation. Not long ago, he had treated his mistress to an exhibition of ill-temper and she, very angry, had bidden him not show his sulky face again in her ante-room unless he should be summoned thither.

Then, while the boy was at a loose end, Martial had got hold of him, had encouraged him to air his grievances and to gossip about the Valerian household, and, in short, was using him for his—Martial's—own purposes.

These were rather complicated, as you will see.

You understand that Martial, for all his literary talent and reputation as a writer, was in reality a bit of an adventurer without much fortune, a sycophant and a hanger-on to the skirts of the great. In fact, he had made his way into Roman high society by his wit rather than by his worth. Nyria has given you a fairly good picture of the man as she studied him from behind Julia's chair. But, in the process of pushing himself through patrician doorways,1 he had sometimes met with rebuffs, intentional or otherwise, and he, too, was the kind of man who stores up his grudges and repays them with interest when opportunity offers.

Such an opportunity he now saw, and one also of serving his own advantage.

He bore a grudge against Valeria for her ordinarily cold treatment of him and he had more than one against Paulinus to whom, by nature, Martial was not exactly congenial and who in his bluff outspokenness had wounded the poet's vanity, no doubt without being aware of so doing. Paulinus had conciliated Martial by welcoming him with more than his usual cordiality at the entertainment in the Valerian villa to speed the departing generals, and on that occasion had brought him specially before Valeria's notice. At the time, she had rather wondered why Paulinus, for all his outward bonhomie, had been grim of humour that day.

Martial was gifted with much shrewd worldliness and was anxious to appear on intimate terms with persons of so much importance. Likewise, he wished to turn Paulinus's friendship to account for the replenishment of his own not too well-filled money chest. He had ingratiated himself with Paulinus by representing that were he—Martial—a frequent visitor at the Valerian house he would be able to keep Paulinus informed as to Valeria's health and interests during her husband's absence. Martial was clever enough to assume that the two were in affectionate accord and that his own friendly offices would be of benefit to both during their separation.

Thus he had obtained Paulinus's note of recommendation which was, actually, a command—'Thou hast received one man for thy pleasure. Now receive another for mine.'

Valeria did not understand Paulinus's attitude and assuming, merely, that he wished to assert his control, felt it prudent not to oppose his wishes. And

1 The character of Martial. See Appendix 6, Bk. III.
she was too indifferent to Martial, personally, for her to suppose that there
could be a malign motive underlying his almost cringing adulation . . .

Thus Martial was received, not only this time but many times afterwards.

It did not occur to Valeria that there was collusion between Martial and
Gregorio. She was not observant. Somewhat against her will, she was
interested in the witty verses and by the poet's visits. Being a woman, she
could not help being flattered by his desire to please her and even responded
to friendly overtures which he was extremely careful should not go beyond
the verge of that which was fitting from one whom Paulinus had, in a measure,
made his deputy.

A sense of convention caused Valeria, on the occasions of Martial's visits,
to command the presence of some of her women. Therefore, when Chabrias
announced his coming, she would bid Nyria summon Corellia and others, so
that Martial always found her surrounded by a suitable train—a restraint
which for the present did not irk him, and he trusted to his ingenuity for
getting rid of the attendants when he should so desire.

Here, I may remark that Paulinus's letters during his absence, which
lasted nearly two years, were a continual reminder to Valeria of what she
owed to her position as his wife.

Despatches by Government-runners arrived periodically in Rome, with
reports of military operations to be laid before the Senate, even though
Caesar himself were at the seat of war; and private correspondence of the
generals and various high officers was also carried in the official post-bag.

Paulinus and Asiaticus made due use of these opportunities. Asiaticus
did not write as often as he might to Vitellia, who was waiting in Rome for
permission to go nearer her husband, but Paulinus regularly sent scrolls to
his wife, which in view of their falling by chance into other hands, he was
careful to couch in terms—perhaps slightly formal—of marital affection.

But Paulinus had a trick with his letters when he wished to impart some
secret information, and to this he now resorted. You understand that every
scroll would be sealed with a very large signet upon a still larger circular
piece of wax—the sign manual of the writer. Now it only needed a little
dexterous manipulation to insert a small bit of parchment—or of the inside
of bark—beneath the seal so that the wax covered it, and, when that was
picked off, the message would be found. To indicate its presence he used the
further device of catching in the wax, as if by accident, and with a short end
sticking out, a hair from his own head.

In the early days of their marriage, knowing that suspicion was rife in
Rome and thinking he might at some future time wish to inform his wife of
news not to be made public, Paulinus had shewn Valeria this contrivance of
his. Therefore, now, when she saw the hair she would break up the seal
carefully and would discover the morsel of parchment on which some words,
usually to the following effect, were inscribed:

'I trust thou art comporting thyself honourably. I have the more reason
to believe this possible since my scouts inform me that Licinius is yet in
Judea.'

This was insulting and, naturally, infuriated Valeria. But she could not
imagine who were the spies watching and reporting upon her movements.
At this time, however, she did not care, because then she had nothing to

1 As the ancients had no establishment corresponding to our post-office, they em­
ployed special messengers called "tabellarii" for the conveyance of their letters. Note
Ovid's Amores, Bk. II, El. 18.
conceal. Later on, her reckless passion made her forget the warning—of which Nyria, of course, knew nothing.

In return, Valeria wrote to Paulinus with sufficient regularity, the runners taking back her letters, which like his own were expressed in polite but formal conjugal fashion. She evaded allusion to Licinius and to purely personal matters, but told him of her ordinary doings, and in particular of the literary receptions she was holding, submitting to him a list of the persons who attended them. He was pleased to reply that he favoured her plan, since he knew there was safety in numbers.

The interest of these literary receptions—they took place once a fortnight and went on for two winters—tided Valeria over the first winter of her desolation. Tacitus delivered the inaugural address, Sulpicia recited her latest poem: discussions on art and literature made part of the proceedings and orations by noted philosophers were a principal feature.”

COMMENTATOR: “There was in Roman society at this time a section of intellectuals—a kind of club, the members of which met in each other’s houses for the discussion of philosophy, art and letters. Thus, when Valeria became enrolled as one of them, the rest felt it a distinct advantage to have the run of so fine a villa as that one upon the Coelian hill. Tacitus was of course a member, but the discussions seldom took place at his house. For one reason, because it was not large, and, for another, his wife had no taste for literary entertainments.

Tacitus was a great help to Valeria in the organisation of her literary receptions. Valeria had always had an attraction for Tacitus, but he was a silent, reserved man who poured forth his powers of expression chiefly in his writings. Now, however, when Valeria spoke of her admiration of his works he was encouraged to talk to her about them. Tacitus was great on oratory,¹ and in reference to the speakers at her parties, he would discourse at some length on that subject, pointing out to her that quite as important a part as the matter of the lecture was the manner of its delivery. He found in her a sympathetic listener, and that he had always badly wanted. He was fond of his wife, who had been quite a young girl when he married her but who was dull and commonplace compared with Valeria.

Under his influence, Valeria turned again to her essays in literary composition. Whether or no she ever finished her tragedy, the secretary was once more given occupation. At one of her assemblies, she herself read a paper in the preparation of which Tacitus had advised her.

All this summer, Tacitus was in trouble over the illness and death of his father-in-law. Agricola had been recalled from Britain because of the jealous hatred of Domitian who could not endure that any general should be popular with the Army except himself. And Agricola was idolised by the soldiery and had been extremely successful not only in his conquest of Britain but in his management of the barbarians who, under him, were rapidly becoming amenable to Roman discipline. . . . Agricola was dismayed at the check to his hopes and to his career. It was the case of a strong, clever, capable man—he was not over fifty when he died—literally broken by bitterness and disappointment at having his plans frustrated, his work taken from him, and at receiving neither recognition nor reward for his immense services. He was heart-broken at having been given no command

¹ The character and writings of Tacitus. See Appendix 7, Bk. III.
in the Sarmatian expedition, and now that reinforcements were called for, he might confidently have expected that he would be placed at the head of the second army to be sent forth.

But Domitian was determined that Agricola should reap no more laurels abroad. Those, he intended, should adorn his own brow. Agricola must sink into obscurity at home, and the only way to manage that—for the Legions would not be satisfied with any paltry excuse—was to make it appear that after his prolonged and arduous service in the conquest of Britain, the General was not in physical condition to undertake a new and perhaps equally trying campaign. And, indeed, the obvious effect upon Agricola, not only of his former strenuous labours but of his recent chagrin, reacting upon an enfeebled body, gave sufficient warrant for the assumption of his incapacity.

Thereupon, Domitian affected deep concern over the ill-health of his 'most valued general,' and insisted that his own physician, Celsus, should attend him.

But that was not enough. Perhaps Celsus did not see the thing quite from Cæsar's point of view. Therefore Phyllis, the old nurse of Domitian and of Julia, must be set to work on a poisoned cup such as—it was said—had been prepared for the Empress Domitia and had failed of its mark... Well, Julia was dead and—except for the Paris intrigue and the scandal involved—there seemed no particular reason to get rid of Domitia.

Domitian was too clever to kill Agricola right off. It would have been unwise to condemn him upon the customary trumped up allegation of treason against the State. Besides, the Praetorians—let alone the outside legions—would not stand an order to Agricola to open his veins. In this case, the poison must act slowly and thus be administered in frequent small doses, and it required some manoeuvring on the part of Cæsar to introduce Phyllis into Agricola's household.

Domitian's way was to caress just before he slew. Out of extreme solicitude for the beloved General, he offered to lend his own trusted nurse. But Agricola's relatives made excuse to refuse the proffered honour. Agricola's daughter, the wife of Tacitus, could not bear, they said, the thought of anyone but herself nursing her father. They had arranged to take him for change into the high air of the Alban hills which it was expected would aid his recovery.

Now, Domitian had a palace at Albanum and Phyllis a cottage on the border of the Nemi wood, where Tacitus had hired a villa for his father-in-law, so the excuse was not altogether a fortunate one. What more natural than that Phyllis should make friends with some of Agricola's retinue—she—or Domitian—may have bribed his slaves. Anyway, Agricola gradually grew worse under Phyllis's surreptitious and deadly ministrations.

It was at the end of this summer that Tacitus, being with his father-in-law at Albanum, succeeded in persuading Valeria to leave Rome, which hitherto she had been reluctant to do; and she spent a week or two in a villa she hired at Nemi. Though Tacitus had come ostensibly to join his family, he really spent a good deal of that time in the society of Valeria. They used to take long walks by the lake and talk of books and of Greek art. Tacitus was very much imbued with the Greek spirit... had read all the Greek writers whose works were procurable and now taught Valeria much that she had not known before. In fact, he helped her more than anyone else to tide

Death of Agricola. See Appendix 8, Bk. III.
over that period of almost despairing loneliness after Licinius Sura's deser-

During that year, there was a good deal of underground intrigue going on
in Rome and of simmering revolt abroad, all of which greatly perturbed
Caesar and was partly the reason of his delay in, at least, making a feint of
joining the forces in Germany. As a matter of fact, he never really got to
the seat of war and became an object of covert derision in Rome by his mock
triumph and bluff of having in person given battle to the enemy. ¹

All this is related in history; and history duly records the suspicion of
poison as causing the death of Agricola, which took place that August or
September.

But history does not give all particulars of the Paris-Domitia drama of
passion and revenge with which Domitian and Phyllis were also concerning
themselves. How the poison cup was again employed, this time not upon
the rightful offender but upon a cleverly substituted pupil of Paris so closely
resembling his master that in the dim cellar of a tenement house in the
Subura where they had incarcerated him, even Phyllis was deceived, and
did not recognise her victim until she was laying out the dead body for
burial. ²

Domitian was a canny beast. He had succeeded in getting rid of Agricola,
and he knew that suspicion was afloat and wanted to take the taste of it out
of the minds of his people. He wished it to be believed that he considered
only the good of the State. Consequently, he caused an edict to be read out
publicly to this effect—that while deep sorrow has fallen upon himself and
upon the nation in the loss of their beloved General, he, Caesar, has his own
private sorrow—the necessity to divorce the Empress. He does not wish,
he says, at such a time, and out of regard for her whom he has always held
dear, to enter into full explanations concerning the cause of his action....
But everyone supposes the cause to be Domitia's scandalous relations with
Paris.

It is not, however, Domitian's intention to connect Paris publicly with
his scheme. He lays his plans that Paris shall be done away with while he
himself is out of Rome; and, for this purpose, he arranges with Phyllis, his
arch-poisoner, to carry out the business in which, as has been seen, Paris
escaped.

But all this is a story by itself, and Nyria was only on the fringe of the
tragedy which, as far as Domitia's love affair went, ended with the murder
of Paris in a prearranged street skirmish. That happened later, and Domi-
tian, under pretext of yielding to the wishes of his people, recalled Domitia
from Gabii and reinstated her as Empress.

It was about midwinter—I think early in January—that Domitian
returned. Some said he was tired of the expedition; others that he
had heard reports of disaffection in Judaea—which last was perfectly
true.

Now, Valeria's social-literary experiment came to his ears and, his curiosity
being aroused, he made known, in roundabout fashion, his desire to attend
the lectures. This was communicated to Valeria who, with sublime audacity,
ignored the suggestion. Thereby, she might have endangered her own safety,
¹ For Domitian's mock triumph in celebration of a pretended victory over the
Germans see Appendix 9, Bk. III.
² For an account of this transaction and for the death of Paris the dancer see Appen-
dix 10, Bk. III.
but she was fortified by the knowledge that Paulinus would not have wished her to receive Caesar thus intimately.

Fortunately, Domitian's attention became attracted elsewhere and the matter dropped. But evilly-disposed persons whispered about it, though Martial was the only one who had the temerity to tell Valeria that none but she would have dared to flout such an intimation from Caesar. This was the kind of speech she found it difficult to parry and cared not to resent, for she knew the affair would be reported to Paulinus and found it easier to tolerate Martial's familiarity than to incur her husband's displeasure.

You will see that in my sketch of public and private affairs in Rome from the spring of 93 to about the late summer of 94 I have considerably over­passed the point at which Nyria left you, and I will now withdraw and allow her to continue her own story in her own fashion."
CHAPTER VI

THE VISION GLORIOUS

Nyria relates how she received instruction at the house of Bishop Clement in preparation for her baptism and is taken to the Chapel of the Christians in the disused quarries beneath the Aventine. Then, the Commentator, speaking by the mouth of the Instrument, tells of the ceremony of her baptism and of the glorified Vision Euphena shewed Stephanus—the eternal Soul of Nyria.

Nyria (taking up her narrative): "I would tell thee of how, one evening not long after the visit of Martial, when I was taking the air by the small gate in the wall of Valeria's garden, I saw, of a sudden, the gate open a space and the head and shoulders of a boy-slave appear from behind it. Methought, but felt not sure, that I had seen the boy's face before, and supposing he was here on some errand, I went nearer to have speech with him.

Seeing me, he came within, taking care to close the door carefully behind him. Then, bending himself, he made on the ground at my feet, with the point of a stick he carried, a certain sign the which at that time, meant to me naught. This I told him. 'What wouldst thou?' I said. And looking more closely at the boy, I asked, 'Art thou not he who opened the door to me when I went with the Domina Domitilla and Stephanus to a house by the river to see the lord Clement?'

He nodded, but first he turned his eyes over his shoulder that he might be sure none listened.

'I am Lucius,' he said. 'I bear thee a message from the Domina Domitilla and the lord Clement. The Bishop willeth that thou shalt come to the same house this evening about an hour after sunset, when he would talk with thee.'

'I will come,' I answered, 'if my lady will permit me.'

'Thou wilt not tell thy lady upon what errand thou art bidden, nor whither thou goest,' he said. 'That is not allowed to such as serve the Lord. We may not speak to others of our purpose, for 'tis not safe to utter it.'

I liked not that he should doubt Valeria and answered him:

'Thou dost not know my lady. She would never enquire of me. But should she ask, there is nothing with which I would not trust her.'

'Nay,' said the boy and came close and laid earnestly his hand upon my arm—brown it looked, I mind me, upon my white robe. 'Nay. Thou must not do this—dost hear? Thou must not. There are many lives at stake. It is not wise in Rome even to whisper of that which doth concern the Christians. Be silent upon the matter.'

'Is that thy lord's message?' I asked him.

He shook his head. 'The Bishop did not himself bid me tell thee, seeing that he trusteth thee. Nevertheless, I know what would be his will.'
'His trust shall not fail him,' I answered. ' Go in peace and tell thy lord that Nyria will be there, at the hour he doth appoint, to await his pleasure.'

Lucius nodded his head again and left me and I went within to seek my mistress.

I had left Valeria sleeping, but now she was awake and lay upon her couch reading from a scroll she held. She looked up when she heard me and put out her hand. Thou knowest that none other of the slaves received from her such mark of favour and, methinks, 'twas for that her head-women were ill-pleased at me. Nevertheless, so changeful were my lady's moods—for oft she seemed cold to me and aloof in her ways—that I was ever timorous in my approach. Therefore I made my obeisance humbly. ' Craving thy permission, Domina,' I said, ' there hath been one here to bid me go into the city this evening to see a friend if it be thy pleasure to spare me.'

My mistress looked at me for a minute vexedly and said: ' Art thou too going to be a gad-about, Nyria? I thought thou wast not like the rest of these slaves of mine who desire continually to be about their own business and serve only because they must.'

Now, her words falling quick and sharp did cut me to the heart. But it was but for a moment, since I was glad to think that she had need of me, and I kneeled by her couch saying, ' Nay, Domina: if it be thy will that Nyria goeth not, then do I stay at thy pleasure. Yet, though I have not long been with thee it hath been my first desire to serve thee, and that have I sought to do fully and faithfully.'

' Ay, it is true thou art better than the others,' she answered more gently. ' Go then, if thou wilt. But see thou be not over-long else shall I suffer at the hands of Aeola for my unrobing.'

I know not why my lady cared not for Corellia who was head-woman and keeper of the robes and draperies. But it had seemed of late that she somewhat favoured Aeola who had not long been promoted to the dressing-rooms. Wherefore did I venture to plead for Aeola. ' May it please thee, Domina, Aeola desireth greatly to learn. If the Domina would permit that she assist more when Nyria is serving——'

But Valeria cut me short. ' Nay: nay. I like not to be a dummy for the tuition of babes,' she said in pettish humour as of one sick and sore of heart. ' Thou mayst have a wax model on which Aeola shall practise her clumsy fingers: but I would rather that none touched me but thine, Nyria.'

I said no more. Nevertheless was I glad, when the time came for me to leave her, that 'twas Aeola Valeria summoned to be in call in the antechamber. So I wrapped me in the grey cloak my domina had given me on the night when I took her letter to Licinius Sura and sped me down the hill by the short cut that I knew.

Dusk had fallen and the torches were not yet lighted. The villa of Licinius looked strangely empty and dark and shadowy beneath the budding trees surrounding it. There was no sign of life about the place and, in my fancy, I likened it to the desolate heart of Valeria. And when I passed the steps at the side of Julia's house I could not help remembering how oft had Stephanus met and left me there, and sore did I miss to-night the comfort of his protection which seemed now altogether denied me. I looked in longing down the street wherein he hath his shop, as I passed the end of it on my way toward the Forum, and I wondered if Stephanus were there and how he bore himself.
Then, crossing the Forum at its lower end, I saw a crowd gathered round a company of street mimes—good performers they seemed to be, for the crowd did greatly applaud them—and, on its outskirts, I noticed a litter borne upon the shoulders of four stalwart bearers handsomely garbed in liveries of dull red with narrow bands of white upon them. In the litter was a lady who caused it to stop the while she watched the show, and I questioned in myself what manner of person she might be, for it is not customary that a Roman lady should comport herself in such fashion. Then, drawing nearer I beheld, through the opening of the curtain, a handsome head, with eyes that peered out upon the people, right gaily decked in scarlet cap and long gossamer veil held by certain gilded ornaments hanging down upon the forehead, and lo! I beheld that it was Thanna. Before I had recovered from my astonishment she had seen me and called my name, and I ran to the side of the litter, then for a moment stayed myself for something told me 'twas scarce seemly for one who served the person of the Most Noble Valeria to be seen in conversation with a woman in Thanna's guise.

But Thanna beamed on me and cried: 'Verily, I am overjoyed to see thee again, Nyria,' and she bade the bearers set her litter down that I might enter it and talk in comfort with her.

But this I would not do. 'I am glad to see thee, Thanna,' I said. 'But I may not stay, seeing that I am sent upon an errand yet further on and I may not delay.'

Thanna pouted crossly. 'Thou wert ever like that, Nyria,' said she. 'Why dost thou concern thyself so much over other persons' business? Lo! I too am sent for certain purposes, yet do I retain to myself the privilege of enjoying whatsoever may seem to me attractive on the road. Be advised. Do thou likewise, else thou wilt find life dull indeed.'

I scarce understood her, so amazed was I at what she told me. 'Thou art sent—by thy lord,' I cried—'thou! in a litter like that and with these bearers who have the air of being thine own!' 'Ay, verily, they are mine,' Thanna answered. 'And the litter is mine. Said I not that I would do well for myself? Ay—and I have done well for myself, Nyria. There be none to scold Thanna now—none to order her about.'

'But thy master?' I asked still in amaze. 'Doth not he command thee?' 'Oh, ay.... He doth command me upon occasions—or thinketh he doth. But it is more often that I command him.'

I stared at her, agape, for I believed her not. 'Of what use to tell me that, Thanna?' I said. 'Do I not know better? Thou wert ever a wheedler with thy tales to others. But I understood thee well. Thou canst not deceive me.'

'Verily I think thou dost not know me at all, Nyria, if thou deemest I am not mine own mistress. 'Tis true indeed. And if, at times, my lord doth demand from me certain offices, they are such as a lady-wife might render, though I would remark there are few lady-wives in Rome who have the wits of Thanna. But such things as the lord Regulus doth require of me, come ever into my humour seeing that they are of more interest than the tiring of dull women and the draping of waxen images in dressing-rooms.'

I knew not how to answer her. 'At least, thou art looking well, Thanna,'
I said. 'I am glad to see that thou hast fallen on such easy footing though it doth puzzle me how thou hast accomplished it. But I may not delay and therefore must bid thee farewell.'

'Suppose thou dost come and see me, Nyria,' she said. 'I would welcome thee and thou shouldst be well served in my household.'

Again I scarce could answer, for I knew that my domina would not like me to visit Thanna. Moreover, I had gathered that Valeria held no good opinion of the lord Regulus. 'Wilt thou not come to see me?' I said. 'I have a nice room of my own where I could receive thee, Thanna.'

'And how should I be required to enter? Thanna goes by no slaves' gates,' she said.

'Then I know not,' I answered. 'Methinks that slaves' gates are meant for such as me and thee, Thanna.'

'Thou canst speak for thyself,' said Thanna. 'If thou art so content not to better thy state, do not expect me to be of like mind. Haply, some day we shall contrive to meet.'

And, with that, she drew her veil around her and signed to the bearers to lift her on their shoulders.

I hastened on, fearing lest I cause the lord Clement to wait, and I thought not again of Thanna so great was my desire to learn more of the Christian god. Daily had I said my little prayer as the Bishop bade me and I had listened for the Voice to speak in my heart and give me guidance. Yet it seemed to me that the Voice spake less oft now that I was happy with Valeria. Thus, sometimes a pressing doubt assailed me and I longed to be led as Clement had said Christ led the little lambs of His flock.

Now, I knew not well this part of the Suburra and could not at first find that house whither Stephanus had taken me. Alack! methought, there was never need to search where I should put my feet when Stephanus was by to show me.

At last I found the door, whereon I knocked and Lucius opened it and admitted me into the presence of Clement, who received me in the same room as before and did so very kindly.

The lady Domitilla was sitting with him and spoke to me in friendly fashion of my change of condition. But she said not much on that score, seeing that other matters pressed. 'I will see thee again, Nyria,' said she as she departed.

Then I sat me on a stool at the feet of Clement and he instructed me in the service of the god Christ to whom I would fain pledge myself. And when he had ended his discourse and I had answered the questions he put, he told me it would be needful I should come yet several times for instruction before he could seal me to that service by baptism. And this I promised, saying that I thought not my lady would forbid me.

At that, the Bishop seemed to consider gravely and he asked whether my lady knew aught of the Christians or would be like to tolerate them. 'For,' said he, 'by repute the Domina Valeria is a lady who doth not concern herself with matters outside her own household.'

I answered that 'twas true, and that to my knowledge Valeria had never had any dealings with the Christians, but that mayhap she might now show indulgence towards them. 'This I said because it seemed to me that in my domina's mind and heart there was a great reaching out towards the truth. For never could I forget how I had seen her prostrate before the Grecian goddess Demeter: and, methought, would she not surely find a
JULIA, DAUGHTER OF TITUS
deeper consolation for her wounded soul in the kind god, Christ, who had
died for men?

Somewhat of this I said to Clement, though I was careful to reveal naught
of Valeria's secret grief.

The Bishop answered me, 'If it be thy happy portion, Nyria, to lead
Valeria into Christ's fold when thou art thyself assured therein, then, indeed,
shalt thou be blest. For the Lord hath promised rich reward to such as save
souls for Him. Yet I would have thee understand that if Valeria be not
thus disposed, thou must preserve strictest secrecy in these matters so that
harm come not to the community. Thou shouldst know that each one
enrolled within our body taketh this responsibility upon himself, so that
he should think not only of his own loss or danger but of danger to the
company to which he doth belong.'

Faithfully did I promise that I would guard my tongue. 'Nevertheless,
lord,' I said, 'the Domina Valeria is high-minded and though she might
not care about these things yet never would she betray us.'

'Heaven grant that thou be right, little maid,' he answered. 'Yet is it
necessary to observe seemly caution at all times, seeing that, verily, we scarce
know what ills do now beset this poor struggling Church, and none of her
children dare risk to plunge her in deeper woe.'

He held some further talk with me on the matter and, meseemed, that he
regarded me with favour in the manner of my understanding of those things
which he had taught me.

'Were it not for our custom, Nyria,' he said, 'that none be baptised save
such as are fittingly prepared, I would have had thee received sooner.
Nevertheless, in thy case, methinks, thou shouldst not be long before
receiving this grace, for, truly, the spirit of the Lord hath descended upon
thee.'

And, after this, he arranged with me that twice more should I come to
him and that then he would acquaint me with the date and hour on which
my baptism should take place in the chapel among the catacombs whither
he would himself conduct me.

Then I went forth from his presence and hasted on my way to reach my
doma in time for her unrobing.

The street was a quiet one, with but few people passing to and fro, and
'twas after I had left it that I heard footsteps following me and, glancing
round, saw the figure of a man, heavily draped, walking some little distance
behind me. He paused as I paused and seemed wishful to avoid notice.
But when I looked again as I went among the small streets and squares
at the foot of the lower forum and on past the end of the Via Margaritaria,
I saw by the lights of the shops that the same figure still followed me. It
was closely wrapped in a dark cloak with a hood drawn over the head and
I began to feel affrighted, for I remembered certain snatches of talk I had
heard in the shop of Stephanus between him and Juvenal whereby I knew
that at night-time in Rome there did go about certain evil men bent on
mischief which would not bear the light of day. So I hasted me yet faster
and heard not the steps again till I had reached the stretch of road by the
Aventine. I have told thee that in the poorer streets the houses are badly
lighted, but where the big villas stand there are torches upon the gates and
also torches along the road. It had been settled by Domitian that of such
great houses so many should pay, the torches set between and that was
good for Rome. But the Aventine was not so well lit, because after Julia's
house there are not many of note save only the temple\(^1\) upon the hill, and
Domitian said the priests could look after themselves. 'Twas in that dark
bend which mounts the Coelian that I heard again the tread behind me and
beheld the same man on my tracks and, as I ran, he took to running also.
Then, indeed, was I like to drop in terror. Yet it seemed that fear lent me
speed and strength, for I paused not till I saw the lights of Paulinus's villa
shining on the big portico and, lengthening not my course to the gate in
the wall beyond, I rushed up the great steps and through the atrium, nor
stopped to draw breath till I had reached my lady's apartments.

But on the second time that I visited the Bishop for instruction, so full
was I of joy and thankfulness in being made a child of Christ that when
I went forth into the dusky street I had forgot my fears and had walked
even beyond the Licinian villa without having given thought to the man
who had before followed me, when lo! again, I heard the steps on my track
and again I escaped my pursuer by speedy flight. The same happened like­
wise upon the third time, yet never once had I been overtaken.

Upon the fourth occasion—that upon which my baptism was to take
place—when I craved of my mistress two or three hours' grace, Valeria
turned sharply upon me and said: 'Whither goest thou these evening
hours, Nyria? It is not seemly that thou shouldst wander the streets alone.'

At first, I hesitated to reply. Then, advancing humbly with folded
hands, I answered:

'Domina, there is naught in my heart that I would screen from thee.
But this matter is one which concerns many others. Wilt thou have
patience with Nyria and hold her secret faithfully if Nyria tells thee all?'

Valeria made a small proud movement as if to convey that she held no
secrets with slaves: and then perchance her heart was touched, for she
said:

'Come hither, child, and tell me what is this great and wonderful secret.
It is a strange thing to demand pledge of thy mistress. Nevertheless, thou
mayst know that Valeria breaks faith with none.'

'I knew it! Oh, I knew it, Domina. I was but bidden to ask it of thee,'
I said: and then, kneeling by her couch, I told her of that great and
wondrous god Christ to whose service I was about to pledge myself, and as
I spoke it seemed to me that she listened with ever increasing interest.
But when I ceased, she drew back her head and gave a little laugh that
nevertheless, methought, was indulgent rather than mocking.

'And dost thou think, poor foolish child, that because thou art going to
step down into a tank of water, thou wilt be made henceforth holy?'

'Nay, Domina—that is impossible. Nyria may never be holy. But Nyria
may be clean and pure as Christ would have her be. And Christ will do the
rest.'

'I trow this Christ-god knoweth he hath found a faithful slave in thee,'
she said, and again she seemed part amused and part stirred of heart. 'Thou
art a strange child, Nyria, made of different stuff from the others. I know
not whence thou comest or whither thou wilt be driven by these wild fancies
which seem so real to thee.'

'But verily, they are real, Domina,' I said. 'If only thou didst know——'

'Ay! If I did know—what?'

'If thou didst know the comfort it doth bring to feel that naught can
hurt me since Christ careth for me.'

---

\(^1\) The temple of Diana on the Aventine. See Martial, Bk. VI, Ep. 64.
'How knowest thou he doth so care?' Valeria questioned, and she thrust her face a little forward and her eyes looked long and close into mine. 'Methinks, Nyria, that if thy god be accountable for the many stripes that have been dealt thee in thy past, then truly hath he used thee hardly,' she said.

'Not so, Domina,' I assured her, 'of a surety, not so. Thereby, He did but chide me for my faults as a loving father might chide his child. For my suffering hath been as naught compared with that of many another. And, in truth, I would it had been greater seeing that Christ hath borne so much for me. Moreover, hath He not blessed me most exceedingly in bringing me to thee?' And I bent me lower and kissed the hem of Valeria's robe.

'Thou art a strange child as I told thee,' Valeria said again. 'But I warn thee no great joy can come from over-estimating us poor human beings. It is not wise to place a creature of flesh and blood upon a pedestal and worship such as though 'twere godlike. Of a surety, the day will come when thou shalt find out thy mistake.'

And I heard her sigh deeply and knew that she was thinking of Licinius Sura. But I answered only, 'Nay, Domina. 'Tis God alone whom I would worship thus. Nevertheless, Christ hath laid it upon us to love all our fellow-creatures, and so I fain would do. But thee, Domina, do I love the most of all.'

At this, Valeria laughed gently. 'If that be so, Nyria,' she said, 'then I may not prevent thee from going where thou wilt. Be baptised since thou dost so desire. But, in truth, while the evenings are still chilly, I myself should like not to be plunged in cold water,' and thus saying, she turned again to the scroll she had been reading.

So I left her and went to make me ready in the manner of Domitilla's advising. First, after I had changed my under-garment, I put on a white linen robe in which I should enter the tank of baptism and over that an upper one which I could remove and, likewise, I took a third of wool for warmth and dryness when the ceremony should be ended, and over all I folded my grey cloak around me.

Now, when I came into that chamber where the lord Clement was wont to receive me, I saw that the great bed which had been in one corner was moved to a further space and that at this end of the room was assembled a small company—some half-dozen catechumens clad as I was and certain persons already baptised who should stand as sponsors to the others. The lady Domitilla was there also and took me by the hand and presented me to her husband Flavius Clemens who saluted me kindly.

Then, while the little company stood in rows before him, the Bishop Clement recited a prayer for our guidance along the road to Christ that we had chosen. Afterwards, at a sign from him, the boy Lucius raised a square block of wood that was a part of the flooring, thus showing an aperture large enough for one person at a time to descend through it. Lucius went first, bearing a torch, while two other slaves stood by ready to close the opening after all had passed down. The lady Domitilla bade me follow and keep close to her, and when we had gone down, it might be twenty or thirty wooden steps, we entered upon a few feet of low-roofed passage and then again went down many steps which were of stone. These ended at another passage, long and likewise low and dim, wherein shining black moisture oozed through cracks on one side of the rock wall and the pavement in places was slimy and
seemed to slip beneath my feet, and the torch of Lucius cast strange shadows in the dimness, so that I had been like to tremble for fear. But the lady Domitilla took my hand. 'Be not affrighted, Nyria,' she said. 'This is the secret road by which we pass from the house we have left to the chapel so that we be safe in our going. We are now almost beneath the Tiber, for the path winds at the edge of the river for some distance. But ere long thou'lt find we shall come out into the air again...'

Yet, was I afraid and yet I know not why.... But I have thought—I have feared that were some great and terrible choice to be put before me the strength might fail me. But then it seemed to me that I being so little and of no account great things would not be required of one so small. ...

Now, I mind me that I was telling thee of the house which had the secret way.... It belonged to Lucius's parents, and certain Christians lodged in it. 'Twas very old—that passage was made on purpose. I cannot tell who made it.... Now, thou knowest, none might have that house who could not be trusted with the secret. Thinkest thou there could be chance in this matter seeing that through betrayal the lives of thousands would be in jeopardy!

That passage leadeth by the Quarries which now are in disuse and runneth 'neath the rocks, all underground.... It hath four openings and one of them goeth to where we hold the services.... Canst thou hold me a little more closely.... Methinks I am confused...."

RECORDER: I had been trying mentally to identify the spot and my thoughts must have wandered from the Instrument. Now, I endeavoured to concentrate them more intently upon her.

NYRIA (continuing): "It is so strange. Now, I remember the passage that went partly under the river.... and the passage that had recesses where they kept things.... And there were inscriptions about people on the stones.... I remember it quite well. But it seems to have been a very long time ago.... It seems as if it belonged to something else altogether. It comes to me in pictures.... that is so strange—pictures of something that happened long, long ago.... I see myself in the passage. Yes, 'tis a girl in Roman dress with long fair hair.... How do I know that? I know it is myself.".... Then dejectedly, "No, I cannot do it now.... I am trying, but I cannot...."

After a minute—

"I am somewhere quite different.... This place is very quiet.... It is lonely because ordinary people may not come here.... Dost thou hear that sound—like a bell?.... 'Tis like silver striking on ice? Yes, I can give thee the message. It is to help thee to understand what I cannot make clear...."

COMMENTATOR (speaking from a super-physical level through the lips of the Instrument): "It appears advisable that I should pick up the threads of Nyria's account of the baptismal ceremony—telling you of it from her point of view but adding some slight general remarks and touching upon details which at the time, in her highly-strung condition, she was scarcely capable of appreciating.

You will doubtless have located the, then, steeper rise and wild outlying
spaces at the back of the Aventine, a region specially frequented by the early Christians because of the underground galleries of deserted quarries and the natural cavities honeycombing the hill which offered a conveniently secluded place for the practice of their religion.

Nyria has accurately described the secret passage which issued upon a small, comparatively open valley sheltered between steep overhanging knolls and further protected from observation by an outcrop of various-sized boulders of red tufa.

Nyria discovered afterwards that this space, though hidden from above by the projecting cliffs, was just below that outlying spur where she used to sit and look over the edge of rock at the people passing by. There was another path to the meeting-place, she found later—one more generally used by the Christians—which wound round the shelving side of the hill until it descended by a steep slope into the further end of the little valley.

Now, the small company crossed this space among the red boulders until they reached a narrow tortuous opening in the opposite cliff, into which Lucius passed holding the torch. Here, Nyria, walking beside Domitilla, slipped behind whilst Domitilla went through.

Inside, the path widened and became a moss-strewn alley with large tablets let in here and there upon the rocky walls. These tablets were monuments to dead Christians and bore upon them legends which, by and by, Nyria got to know by heart.

One, in memory of a little boy, ran thus:

'Oh Christ! who dost suffer little children, we have sent our son to Thee.'

And again, on the stone to a young girl of fifteen:

'Here, Lord, we lay a lily on Thy Shrine.'

Then there was one to an old woman:

'Full of faith and years Dulcinea gave herself to God.'

And again:

'Our mother Marcia hath gone home and beckons us thither.'

Yet another:

'Sweet Hermione was about to be led to the marriage altar but Christ called her and she followed Him.'

And there was one which always seemed to Nyria the most beautiful:

'Behold, Flavia was weary, and then did Christ Himself prepare her bed.'

COMMENTATOR (resuming): "Well, the procession wound on through a labyrinth of passages in the old Quarries until it turned into what looked like an underground temple.

This place of worship was fashioned out of several good-sized caves which had once been divided into separate cavities by natural walls of rock projecting in some places and, in others, broken away and showing apertures between the caves. It had been the idea of the early presbyters to widen the apertures and enlarge some of the cavities by hewing the dividing rock into the semblance of huge, rough pillars, thus giving somewhat the effect
of a nave in a modern church. These pillars supported, as it were, the roof, and benches had been quarried from the rock walls upon which the aged and infirm might sit. At the upper end of the chapel, there had been built up, by arranging blocks of stone one upon another, what Nyria would call the rostrum, from which Clement and others of the Elders delivered their prayers and discourses. At this end was also a great sunken tank of water entered by two or three steps on either side, and, beyond the tank, a curtained archway into another cave where the candidates for baptism might change their garments after immersion.

As many of the Christians belonged to the working class, with stone-cutters and artificers amongst them, the presbyters' idea had been carried out fairly successfully, and the place had a rude resemblance to a cathedral crypt.

The pillars bore upon their sides curious designs and carvings, a first effort of the community to memorialise its martyrs. The Church had not then any system of sainthood beyond veneration of the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. But families, of whom some member had suffered for Christ's sake, were permitted to commemorate the event by frescoes and inscriptions placed on these pillars in spaces allotted for the purpose.

You will understand that the spirit of the early Christians was essentially a martyr-spirit chiefly arising, no doubt, from the condemnations under Nero. The bulk of Christians looked forward—in theory at all events—to a martyr's death. Nevertheless, as will be seen, when martyrdom actually faced them, these very people who had been wont to speak of such culmination as the highest fulfilment of their dreams—the most blessed sacrifice that could be demanded of them by their Master—yet flinched pitiably when the supreme moment arrived. That has always struck me as a most pathetic illustration of the weakness of human flesh being stronger than the spirit it clothes; and, if we are to present a truthful picture, this failing must be made plain.

To newly-received Christian enthusiasts, baptism meant literally being signed and sealed with their Saviour's blood. From the sealing of His mark upon them they might be called at any time to suffer for Him and it was their duty to themselves and to those in training under them to hold this prospect ever in view. Continually, they were climbing the steps to Calvary. But when Calvary was reached, poor creatures!—though no doubt the system of preparation stood to some in good stead—it would be difficult to overrate the wild terror and shrinking in which the greater number met their doom.

As I have said, the ceremony of baptism being inaugural, was considered by all ardent Christians as of the greatest import, and an exceeding and somewhat morbid interest was taken in the catechumens presented for it. These were regarded as, in a sense, already on the Cross. It was as though the sacrifice were prepared and the sacrificial fire about to be lighted. There was even felt an unnatural and almost gloating satisfaction in the youth and beauty of certain dedicants.

Thus, Nyria drew much notice from the crowd in the Chapel. More so, because she was a stranger to most of the people present. For, in their daily life, the Christians formed a community apart from the ordinary life of Rome, no matter to what social class they might belong. The unfortunates among them were the slaves in Pagan families. There were a certain number of these, but the generality of Christians were tradesfolk and small farmers with a few employed in lawyers' and other offices. Now and again, though
rarely, there might be a soldier amongst them. The slaves were chiefly those under Christian masters, and, Christianity being, fundamentally, a religion of the free, these were almost invariably freed, although, as in the case of Clemens and Domitilla, it was usually considered impolitic to let the fact be known.

The dread of being suspected had become intensified by reason of Jewish disaffection, particularly in the reign of Domitian, and pastors and teachers impressed upon their flock that the direst deed of shame a Christian could commit, next to betraying his master Christ by denying his faith, was the betrayal—careless or otherwise—of his fellow members of the Church.

Now, to describe the baptismal scene. . . . As the candidates and their sponsors ranged themselves by the tank at the upper end of the Chapel, the good folk, crowding the body of it, were observing them with childlike curiosity and commenting and whispering together as might a modern crowd witnessing a show.

Indeed, the whole pack of them seemed more or less like children taking an excited and very mundane interest in the novelty of the proceedings.

It should, however, be remembered that they were debarred by their religion from the amusements enjoyed by citizens of Rome. They might not attend the Games; they might not enter a theatre. Even such sports as racing and wrestling were denied them because of the company with which they were brought in contact and the language heard in the Gladiatorial Schools. In fact, the pleasures available to the early Christians in Rome were extremely limited and, apart from the excitement of their religious ceremonies, they lived at an uncommonly dead level.

Among the crowd towards the back of the Chapel, partly screened by a pillar, round which he, nevertheless, contrived to get a good view of what was going forward, crouched a man in a dark cloak. His eyes never left the form of Nyria as she stood, in her linen robe with her hair all unbound, by the side of Domitilla.

The girl was nervous and was shivering, partly from cold, for the night was a little chilly, partly from apprehension.

And as she looked down into the black-green depths of the tank before her, she shrank perceptibly. Whereat, the watcher behind the pillar gnashed his teeth, but he was powerless to interfere.

Nyria clung to Domitilla's hand and, as the service proceeded, she glanced timidly, now and then, up at her protectress. Domitilla tried to soothe her—pressing her hand and whispering, 'Be not frightened, Nyria.'

'Tis deep, Domina,' the girl said.

'It will not cover thy head,' Domitilla replied, and this somewhat reassured her.

'Be not afraid,' whispered Domitilla again. 'Tis but a little thing to do for Him who died for thee.'

The first to enter the tank was an old man with longish grey hair, and Nyria watched him breathlessly as he passed down the steps at one end and up at the other, the water rising to his shoulders and then to his head and lowering again as he issued forth. Two servers, specially selected for the purpose, stood on either side of the tank and guided the passage of each catechumen. In the case of one or two who were taller, they would dip the convert by the shoulders so that the head might be entirely covered, and in the case of young children, these were lifted across in a sort of arrangement
of ropes and just dipped below the water in the middle. But there were no young children to-night: Nyria was one of the youngest present.

The girl looked with interest at the long hair of a woman preceding her and, seeing that she bound her hair upon her head and slipped over it a white linen cap before she passed down the steps, Nyria craved permission of Domitilla to do the same. She had come unprovided with a cap, but she bound her hair tightly round her head and Domitilla lent her a kerchief to knot over it; then, with an almost piteous glance at Domitilla, Nyria took her place in the rank of those about to descend. They followed each other with fair quickness, the Bishop reciting prayers meanwhile.

The principal part of the service was gone through before any catechumen was dipped, it having been found that after that process few were fit to take any further conscious part in the ceremony. Therefore, the prayer, which was repeated over and over again as each fresh candidate went down, was of the simplest form, commending him or her to the care of the new Master.

Nyria caught Clement's eyes fixed upon her as, trembling, she took the first downward step. It was curious perhaps that she should flinch thus. But though Nyria could bravely endure pain, to which she was accustomed, there was something in the dark shadowy appearance of the tank and in the whole strangeness of the ceremony which unnerved her. Nevertheless, she put her foot upon the edge of the tank and presently felt the cold water round her shoulders as she bravely advanced.

The next thing she was aware of was the strong grasp which guided her forward when she emerged dripping and, then, shielding her face with her hands, rushed half-ashamed through the passage left for her among the bystanders to the room where the women and girls were permitted to dry themselves and change their robes.

The excitement of the actual immersion being over, Nyria felt anxious to take her place again among the rest. Now she was thankful indeed that she had twisted up her hair, which having been protected and scarcely five seconds under water, was not as wet as might have been expected.

Shaking it loose over her shoulders, when she had put on her robe, Nyria went forth, back to Domitilla, and remained kneeling with the others during the singing of the final hymn. Then the Bishop gave his blessing in a few simple but impressive words, and the long-looked-for ceremony was over.

It took some time to clear the Chapel, for many had friends or relatives among those who had been baptised, and wished to speak to them, while others waited to have a word with the Bishop who, with the air of a tender father, walked about among his congregation.

Nyria was perhaps the one most in haste to depart, for she was anxious not to be late for attendance on Valeria. Domitilla, seeing this, walked back with her to the house by the river, the boy Lucius accompanying them.

On the way, Domitilla spoke much to Nyria of the responsibilities her new profession of faith imposed upon her, bidding her remember that she was no longer her own but a child of Christ her Lord to whom service must be rendered before that given to woman or man. It would have been impossible for Nyria to be false to her pledge, but as yet it had never occurred to her that these duties might clash. Valeria, she thought, if not disposed to become herself a Christian would never interfere with her slave's practice of her new religion.

When they had reached the house and ascended by the stairs and gone through the trap-door which Lucius by some peculiar arrangement again
opened for them, Nyria bade Domitilla good night, her heart too full for her
to utter all the gratitude that she felt. Domitilla was sweetly comprehending.
She kissed the girl and bade her now look upon her as her best friend. But
Nyria's thoughts turned to Valeria. It was strange that, apart from the
desire to possess a personal god whom she might worship, Nyria had no
particular desire for any earthly friend save Valeria. Except, indeed,
Stephanus, of whom she thought with lingering affection. He came to her
mind now when again she went forth into the street. It was later than
usual and she hoped that her unknown follower might have gone home.
Strengthened by her belief in the Divine Power whose protection had
lately been invoked for her, she walked on, uplifted by that remembrance,
passed the lower forum at the end of the Via Margaritaria and had reached
the long shadowed stretch of road before the certainty that she was being
again pursued frightened her once more into a run.

But the striding steps overtook her and as she struggled for higher speed
she felt a hand upon her shoulder and heard a voice she recognised saying
in her ear:

'Haste thee not, Nyria; dost thou not know me, child?'

She turned with a gasp of relief and by the pale light of the stars which,
as the two had come out into a clearer space, shone overhead, she saw the
kind eyes of the goldsmith.

'Oh, Stephanus, is it thou!' she cried, and, exhausted and relieved,
sank back against him.

He put his arm round her to support her and with a spasmodic gesture
drew her close to his side. Then, he would have released her at once but the
girl clung to him. 'Oh, Stephanus, I am so glad, so glad. But wherefore
hast thou frightened me so these three or four nights?'

'Nay, 'tis thou who hast affrighted thyself, Nyria,' he answered. 'Thinkest
thou I'd let thee go night after night down into that den of iniquity where
wild beasts of men verily do rage and might capture a hapless maid who
had none to protect her? Nay, child, nay. I told thee that if ever thou
didst need a friend thou mightest command Stephanus. Wherefore didst
thou not claim him?'

'I was afeard,' she said. 'Thou wast so harsh to me, Stephanus. How
could I come near thee?'

'Ay, was I harsh to thee?' he said, supporting her steps as they went
slowly on. 'Mayhap. A man is but a man, Nyria, and hath the weakness
of men.'

'I care not now,' she said, 'so that thou art kind to me again.'

He looked at her with the old tenderness in his face but with less of that
passion which the sight of her had been wont to arouse.

'Ascalaphus hath been calling thee,' he said. 'The bird wondereth
why thou hast not been near the shop windows these many weeks past.
Ah, Nyria, 'tis chill there when thou dost not show thy face.'

'I'll come. . . . I'll come to-morrow. Haply, Valeria will let me.'

Stephanus grew glum at the mention of Valeria's name but it was evident
that he would try to overcome his antipathy towards her.

'So that thou art happy, Nyria, Stephanus must needs be happy too,'
he said. 'Long ago, sweet child, I told thee that Stephanus desired only
thy happiness. Say, is she good to thee, Nyria?'

'Oh, ay,' cried Nyria. 'I have a room to myself and much favour shewn
me.' But she told him not of how the rest of the slaves hated her. 'And
what hast thou been doing these four nights past, Stephanus? How didst thou know that I went forth and at what hour to follow me?

'That is my secret,' he rejoined with a touch of merriment. 'I too, Nyria, have means whereby to inform myself.'

'I saw thee not,' she said. 'Haply, thou didst wait in some secluded corner of the street near Clement's house?'

'Nay, to-night I have been farther than that,' he answered. 'Thou didst not see me, Nyria, but I saw thee go down into that cursed water with all thy curls bound up as though thou wert the hapless Cornelia herself buried for her sins in the earth. But for thee—thou, who knowest not sin, who art as pure as the purest spirit of the air—methinks such ways are but foolishness.'

They had reached the Valerian villa by now and stood near the little gate in the wall, each so absorbed in the other that they had not noticed a small, bent, black figure passing that way.

As they stood thus, the man's arms round the girl and the girl's face lifted in all its childlike faith to his, there came, it seemed out of the shadows of Rome behind them, a low evil chuckle which caused them to start apart.

'Nay, let me not disturb these pretty lovers,' cried a voice which both remembered. 'Such moments are doubtless precious. Enjoy them while ye may, my friends. Who knows what fate may thrust between ye?'

They had both turned and, there, in the light of the stars they saw the dusky, evil shape of old Euphena leaning on her stick, her shoulders bent, her leering face pushed forward, looking, veritably, like some hag from Hades.

'So, ho! Stephanus,' she said. 'Thou art courting still, and still shall Nyria flout thee. What did I tell thee, eh, man? He who would pour forth passion upon an altar where it may only be burned up to naught is a fool for his pains. Nyria is not for thee, Stephanus,' and Euphena chuckled again. 'Ho! Ho! It seems that still thou thinkest that Nyria would make a sweet and docile wife to sit by thy decent, honest hearth. Wouldst see in truth what the maid is, whom thou dost worship. . . . Shall I show thee, Stephanus?'

Euphena went nearer to them and, with the point of her stick, rapidly drew a circle round Nyria upon the piece of ground where the girl stood. 'Stay there; stir not, Nyria. Remain, with the wall close behind thee, while I shew to friend Stephanus the real maiden whom he would fain snatch to his bosom and turn into a simple Roman matron. . . . Now, good goldsmith, come hither.'

Stephanus was standing, as if spellbound, a little pace from Nyria. Neither of the pair had spoken. Astonishment at the sight of Euphena had at first kept them silent, and now it seemed as though some strange power held their lips.

'Hither, hither, goldsmith,' commanded Euphena, and she motioned him to a little mound on which he might stand a few feet from Nyria.

'Stay there; stir not, Nyria. Remain, with the wall close behind thee, while I shew to friend Stephanus the real maiden whom he would fain snatch to his bosom and turn into a simple Roman matron. . . . Now, good goldsmith, come hither.'

Stephanus was standing, as if spellbound, a little pace from Nyria. Neither of the pair had spoken. Astonishment at the sight of Euphena had at first kept them silent, and now it seemed as though some strange power held their lips.

'Hither, hither, goldsmith,' commanded Euphena, and she motioned him to a little mound on which he might stand a few feet from Nyria.

'Stay there; stir not, Nyria. Remain, with the wall close behind thee, while I shew to friend Stephanus the real maiden whom he would fain snatch to his bosom and turn into a simple Roman matron. . . . Now, good goldsmith, come hither.'

While the hag was speaking she had dipped her hand into a small bag she carried at her side and brought forth handfuls of something that might have been sand. She threw this close into Stephanus's face, murmuring, as she did so, some unintelligible gibberish. Then, suddenly going up to him,
she placed one of her hands over his eyes and with the other made certain curious signs in the air around his head.

'Behold!' she said, and drew herself away behind him.

Stephanus, stooping, half-dazed, lifted his head and looked. He saw Nyria standing in a simple attitude against the wall as he had left her, except that the bundle she had been carrying had fallen and rolled a little way down the incline. The light of the stars shone down upon her. But a more mysterious light, soft, yet of dazzling radiance, lit up the girl's form. It arose round her in luminous clouds of silvery whiteness, melting into palest blue which, where the glory crowned her head, was tinged with exquisitely delicate violet. Transfigured thus, she remained motionless for several seconds, and Stephanus, gazing, realised that this was no mere mortal maid but, verily, the eternal soul of Nyria.

Then, when the vision had slowly faded, it was as though a dark curtain had fallen before him. He put his arms out in a bewildered way, rubbed his eyes and shook himself to recall his senses.

Now, the curtain lifted. Nyria stood there smiling, as he had often seen her smile, and held out her hands.

'What is it, Stephanus?' she said. 'Why dost thou look so strange?' And the man approached her, but, remembering what he had seen, fell dumbly at her feet and caught the border of her robe.

'Oh, Nyria! Oh, Nyria!' at last he said. 'What have mine eyes gazed upon? 'Twas Nyria... And yet, 'twas not Nyria.'

He rose, and while they stood near, but he not touching the maid, Euphena who had watched, unheeded, passed down on her way. And as she went, her evil chuckle came up to them from the road below.'
CHAPTER VII

APOLLONIUS, THE WONDER-WORKER

Nyria tells of the Domina's friendship with Pliny, Tacitus and other men of mind and repute, and of the discourse of Juvenal at the shop of Stephanus upon the manners, morals and gods of Rome: likewise, of the marvels wrought by the Wonder-worker, Apollonius of Tyana, which were the talk of the city: and of the doings of Asclepario the Astrologer who was feared by Domitian.

Nyria: "I believe that in this summer and winter, after the departure of Paulinus for the war and of Licinius Sura for Judaea, there were certain happenings of import both in Rome and abroad. But of this I cannot tell with certainty, seeing that Valeria held herself apart from the life of the city, of which, in truth, I heard naught save by snatches if I chanced to stand by in Stephanus's shop when he and Juvenal were talking.

I went now, sometimes, to the shop of Stephanus. For, since his following and overtaking of me in my terror upon that night of my baptism and of our strange meeting with Euphena upon the Ccelian hill, Stephanus seemed to have become once more the kind friend who had watched over me when I was in Julia's service. Yet, with this difference, that he no longer pressed upon me the thought of marrying. Mayhap, he knew it was of no avail, for that, assuredly, I would not leave Valeria.

Now, as spring advanced, my domina began to turn somewhat toward those occupations which formerly had been her pleasure. Methinks 'twas the reciting of Martial's verses and their setting to music upon Gregorio's tunes, by which the young man was greatly puffed up, that had first aroused her interest.

I know not if Martial did ever make mention to my domina of Licinius Sura. I heard a rumour that came through Gregorio—but I said naught to him on the matter—of Licinius's reported doings in Judaea: and my domina, though she spake not Licinius's name, let fall some words by which the thought came to me that she had heard the rumour and I know not from whom, save it had been Martial. . . . But thou knowest—my domina hath great pride, and even though I had been her messenger to Licinius and she knew that I understood how matters lay between them, yet, all this time, she never said aught to me touching Licinius Sura. . . .

Yet, there was Plinius who often visited her, and I have heard him give her gossip of her friends; and likewise Tacitus. But neither of them would have spoken to her of Licinius Sura. Of that I feel certain.

Methinks, Plinius may have guessed truly that Valeria's heart was sore for Licinius and he would have shrunk from hurting her. Moreover, he was a loyal man and he had a very real friendship with Paulinus. Nevertheless, was he a true friend to my domina and oft have I thought it strange that he should stand so well with the two. None but Plinius could have carried
faithfully such double friendship. For Plinius, though he seemed all open
and like glass outside, had yet a great reserve beneath. I think Plinius
understood my domina and she understood him and trusted in his sincerity.

Thus it happened that in the late spring, my domina being somewhat
occupied with Plinius and Tacitus in planning for orations at her house by
certain philosophers who, fearing the anger of Domitian, dared not speak
from the public rostra, I was sometimes permitted an hour to myself. And
then would I hie me down to the shop of Stephanus and if, perchance, Juvenal
were there I would wait while the two discoursed together.

Now all men were friends with Stephanus, and Stephanus liked a gossip.
For though Stephanus did seem hard when he was angry, I never knew one
who better loved his fellows. Whereas Juvenal was hard and bitter against
everyone so that it seemed strange they two should get pleasure from each
other’s company. But Stephanus would find humour in Juvenal’s sharp
sayings and he would laugh at Juvenal as I believe none else dared to do.
Yet each seemed to see a different side from the other, and when they
talked together about the evil doings of Roman lords and ladies, Stephanus
would say to Juvenal:

‘My friend, if thou wert one of them thou wouldst take delight in that
which now seemeth to thee so contemptible.’

And Juvenal would reply that he had liker fancy himself one of the
lowest beasts of the field than a so-called cultured Roman. Now, ‘twas
reported of Juvenal that most of all was he bitter against women, yet,
methinks, he had softness in him, for to me he was ever kind and courteous.

Some among the slaves and tradesfolk said he dared not be otherwise
before Stephanus, for, human-loving as was Stephanus, he had a fierce
temper when aroused. But I never knew of him and Juvenal quarrelling.

Thou wouldst that I should tell thee somewhat of these philosophers, of
whom it was Juvenal that I knew best, though Juvenal was not one of those
who made oration at the house of my domina.

He seemed of middle age; not tall, but broad and slow of movement.
His hair was lightish brown and his beard reddish and he had an earnest
face, cast somewhat heavily. Stephanus said he did take too seriously the
evil doings of the great and thought ill of all men and women who were
placed higher than himself. Nevertheless, was he happily married. A
good husband and father, though severe, and, methinks, he found pleasure
in his home life.

Now Juvenal was the son of a freedman who had a small farm in the
country—I know not where but I have heard he was born at a place called
Aquinum. Mayhap, because he was a Roman citizen they called him less
in question for his writings and orations than others who were of foreign
birth.

For there came a time when the philosophers were sent out of Rome and
Juvenal but escaped banishment by remaining very quiet. He had some
means of sustenance of his own and needed not to work to keep himself in
comfort, but, seeing that he thought it not well for any to be idle, he employed
himself as tutor to the sons of some of the better tradespeople, who were
glad to secure his services . . . .

‘Twas said that Juvenal might have tutored sons of greater men, but he
was wont to despise the nobility, and often said it was not from her princes
but from her people that Rome should recruit her rulers: and that if she

1 Concerning Juvenal. See Appendix II, Bk. III.
looked more to the raising of her people's minds, she would make better
governors for the State.

Oft, when he walked, he took his class of young lads with him, and as they
came up the street in a body, they would call at the house of Stephanus
and the boys would crowd the doorway, teasing the bird while Juvenal
discoursed with Stephanus within.

I did hear that Juvenal studied oratory under one of the chief orators,
who likewise gave lessons. I know not that orator's name, nor did Juvenal
himself wish it known. Methinks he liked it to be thought that he was a
good natural orator. But Stephanus knew and would joke Juvenal about
his lessons.

And I have heard that in his beginnings, he spoke down in the lower
forum where are the lesser merchants and the small food-shops and the
fish-market. It was a poor place for an orator, yet much trade was done
there and the populace thronged to listen to him.

Thou knowest, there are finer shops round the chief Forum and at the
corners of streets which lead to it—booksellers in especial, and here the
higher folk of Rome do congregate. But by law no food-sellers may deal in
the chief Forum save such as carry their wares on trays—sweetmeats,
fruits and the like: and even they dare not remain, for the quaestors1—of
which always there are stationed one or two who are changed by the hour
—would send on such loiterers lest they block the way to better men.

And round that chief Forum are the offices of those who have to do with
the State and of certain great providers from whom one may obtain what­
soever he desire, whether it be a poor noble to fill a vacant place at dinner
or a slave for service.

Then, not far from that Forum is what they call the Carinae. It is there
that Matho the lawyer had his office until his fortune failed and he was
forced to depart. Matho waxed fat when he was rich: but when he became
poor the skin grew loose upon him and he was of a yellow countenance, with
small squeamy eyes that seemed to be ever looking sideways.

Matho was reckoned a sharp lawyer and people wondered that with so
many clients and such clever ways of working he should have lost his money.
But some said he was too sharp and over-reached himself, and I think not
that Matho was employed for very clean work. So saith Juvenal, who doth
greatly scorn him. But Stephanus would laugh at Juvenal's tales of his
encounters with Matho. For when Matho took up his abode by the lower
forum at the corner of that street which is called—I remember not its name
—a narrow street abutting on the Forum—he did hear Juvenal speak, and
Juvenal's orations being cast against the highest, Matho said it was not well
that such sedition should be talked in Rome and he betrayed Juvenal to
those in authority. Thus, for a time, Juvenal had to be silent. For though
men despised Matho—even those who went to him for help—yet his word
was taken, as always is that of an informer.

I think Juvenal was very quiet in his speech. He did not speak loudly,
but yet he spoke with great force: and he did not use many gestures unless
he were speaking in the Forum.

Afterward, thou must know, he went up to the chief Forum and spoke
there; and though tales of what he said must have reached the Palace yet he
was not condemned for it. I know not why. Perchance it might have been
that all he said was interesting and amusing, too—or so thought the Romans

1 Offices of Quaestor and Aedile and the policing of Rome. See Appendix 12, Bk. III.
who came to listen. A great many did come—even of the chiefest of the nobles. 'The fellow with the edged sword for tongue'—they called Juvenal. For he spoke really well. And it was his joy to mount that rostrum.

Now, there were two rostra in the Forum—one close by the Senate House—it was very high and finely built of marble and engraved with men and beasts, and this was only used when one very special made a proclamation; and there was a lesser rostrum at the farther corner, nearer to the shops, where orations were often delivered, and it was this one Juvenal did use.

Yet, I would have thee understand that though Juvenal did evade the banishment of the philosophers on the first edict, 1 nevertheless, when the second came, excuse was found to send him into Egypt, not by banishment but that he might take up some civil office there. I know not what it was but I think that Domitian either feared or liked him, for Juvenal would go to the edge of Caesar's wrath, yet Caesar took no vengeance: and when Stephanus said to Juvenal, 'Thou dost endanger thy head,' Juvenal would laugh and answer that Domitian, fool though he might be, well knew the value of brains and would not pick out the best from Rome to destroy them.

For Juvenal, as thou knowest, thought very well of himself. Or it might have been that Domitian did not forget how Juvenal had spoken of him when first he ascended the throne. It was said—that was long before my remembrance—that Juvenal was one of the first to sing his praises. Because Domitian was a prince of goodly countenance and pleasing manners when he began to rule, having only such faults as many a young man hath ... I speak of Juvenal's sayings of him for I know naught of this myself. And Juvenal hoped that he would prove a worthy patron of literature and the arts—the which neither Titus nor Vespasian had been. For Domitian was learned in many things. 2 He could himself compose and was well versed in the dialects of other nations: moreover he was of a manly yet modest way. But all that changed. By indulging himself he became more and more vicious and less acceptable to such as were good and true men. And especially he shewed the fault of arrogance, in that he thought himself of more account than his father or his brother or any other Caesar. Juvenal was wont to say that in this he resembled Nero and that brains were but a bondage to a man because they led him into all sorts of harm and wickedness, the which, had he been a fool, he would not have dealt in.

Oft have I thought that the chief of Juvenal's bitterness against Domitian lay in that the hope he once had of him had been so sore disappointed.

And thus, Juvenal being strong both in his love and hatred, would now speak freely in blame as he had spoken in praise. For he was a staunch friend but a bad enemy—that was Juvenal. But at all this, Stephanus smiled and said that, in truth, Domitian made life difficult in Rome, but 'twere wisest to earn an honest livelihood if that was possible, and not concern oneself with the doings of the great. For his own part, he said, his time was fully occupied without meddling in questions of State.

And Juvenal would answer that State questions should first concern the sons of the State, whereof he and Stephanus were two. And that to remain silent and uncaring, while the State herself went to ruin, was conduct unbecitting dutiful sons.
And Stephanus would say, ‘Mayhap,’ and shrug. He had no mind to deal with such things.

Yet, thou knowest, Stephanus did much good himself, and this Juvenal would tell him, saying, ‘Thou dost make thyself out a lazy dog. Stephanus, who careth for naught but his bone and to bask in the sunshine. Luckily, thy deeds speak better for thee than thy words.’

Whereat Stephanus would say that ‘The gods had given him flesh and blood, and that flesh and blood must needs be stirred when other blood and flesh suffered. He could understand the pangs of the body,’ he said, ‘and a man would not be a man—were he Greek or Roman—if he would not lift a finger to help alleviate them. But these matters of the mind he would leave to men of mind to deal with, and none better fitted for that,’ he would say with a laugh, ‘than Juvenal.’

Thereon, Juvenal was well pleased, for he thought much of his own writings and would often bring a scroll of parchment and read Stephanus some fine witticism he had composed against the nobles or the priests or the women of Rome. The soldiery he did not so much condemn. For, he said, ‘they had been taught nothing but soldiering and ‘twas not likely they would understand aught else, and, seeing that as soldiers they did their duty, he would not condemn them.’

But upon priests—ay, and even philosophers, of which he counted himself one—Juvenal was sore. Their learning, he said, they wrought to folly, making boast of such things as they should hold as jewels in their breasts and, though knowing better, leading lives in truth as beasts.

For it was well known that few lived as they taught. And when the priests condemned sinners for small faults and they themselves spent carefully screened days indulging in the dearest of their vices, Juvenal would say:

‘Lo! what are the gods who keep such slaves as these? Thou and I, Stephanus, would sell or punish such as served us so. But the gods are no wiser than men and if they see these things they either care nothing or they trouble not themselves in the matter.’

Whereat, Stephanus would laugh loudly, and say:

‘Oh ay, the gods of Rome are a goodly crew and keep high revel, methinks, somewhere amid the clouds. Olympus must be a pleasanter place than Rome and that is why they stop there and come not down to put things straight.’

Well, thou dost know the names of many men of different kinds who spoke well and wrote well, such as Tacitus, Statius, and of course Martial, who was chief among the poets. I have seen Statius. He was a great, broad, fleshy man, not very tall, and with no hair upon his face save that he grew a little down on either cheek after a manner of his own. His hair was dark and curly and he had an open, strong kind of face. He went sometimes to feasts. I have seen him when he dined at Julia’s. Martial did often come to Julia’s house. Methinks Martial was to Julia’s liking. ‘Twas thought he had a marvellous clever way in shewing forth the witty side of things. And I have heard even Juvenal, who doth despise the man, speak in right good praise of his verse. Thus, there was no need Martial should be poor, but it was known that much of his substance went to waste on women. He hath a lodging, very high up, near the Tiber. It is a lowly part of Rome where

1 Statius, the poet. See Appendix 14, Bk. III.
many people do hire out portions of their houses. But Martial minds not
how he fawns and cringes for favour nor cares who may look down upon him
so that he gain what he doth want.

So saith Stephanus, who himself is stiff-backed, and he saith that Juvenal
is worth ten of Martial . . . and so methinks likewise, though Martial be well-
dressed and in looks handsome, and Juvenal hath the plebeian air. Yet
Martial is no very fine figure of a man, being thin and spare and without
dignity of presence. He hath dark eyebrows, which run up sharp, and
piercing eyes, and his nose is well-shaped, which giveth character to his face.

Tacitus is better born than any of these and Tacitus is juster in his views
than the other two. He is truer about life, looking at both sides, and is a
good man and a wise one. Methinks he did not care for Julia but he came
sometimes to her feasts. All did that because of her position.

Thou knowest, Juvenal did not go to parties like Martial and other men
of note who spoke or wrote: and though he said he did not want to attend
such shameless entertainments, yet, methinks, had Juvenal been bidden in
state he would have gone if ’twere only to see how they were conducted.
And I have heard Stephanus say to him:

‘Thou protest freely of these doings, but seeing thou hast not witnessed
them, thine information may not be correct.’

Now Juvenal got most of his talk from the slaves, since there are always
plenty who will tell aught for pay. And he paid them well and thought no
scorn of it. ‘For the poor things,’ he said, ‘like a coin as well as do their
masters: and since they are not paid for the services they render unto these,
’tis right that I should pay them, seeing they serve me well.’

And Juvenal was for ever preaching that slavery should be done away
with: but often, methought, that were all slaves set free, then would there
be none to serve, seeing that most of them only served because they were
obliged.

Methinks Juvenal felt that by reason of his own cleverness, he was as good
and better than most of these poets and philosophers, and he thought scorn
of those habits and customs which kept him outside and yet admitted men
such as Martial and Flavius Archippus.1 For among the philosophers there
was one in especial—this Flavius Archippus whom Juvenal scorned and
would prate against roundly when he spoke to Stephanus. For this Arch­
ippus was well received in many noble houses in Rome, though I never heard
good spoken of him, and ’twas said that only by favour of Caesar was it that
he did escape the due reward of his deeds, and at one time even Caesar ban­
ishèd him. But by appeal he obtained a cancelling of that order and back
again he came to Rome, where he lived a life of much indulgence, though,
all the time, he preached the Stoic doctrine and loved, with much state, to
lecture. And this did anger Juvenal, who said that Domitian would only
retain those of evil life about him.

And one—Euphrates,2 whom I have heard and seen, for he did afterward
make an oration in the house of Valeria—he was not banished, for at the
time he was on a visit with his noble wife and retinue to some other country,
and when they returned none said him nay, seeing that his wife was the
greater one of the two. Methinks that Julia interceded for him with Domi­
tian, for, though she cared naught for philosophers, she was wont to say that
’twas well there should be some since they took away certain dull persons

1 Flavius Archippus. See Appendix 15, Bk. III.
2 Euphrates, a Stoic philosopher, described more fully by Nyria, later.
who were unpleasing to her and left more space in which the others might enjoy themselves.

Greatly did Juvenal scorn Martial, who, likewise, thought scorn of him. But Martial was more clever than Juvenal, in a certain fashion, and what made Juvenal most cross was when Stephanus said to him:

'Friend, thou shouldst take lessons from Martial. For this great Jupiter whom ye do both serve hath endowed him with the wisdom of the gods themselves, seeing that Martial knoweth well the distinctions of place and payeth reverence to each according to his due, which is what the gods like. And thou wouldst do better, Juvenal, wert thou likewise to pay in that kind.'

Then would Juvenal swear in his beard, and say:

'By Mercury himself, who stood sponsor for Martial, I would serve no god again, if that were their desire.'

And oftentimes he would say:

'But it matters not what gods rule in Rome while the Romans are rotten at the core. For, serve they gods of Greece or Egypt, or such as they have named themselves, their service would be false or hollow. But it maketh a man wonder,' he would add in more thoughtful mood, 'if indeed these gods who sport in higher heaven are worthy of men's faith and confidence, seeing they cannot control them better or do not choose to do so.'

And Stephanus, with a twinkle in his eye, would go on with whatever he might be doing, and thus reply:

'The gods are too busy, friend, for, be they gods of Greece or Rome, yet must we remember that they have their own affairs—their loves and espousals, their quarrels and their enjoyments—and, methinks, we are too hard upon them when we expect them to trouble themselves over our little lustings, likewise. Look at Denarmid! So that he doeth that which I tell him, and proveth honest and trustworthy, doth not steal my jewels, keepeth the place clean and lies not to me upon the errands on which I send him, I care not at all though he spend his overtime in rioting and jousting. Thus, mayhap, it be with Jupiter himself and, in very truth, were I Father Jove, as the Romans call him, I would think my time well occupied with a lusty lady-wife like his, and such a family who were busy roystering, themselves—without troubling myself about the grasshoppers that play on hills beneath me.'

But Juvenal did not come much into my life save through Stephanus, and methought, that when Stephanus said a wise or witty thing, it had been dropped into his ear by Juvenal. So that I, who knew him well, did call him Juvenal's mouthpiece when he quoted some opinion to me of men or things the which I knew he did not himself hold. Oft have I said to him, 'Speak for thyself, Stephanus. I need not to know what that growling dog doth say.'

'I did not understand Juvenal or his way of looking at things. He was away from me. And it seemed to me that seeing Juvenal was so busy despising everyone, he must likewise despise me. Nevertheless, he was ever kindly to me, and sometimes he said things which made me feel that he did not think me like the other people. But I saw that Stephanus liked not I should hear Juvenal talk, for oft, when I was there, he would try to hush him and to turn his speech. And this Juvenal knew quite well and would smile, but in ill-pleased fashion, and oftentimes he would say to me:

'Friend Stephanus thinketh such matters not fit for a lady's ear,' and
this, specially when I put to him a question or two. But often he would
follow this saying with another, 'I warrant thou hast heard stranger things
within the sacred dressing-rooms of Julia or Valeria—' or wheresoever I
happened to have been. I minded not what he said of Julia, but I liked not
his talk of Valeria and that the less because Stephanus, by his manner, would
seem to agree with him. And thou knowest that afterwards, if there were
one person whom Stephanus did mislike, it was Valeria. Yet for this he had
no cause save that never would I neglect her wishes for his.

And once was I greatly wroth with Juvenal for the evil that he said of
Valeria. That was after she had been ill when, for many weeks, I went not to
the house of Stephanus and saw nought of Juvenal. But afterward he said
that sometimes the gods sent suffering and hardnesses upon one who was a
fool in order to keep such an one from crime and worse folly: and that, see­
ing Valeria was not, so far, following the road whereon all Roman ladies
walked, her sickness might have been sent, as it were, to bar to her that gate.
But his words angered me and I spoke sharply, whereat he smiled in scorn
and said I was a loyal champion and that I had not been myself had I spoken
other than I did. Then Stephanus smiled on me, and gently he said:

'Though she be of the sex of Roman ladies, Nyria knoweth naught of
these things, and a maid can gain no good, friend Juvenal, by listening to
thy talk concerning them.'

Nevertheless, thou shouldst know that 'twas but now and then during the
time I have been telling thee of—most, mayhap, in the beginning—that I
heard the talk of Juvenal. I never saw him anywhere save at the shop of
Stephanus. And now I mind me that of the greatest one of whom Juvenal
spoke I have told thee naught. I did hear his talk of him that was called
Apollonius—from Tyana, they said. He was the subject of much thoughtful
discourse between Juvenal and Stephanus, and I have heard others also tell
of that wondrous man.

Some said that he came as a god in disguise, and some would question
which god he was. And Juvenal himself somewhat favoured this belief.
But Stephanus shook his head and said, the gods were too busy and that if
indeed they were wise they would know better than to take a human form.

But this Apollonius did many things which were spoken of, though he
would not have them widely known, and hushed all talk about himself when
it reached his ears. He was kind to the sick and to the poor, and I heard
that when once he walked through the Suburra there was a following round
him of those whom he had healed and helped, and many ran before and
cried, 'The great Apollonius cometh.' That was when he was on his way
to preach on the banks of the Tiber, and where the road was muddy they
laid their garments before him that he might tread upon them, and some ran
shouting with branches in their hands and wreaths of laurel. But he liked
it not; and after he had spoken to the people while they pressed around
him, some urging him to come within their houses and take refreshment, he
was gone, even while they looked, and none knew whither.

But he was seen afterwards on the other side of Rome talking to a com­
pany of slaves who worked chained in the Quarries and who were sore and
sorrowful, being beaten with the lashes of the overseers. Now, one of these
overmen raised his arm to beat a poor slave who was struggling with a block
of stone—for they had to drag the stones up the hill with ropes. And

1 The Wonder-worker, Apollonius of Tyana. See Appendix 16, Bk. III.
Apollonius lifted his finger, and lo! the arm shrank shrivelled at the overseer's side and the rope fell off the slave's shoulders so that he sat upon the stone and rested till his strength came back to him. Then from a spring near, Apollonius filled a vessel that he had brought, and gave it to the slaves to drink. And lo! when they tasted, it was wine. 'Twas rich Falernian, that made their blood flow like young men's blood. And he made them cakes on a little fire of sticks laid crosswise. He gathered the sand upon platters of wood and kneaded the cakes with a few drops from the vessel. And lo! they were like rich wheaten cakes and cheese that he gave them. 'Twas said that such as secreted those cakes and carried them away in their tunics never found them stale though they kept them a long time, and some there were who, when they broke off a portion and ate it, found the cake whole again: and this they said was because the great Apollonius would not have that any man should starve. It was well known that this company belonged to the great quarry-master—I have lost his name—who both starved and ill-served his slaves.

But these were some of the stories that were told about him. None of them I ever knew myself, for I never saw Apollonius—at least I think not—and, afterwards, he went away from Rome, for he told the people that he had places to visit and much work to do. And some there were, he said, of good intent who, though he worked not with them and to whom his presence would only bring pain, were men of much merit. But yet, he said, his own work was good and they would know it by his deeds. Only, he would go where men had no helper, since in Rome there were several who perchance could do better than he. But I knew not of whom he spake.

Now yet there is one other of whom I would thou shouldst know—who was likewise a friend of Juvenal, by name Ascletario. Of him I saw and heard most when I dwelt with Euphena in the household of Julia.

This man was an astrologer, and wondrous skilled. He had his abode out on the wildest part of one of the hills. Oft, when I wandered, did I pass his hut in the distance but, save once, I never saw him there. For, in the daytime, he slept, they said, unless he were engaged upon some special undertaking.

I have seen him in Stephanus's shop with Juvenal, but this not often, for he came not to gossip. In truth, to look at him, thou wouldst not think he could gossip. He was a thin man who always dressed in dark raiment and always wore a pointed cap of curious fashion. His hair was dark, turning grey in places, and his beard dark also and tipped with grey. He had large dark brown eyes that seemed to see a great way, yet in the daylight he usually kept them shaded. Men said that he gazed so much at the stars that he could not bear the light of day. He had a thin face, very hollow in the cheeks, and his nose was high and thin.

He knew Euphena. Methinks he taught her much of her lore. But this I know not of myself, for Euphena never would have me present if by chance he were practising what he shewed her or if—as sometimes but very seldom happened—he came to visit her in the slaves' court.

Then afterward, Euphena would gather up her garments and such things as she needed and betake herself to his hut upon the hill and once I did see him with her there when I was out late with Stephanus.

1 Ascletario. See Appendix 17, Bk. III.
We had been gathering herbs afar and night had fallen when we crossed the hill and the stars like silver spangles covered the sky. And when we drew near the hut I grew afraid, knowing not why, and clung to Stephanus’s arm. He held me comforting and, as our path led near by, we saw two dusky figures crouched outside the hut. These, as we drew close, rose up and held their faces to the sky, remaining motionless. But the taller had something in his hand which flashed and, as he stooped again and moved about, I saw the starlight shine upon it. ’Twas some kind of instrument, and other things, shaped oddly, lay about the ground. There was a bowl of something that looked like liquid and a heap of sand, and there were markings on the ground such as Euphena made in her divining, and I guessed the other lesser one was she. But that was not until I reached home and found that Euphena was absent. ’Twas said that Domitian greatly feared this Ascletario. I know not how that was known but I heard Juvenal and Stephanus say the same. . . . He was a strange man—Ascletario—shadowy, always courteous, but seeming to like best to hide himself and seldom known to walk abroad or talk with others in the Forum.

I heard Juvenal say that Domitian was afeard of astrologers for the reason that a company of Chaldeans had foretold at his birth that violence should bring about his latter end. . . . I ought to have told thee this before, but to me it had seemed that Domitian scorned—or tried to scorn—all such foolish matters.1

1 He (Domitian) had long entertained a suspicion of the year and day when he should die, and even of the very hour and manner of his death; all of which he had learned from the Chaldeans when he was a very young man. Suet., Domitian, XIV.