

who were waiting for an audience, and in the antechamber, where the aurelians had had to pay so bitterly for their insolence yesterday, they were detained by the blonda and red haired giants of the uermanian body guard, whose leader, sabinus, a thracian of exceptional height and strength, was acquainted with the philosopher. caracalla had given orders that no one was to be admitted till the negotiations with the parthian ambassadors, which had begun an hour ago, were brought to a conclusion. philostratus well knew that the emperor would interrupt the most important business if melissa were announced, but there was much that he would have the maiden lay to heart before he led her to the monarch; while she wished for nothing so earnestly as that the door which separated her from her terrible wooer might remain closed to the end of time. when the chamberlain adventus looked out from the imperial apartments, she begged him to give her a little time before announcing her. the old man blinked consent with his dim eyes, but the philosopher took care that melissa should not be left to herself and the terrors of her heart. he employed all the eloquence at his command to make her comprehend what it meant to be an empress and the consort of the ruler of the world. in flaming colors he painted to her the good she might do in such a position, and the tears she might wipe away. then he reminded her of the healing and soothing influence she had over caracalla, and that this influence came doubtless from the gods, since it passed the bounds of nature and acted so beneficently. no one heard a voice say in the english tongue; for by my troth, good malcolm, i had thought that thou and i would not live to tell this tale to others. but where are our good friends and rescuers verily, i have seen nothing, yet there must have been a good dozen or more. light thy lantern, an thou canst, and let us look well round us, for by the mass i shall soon think we have been helped by the spirits of the forest. nay, fair sir, but only by two travellers, said gaston, advancing from the shadow of the giant trees, his brother closely following him. we are ourselves benighted in this forest, having by some mischance lost our road to castres, which we hoped to have sighted ere now. hearing the struggle, and the shouts with which you doubtless tried to scare off the brutes, we came to see if we might not aid, and being well acquainted with the calls of the hunters of the wolves, succeeded beyond our hopes. i trust the cowardly and treacherous beasts have done you no injury by my troth, it is strange to hear my native tongue in these parts, and so fairly spoken withal. i trust we are not bewitched, or the sport of spirits. who art thou, brave boy and whence comest thou how comes it that thou, being, as it seems, a native of these parts, speakest so well a strange language it was our mothers tongue, answered gaston, speaking nevertheless guardedly, for he had been warned by the father not to be too ready to tell his name and parentage to all the world. we are bound for bordeaux, and thence to england, to seek our mothers kindred, as she bid us ere she died. if that be so, then let us join forces and travel on together, said he whom they had thus succoured, a man well mounted on a fine horse, and with a mounted servant beside him, so that the brothers took him for a person of quality, which indeed he was, as they were soon to sly smile, put them into the girls hand. arsine felt as if it were in a dream that she went to the ship builders house, and from thence to the theatre, and on her way she fully understood, for the first time, that alarm and delight may find room side by side in a girls mind, and that one by no means hinders the existence of the other. fear and expectation so completely overmastered her, that she neither saw nor heard what was going on around her; only once she noticed a young man with a garland on his head, who, as he passed her, arm in arm with another, called out to her gaily: long live beauty from that moment she kept her eyes fixed on her lap and on the roses dame doris had given her. the flowers reminded her of the kind old romans son, and she wondered whether tall pollux had perhaps seen her in her finery. that, she would have liked very much; and after all, it was not at all impossible, for, of course, since pollux had been working at lochias he must often have gone to his parents. perhaps even he had himself picked the roses for her, but had not dared to give them to her as her father was so near. xibut the young sculptor had not been at the gatehouse when arsinoe went by. he had thought of her often enough since meeting her again by the bust of her mother; but on this particular