

this i had frequently quitted it full of deep contempt, for among the imprisoned christians, there were too often lazy vagabonds, who had loudly confessed the saviour only to be fed by the gifts of the brethren; there i had seen accursed criminals, who hoped by a martyrs death to win back the redemption that they had forfeited; there i had heard the woeful cries of the faint hearted, who feared death as much as they feared treason to the most high. there were things to be seen there that might harrow the soul, but also examples of the sublimest greatness. men have i seen there, aye, and women, who went to their death in calm and silent bliss, and whose end was, indeed, noble more noble than that of the much lauded codrus or decius mus. among all the prisoners there was neither man nor woman who was more calmly self possessed, more devoutly resigned, than magdalen. the words, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that need no repentance, strengthened her greatly, and she repented yea and verily, she did. and for my part, god is my witness that not an impulse as from man to woman drew me to her, and yet i could not leave her, and i passed the day by her side, and at night she haunted my soul, and it would have seemed to me fairer than all in life besides to have been allowed to die with her. it was at the time of the fourth decree of persecution, a few months before the promulgation of the first edict of toleration. he that sacrifices, it is said, shall go unpunished, and he that refuses, shall by some means or other be brought to it, but those who continue stiff necked shall suffer death. for a long time much consideration had been shown reserve the sanctuary for the wedding of the fugitives for a short time after the departure of the procession, which was to take place at sunset. in return for this service another might perhaps soon be requested from the friend of octavianus, who greeted his promise with grateful warmth. the priesthood, said serapion, takes sides with all who are unjustly persecuted, and in this case bestows aid the more willingly on account of its great anxiety to guard the queen from an act which would be difficult to approve. as for the fugitives, so far as he could see, only two possibilities were open to them: cleopatra would cleave to mark antony and go would that the immortals might avert it to ruin, or she would sacrifice him and save her throne and life. in both cases the endangered lovers could soon return uninjured the queen had a merciful heart, and never retained anger long if no guilt existed. the details of the plan were then settled by archibius, anukis, and berenike, who was with the family of arius, and the decision was communicated to the architect. archibius had maintained the same silence concerning the destination of the fugitives towards the men composing the council and barines mother as to his sister. with regard to the mission of timagenes and the political questions which occupied his mind, he gave charmian only the degree of information necessary to explain the plan she so lovingly promoted; but she had no desire to know more. on the way home her mind was wholly absorbed by the fear that cleopatra had missed her services and discovered barines flight. true, she mentioned the queens desire to place her children in archibiuss charge, but she could not give him full particulars until she reached her own apartments. her absence had not been noticed. the regent mardion had received the procession her down to a secure footing on the plateau. so long as she followed him unresistingly he led her on towards the mountain without aim or fixed destination but away, away from the abyss. she paused by a square block of diorite, and paulus, who had not failed to observe how heavy her steps were, desired her to sit down; he pushed up a flag of stone, which he propped with smaller ones, so that sirona might not lack a support for her weary back. when he had accomplished this, sirona leaned back against the stone, and something of dawning satisfaction was audible in the soft sigh, which was the first sound that had escaped her tightly closed lips since her rescue. paulus smiled at her encouragingly, and said, now rest a little, i see what you want; one cannot defy the heat of the sun for a whole day with impunity. sirona nodded, pointed to her mouth, and implored wearily and very softly for water, a little water. paulus struck his hand against his forehead, and cried eagerly, directly i will bring you a fresh draught. in a few minutes i will be back again. sirona looked after him as he hastened away. her gaze became more and more staring and glazed, and she felt as if the rock, on