

John Gibson Lockhart



Valerius - A Roman Story

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SINCE you are desirous, my friends, that I should relate to you, at length and in order, the things which happened to me during my journey to Rome, notwithstanding the pain which it must cost me to throw myself back into some of the feelings of that time, I cannot refuse to comply with your request. After threescore years spent in this remote province of an empire, happy, for the most part, in the protection of enlightened, just, and benevolent princes, I remember, far more accurately than things which occurred only a few months ago, the minutest particulars of what I saw and heard while I sojourned, young and a stranger, among the luxuries and cruelties of the capital of the world, as yet imperfectly recovered from the effects of the flagitious tyranny of the last of the Flavii.

My father, as you have heard, came with his legion into this island, and married a lady of native blood, some years before the first arrival of Agricola. In the wars of that illustrious commander, during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, he had the fortune to find opportunities of distinguishing himself; but when his general was recalled, by the jealousy of Domitian, he retired from public life, and determined to spend the remainder of his days in peace, on the lands which belonged to him in right of his wife here in Britain. He laid the foundations of the house in which I have now the pleasure of receiving you; and here, in the cultivation of his fields, and in the superintendance of my education, he found sufficient employment for an active,

though no longer an ambitious mind. Early in the reign of Trajan he died. Never did either Roman or British dwelling lament a more generous master.

I cannot pretend to regret the accident which immediately afterwards separated me from a gentle mother—never to see her more upon the earth. Yet deeply was the happiness of my returning hour stained by that privation. It is the common rule of nature, that our parents should precede us to the grave; and it is also her rule, that our grief for them should not be of such power as to prevent us from entering, after they are gone, into a zealous participation both of the business and the pleasures of life. Yet, in after years, the memory of that buried tenderness rises up ever and anon, and wins rather than warns us to a deliberate contemplation of our own dissolution.

Towards the end of the winter following the death of my father, there arrived letters which engaged anxious consideration. They were from members of his family, none of whom either my mother or myself had seen. It was explained, especially by Caius Licinius, the lawyer, (who was near of kin to our house,) that by the death of a certain Patrician, Cneius Valerius by name, I had become legally entitled to a very considerable fortune, to claim and take possession of which, demanded my immediate presence in the metropolis. My rights, said this jurist, were indeed called in question by another branch of the family, but were I on the spot, his professional exertions, with whatever interest he or any of his friends could command, should be at my service, for the sake of my father and of my name.

The love of travel had never before been excited in my bosom; but now that I knew I was so soon to embark for Italy, the delights which I might there hope to experience came crowding upon my imagination. The dark and pine-clad banks of my native Anton, said I, shall now be exchanged for that golden-waved Tiber, of which so many illustrious poets have sung. Instead of moving here among the ill-cemented and motley fabric of an insulated colony, and seeing only the sullen submission of barbarians on the one hand, or the paltry vanity of provincial deputies on the other, I shall tread the same ground with the rulers of the earth, and wear, among native Romans, the gown of my ancestors. I shall behold the Forum, which has heard the eloquence of Cicero and Hortensius; I shall ascend to the Capitol, where Caesar triumphed; I shall wander in the luxurious gardens of Sallust, or breathe the fresh air in the fields of Cato: I shall gaze upon the antique majesty of temples and palaces, and open my eyes on all that art and nature have been able to heap together through eight centuries, for the ornament of the chosen seat of wisdom and valour.

A single trusty slave was selected to accompany me. It was not certainly on account of his accomplishments that Boto had been chosen for this duty; for although he had lived all his days in the vicinity of the colonists at Venta, there was scarcely a person within the bounds of the British Belgae that spoke worse Latin. He was, however, a man of natural sagacity, possessing shrewd discernment concerning whatever things had fallen under his customary observation; and he showed no symptom either of

diffidence respecting his qualifications for this new office, or of regret at being separated from those in whose company many years of gentle servitude had glided over his sun-burnt countenance. It was reported to me, that he invited several of our rustics to drink with him in one of the out-houses, where his exultation knew no limits. He was going to Rome, for his young master very well knew he could never get on in such a journey without the helping eye and hand of Boto; and he had a brother in Italy already, (he had gone over with a distinguished legionary some ten years before,) and from him (for he would of course meet with him as soon as our arrival should be known) he would receive all requisite information concerning the doings of the great city. The usefulness which, he doubted not, I should be constrained to acknowledge in his manifold qualifications, would, without all question, entitle him to some signal reward—perhaps nothing less than manumission on his return.

Two days passed more quickly than any I ever remember to have spent amidst a strange mixture of mirth, and sorrow, and noisy preparation.

Where that single tall naked pine now stands buffeted by the wind, then grew a thick grove, of which that relic alone survives. It was there that I turned round to gaze once more on the quiet verdure of these paternal fields, and our small pastoral stream glistening here and there beneath the shady covert of its margin.

I had at first intended to cross over to Gaul, and traversing that province, enter Italy, either by the route of the Alps, in case we could procure convenient guides and

companions, or by some vessel sailing from Marseilles or Forum Julii to Ostium. But the advice of one of my neighbours, who had himself been a great traveller, made me alter this plan, and resolve to commit myself to the care of an experienced mariner who was just about to sail for Italy, by the way of the pillars of Hercules, in a vessel laden chiefly with tin; and on reaching the Clausentum, I found this man, with several passengers, ready for the voyage.

For the first three or four days, I was so afflicted by the motion of the vessel, that I could bestow little attention on any external object; my eyes were so confused and dazzled, that I saw nothing beyond the corner of the deck on which I had caused my carpets to be laid; and a few ejaculations to Castor and Pollux were all the articulate sounds that I uttered. By degrees, however, the weight of my depression began to be alleviated; and at intervals, more particularly during the night watches, if I was not altogether in possession of myself, I was at least well enough to enjoy a sort of giddy delight in watching the billows as they rose and retreated from the prow. There were moments, also, in which the behaviour of Boto, under this new species of calamity, could furnish me, as it had already done the more hardy of my fellow-voyagers, with store of mirth. Near us frequently, upon the deck, sat a Captain of the Praetorian Bands, who, more than any other of these, displayed a florid complexion and cheerful eye, unalterable by the fluctuation of the waters. This Sabinus had served in all the wars of Agricola, and accompanied him even in his perilous circumnavigation of the islands which lie scattered to the north of Britain. He had also gone back to Rome with his

commander, not, like him, to extenuate imperial jealousy by the affectation of indolence, but to seek for new occupation on some other disturbed frontier of the Empire. In Syria and Cappadocia he had spent some years; after which, he had attended the Emperor himself through Maesia and Illyricum, and all those countries he traversed and re-traversed, during that shameful contest in which so many Roman eagles were made the prey of barbarous enemies, and which terminated at last in that cowardly treaty, by which Domitian granted a diadem to Decebalus, and condescended to place the Roman Senate among the tributaries of a Dacian. Our friend had also strutted his part in that gorgeous triumph, or rather succession of triumphs, by which the defeated and disgraced Prince, on his return from the Ister, mocked the eyes and ears of the incredulous and indignant Romans. In a word, he had partaken in all kinds of fortune, good and evil, and preserved his rubicundity and equanimity unaltered in them all. Having attained to a situation of some dignity, he had now been visiting Britain on a special message from the new Emperor, and was returning in the hope that no future accident of fortune, or princely caprice, would ever again make it necessary for him to quit the shows and festivities of the capital.

This good-natured man sat down beside my suffering peasant, endeavouring to withdraw his attention from the pangs of his sickness, by pointing out the different boats which came in view as we held on from the Gobaeian rocks, keeping close to the shore as we went, in order to shun, as well as we could, the customary fury of the Aquitanic Ocean.

"Behold these fishing-vessels," he would cry, "which have undoubtedly been upon the coast of Rutupia for oysters, or it may be about the mouth of yonder Ligoris for turbot, and are now stretching all their canvass to get home with their booty to Italy. Smooth be your winds and fair your passage, oh rare fish!" To which the downcast Boto would reply, "Lavish not, oh master, your good wishes upon the mute fish, which have been tossed about all their lives, but reserve them rather for me (unhappy) who am thus tormented in an unnatural and intolerable manner;" or perhaps, "Speak not, I beseech you, of oysters, or of turbot, or of any other eatable, for I believe I shall never again feel hungry, so grievously are all my internal parts discomposed. Oh, that I had never left my native fields, and bartered the repose of my whole body for the vain hope of gratification to my eyes!"

By degrees, however, custom reconciled all of us to the motion of the bark, and the weather being calm during the greater part of the voyage, I enjoyed, at my leisure, the beauties, both of the sea, and of the shores amongst which we glided. From time to time, we put in for water and other necessaries, to various sea-ports of the Spanish Peninsula; but our stay was never so long at any place as to admit of us losing sight of our vessel. Our chief delight, indeed, consisted in the softness and amenity of the moonlight nights we spent in sailing along the coasts of Mauritania,—now the dark mountains of the family of Atlas throwing their shadows far into the sea—and anon, its margin glittering with the white towers of Siga, or Gilba, or Cartenna, or some other of the rich cities of that old Carthaginian region. On

such nights it was the custom of all the passengers to be congregated together upon the deck, where the silent pleasures of contemplation were, from time to time, interrupted by some merry song chanted in chorus by the mariners, or perhaps some wild barbarian ditty, consecrated by the zeal of Boto to the honour of some ancient indigenous hero of the North. Nor did our jovial Praetorian disdain to contribute now and then to the amusement of the assembly, by some boisterous war-song, composed, perhaps, by some light-hearted young spearman, which our centurion might have learned by heart, without any regular exertion, from hearing it sung around many a British and Dacian watch-fire.

Thus we contrived to pass the time in a cheerful manner, till we reached the Lilybaean promontory. We tarried there two days to refit some part of our rigging, and then stretched boldly across the lower sea, towards the mouth of the Tiber. We were becalmed, however, for a whole day and night, after we had come within sight of the Pharos of Ostium, where, but for the small boats that came out to us with fresh fish and fruit, we should have had some difficulty in preserving our patience; for, by this time, our stock of wine was run to the last cup, and nothing remained to be eat but some mouldy biscuit which had survived two voyages between Italy and Britain. During this unwelcome delay, the Praetorian endeavoured to give me as much information as he could about the steps necessary to be pursued on my arrival in the city. But, to say truth, his experience had lain chiefly among martial expeditions and jovial recreations, so that I could easily perceive he was no

great master of the rules of civil life. From him, however, I was glad to find, that the reputation of Licinius was really as great at Rome as it had been represented in our province; and, indeed, he treated me with a yet greater measure of attention after he was informed of my relationship to that celebrated jurist.

Early in the morning, a light breeze sprung up from the west, and with joyful acclamations the sails were once again uplifted. The number of mariners on board was insufficient for impelling the heavily laden vessel altogether by the force of oars, but now they did not refuse to assist the favouring breeze with strenuous and lively exertion. The Praetorian cheered and incited them by his merry voice, and even the passengers were not loath to assist them in this labour. My slave, among the rest, joined in the toil; but his awkwardness soon relieved him from his seat on the bench; a disgrace which he would have shared with his master, had I been equally officious.

Ere long, we could trace with exactness those enormous structures by which the munificence of Augustus had guarded and adorned that great avenue of nations to the imperial city. Those mountains of marble, projected on either side into the deep, surpassed every notion I had formed of the extent to which art may carry its rivalry of nature. Their immovable masses were garnished here and there with towers and battlements, on which the Praetorian pointed out to me the framework of those terrible catapults, and other engines of warfare, of which no specimens have ever been seen in Britain.

No sooner had we stepped upon the shore, than we were surrounded by a great throng of hard-favoured persons, who pulled us by the cloak, with innumerable interrogations and offers of service. Among these, the varieties of form, complexion, and accent, were such, that we could not regard them without especial wonder; for it appeared as if every tribe and language under heaven had sent some representative to this great seaport of Rome. The fair hair and blue eye of the Gaul or German, might here be seen close by the tawny skin of the Numidian or Getulian slave, or the shining blackness of the Ethiopian visage. The Greek merchant was ready, with his Thracian bondsman carrying his glittering wares upon his back; the usurer was there, with his arms folded closely in his mantle; nor was the Chaldean or Assyrian soothsayer awanting, with his air of abstraction and his flowing beard.

Boto, as if alarmed with the prevailing bustle, and fearful lest some untoward accident should separate us, kept close behind me, grasping my gown. But our good friend Sabinus did not long leave us in this perplexity; for, having hastily engaged the master of a small barge to carry him to Rome, he insisted that I should partake of this easy method of conveyance. "We found the vessel small but convenient, furnished with a red awning, under which cushions and carpets were already stretched out for our repose. The oars were soon in motion, and we began to emerge from among the forest of masts with a rapidity which astonished me; for the multitude of vessels of all sizes, continually crossing and re-crossing, was so great, that at first I expected every moment some dangerous accident might occur.

By degrees, however, such objects failed to keep alive my attention; the sleeplessness of the preceding night, and the abundance of an Ostian repast, conspiring to lull me into a gentle doze, which continued for I know not what space. I awoke, greatly refreshed, and found we had made considerable progress; for the continual succession of stately edifices already indicated the vicinity of the metropolis. The dark green of the venerable groves, amidst which the buildings were, for the most part, embosomed, and the livelier beauties of the parterres which here and there intervened between these and the river, afforded a soft delight to my eyes, which had so long been fatigued with the uniform flash and dazzle of the Mediterranean waves, and the roughness of the sea-beaten precipices. The minute and elaborate cultivation every where visible, the smoothness of the shorn turf on the margin, the graceful foliage of the ancient planes and sycamores,—but, above all, the sublimity of the porticos and arcades, and the air of established and inviolable elegance which pervaded the whole region, kept my mind in pleasurable wonder.

Here and there, a gentle winding conducted us through some deep and massy shade of oaks and elms; whose branches, stretching far out from either side, diffused a sombre and melancholy blackness almost entirely over the face of Tiber. Loitering carelessly, or couched supinely, beneath some of these hoary branches, we could see, from time to time, the figure of some stately Roman, or white-robed lady, with her favourite scroll of parchment in her hand. The cool and glassy rippling of the water produced a humming music of stillness in the air, which nothing

disturbed, save only the regular dash of the oars, and, now and then, the deep and strenuous voice of our cautious helmsman. Anon would ensue some glimpse of the open champaign, descending with all its wealth of golden sheaves to the very brink of the river—or, perhaps, the lively courts of a farmyard stretching along the margin of some tributary streamlet—or some long expanse of level meadow, with herds of snow-white heifers. I could not gaze upon the rich and splendid scene without reverting, with a strange mixture of emotions, to the image of this my native land; its wild forests, shaggy with brushwood and unprofitable coppice, through which of old the enormous wild deer stalked undisturbed, except by the adder of the grass, or the obscene fly of the thicket; its little patches of corn and meadow, laboriously rescued from the domain of the wild beast, and rudely fortified against his continual incursions;—the scattered hamlets of this Brigian valley, and my own humble villa—then humbler than it is now. Trees, and temples, and gardens, and meadows, and towns, and villages, were, ere long, lost in one uniform sobriety of twilight; and it was already quite dark, when the centurion, pointing to the left bank, said, "Behold the Gardens of Caesar: beyond, is the Portian Gate, and the street of the Rural Lares. In a few moments we shall see the lights of the Sublician Bridge, and be in the city." At these words I started up, and gazing forward, could penetrate through the mists of evening into the busy glare of a thousand streets and lanes, opening upon the river. The old wall was already visible; where, after having swept round the region towards the Vatican and Janicular Hills, it brings the last of its turrets

close down to the Tiber, over against the great dock-yards by the Field of Brutus.

Through a forest of triremes, galleys, and all sorts of craft, we then shot on to the bridge—beneath the centre arch of which our steersman conducted us. Beyond, such was the hum of people on the quays, and such the star-like profusion of lights reflected in the water, that we doubted not we had already reached the chief seat of the bustle of Rome. On, however, we still held our course, till the theatre of Marcellus rose like a mountain on our right. It was there that we ran our bark into the shore, not far from the little bridge—the third as you ascend the river—which conducts to the Island and the Temple of Aesculapius. While our friend was settling matters with the master, and the attendants were bringing out our baggage, I stood by myself on the elevated quay. Here a long tier of reflected radiance bespoke, it may be, the vicinity of some splendid portico—of palace, or temple, or bath, or theatre; there a broad and steady blaze of burning red, indicated the abode of artisans, resolved, as it seemed, on carrying their toil into the bosom of the night. Between—some speck of lustre betrayed, perhaps, the lamp of the solitary student, or the sober social hour of some peaceful family, assembled around the hearth of their modest lares. Behold me then, said I, in the capital of the globe; but were I to be swallowed up this moment in the waves of Tiber, not one of all these lights would be dimmed.

CHAPTER II

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BEING told that my relation had his residence at no great distance, the friendly Sabinus insisted upon escorting me thither in safety. We walked, therefore, along two or three proud streets, which brought us near to the Pantheon of Agrippa, and there the house was easily pointed out to us; its porch decorated with recent palm-branches, which the Centurion said must have been placed there by the joyful hands of some fortunate client. Here having thanked this kind person, and left honest Boto among the crowd of slaves in the vestibule, I was speedily conducted into the presence of the Patrician.

I found him in a small upper chamber, lighted by a single silver lamp suspended from the roof, enjoying, as it appeared, repose and relaxation after the exertions of the day. He was reclining when I entered; and although supper was long over, some fruits and other trifling things still remained on the board. At table with him there was no one present, excepting a Greek of solemn aspect, whom he introduced to me as the superintendent of his son's education, and Sextus himself, a modest and ingenuous youth, who sat at the lower extremity of his father's couch. He was indeed a very mild and amiable young man, and I had more pleasure, after a space, in surveying his features, than the more marked lineaments of the other two. At first, however, nothing riveted my attention so much as the energetic physiognomy of the Senator. The forepart of his head was already quite bald, although the darkness of the

short curls behind testified that age was not the cause of this deformity. His eyes were black and rapid, and his eyebrows vibrated in a remarkable manner, not only when he spoke, but even when he was silent; indicating, as it appeared, by their transitions, every new train of thought and imagination within his mind. His style of conversation was quick and fervid, and his gestures vehement as he spake; it being apparent, that, from restlessness and vanity of disposition, he was continually exercising a needless measure of mental activity and anxiety. Not satisfied with his own sufficient richness of ideas, no thought could be expressed which he did not immediately seize upon, and explain, even to him by whom it had been first suggested, with much fluency and earnestness of illustration. On the other hand, the guest, who wore a long beard reaching to his girdle, preserved in all things an uncommon demureness of manner, restraining every salient movement of his mind, and watching, with the gravity of a Numa, the glancing eyes and sharp features of his patron. A roll of yellow parchment graced his left hand, but the other was employed in selecting from the table such articles as were most agreeable to his palate. Licinius, although meagre in person, and at that time parched with declamation, seemed to live in such a state of intellectual excitement, that he thought little either of eating or drinking; therefore, the Athenian, resigning, for the most part, his share of the conversation, amused himself, in exchange, with the more trivial gratifications abandoned to him by his host. Nor, if one might draw any conclusion from his complexion and figure,

was this the first occasion on which Xerophrastes had exercised that species of humility.

When Licinius had inquired of me concerning my native place, and also given a few words to the affairs which had brought me to the city, his conversation was naturally directed to subjects more new to me, if not more interesting to him. "You would observe," said he, "the palm branches at my door. They were won to-day by a five hours' harangue before the Centumviri. It is only in contests such as these that men of my order have now any opportunity to exercise themselves, and preserve some remembrance of those ancient worthies and great public characters that once adorned the state. To these things, therefore, young kinsman, I entirely devote myself; nor aim, like other citizens of rank, at passing the day in diversion, and ending it with luxuries. At supper my table is furnished with moderate fare, while in other houses I know not how many roasted boars and pompous sturgeons have been regaling with the rich perfume of their sauces and stuffing, guests who love the meat more than the man who gives it. This learned person knows how laborious is my course of life, and what an impatient crowd awaits my appearance every morning. His pupil will, I hope, tread in the same steps, and afford to a future generation the image of the former Licinius."

With these, and the like discourses, he occupied our ears till it was time to retire; and then intimated that he had allotted to me an apartment which he expected I would continually occupy during my residence in the city. But being informed that I had a British slave with me, he

insisted on having this man sent for, that he might see him, as he expressed it, before the genuine unsophisticated barbarian had been corrupted by keeping company with the cunning menials of the metropolis. Whereupon, it was commanded that Boto should come up, and he was forthwith ushered in by a certain leering varlet, with rings in his ears, whose face resembled some comic mask in the habitual archness of its malicious and inquisitive look.

Not few were the bows and scrapes with which my Briton entered these penetralia; nor was the astonishment inconsiderable with which the orator regarded Boto. "So, friend," said Licinius,— "and you have ventured to come to Rome, without so much as shaving your beard?" But the merry and good-natured tone in which these words were uttered, having somewhat reassured the bashful rustic, he gave a sly side-look towards the philosopher, (who, I think, had never once glanced at him,) and replied to Licinius, "Pardon me, master, for coming thus into your presence; but I knew not, till Dromo told me, that beards were worn in Rome only by goats and the wisest of mankind." The words of the barbarian amused the orator—but, turning round to his own slave, "Ah! Dromo," said he, "do I already recognize the effects of your teaching?—beware the whip, corrupt not this good Briton, at your peril." He then asked of Boto various questions concerning his recent voyage; to all of which he made answers after his own fashion, sufficiently sagacious. Great contempt, however, was depicted on the face of the silent stoic during this conversation; which he, no doubt, looked upon as a very unworthy condescension on the part of Licinius; till at last, having, in a leisurely manner,

poured out the last of the flagon, Xerophrastes arose from his couch and departed. As he withdrew, he unfortunately struck his knee on the corner of the table, which elicited from his stubborn features a sudden contortion. This, however, he immediately smoothed of, twisting his involuntary stoop into an obeisance to the Senator.

Young Sextus conducted me to my chamber; and we conversed together with easy juvenile confidence for some time before he left me.



CHAPTER III

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MY sleep was sound and sweet; nevertheless, when the morning began to dawn, I was awakened by its first glimmerings, and found that my thoughts became at once too busy to admit of a return to slumber. I therefore arose, and went to walk in an open gallery, with which my chamber was connected. This gallery commanded a prospect of a great part of the city, which at that hour appeared no less tranquil than stately, nothing being in motion except a few small boats gliding here and there upon the river. Neither as yet had any smoke begun to darken the atmosphere; so that all things were seen in a serene and steady light, the shadows falling broadly westward over streets and squares but pillars, and obelisks, and arches, rising up every where with unsullied magnificence into the bright air of the morning. The numerous poplars and other lofty trees of the gardens, also, seemed to be rejoicing in the hour of dew and silence; so fresh and cheerful was the intermixture of their branches among the piles of white and yellow marble. Near at hand, over the groves of the Philoclean Mansion, I could see the dome of the Pantheon, all burnished with living gold, and the proud colonnades of the Flaminian Circus, loaded with armies of brazen statues. Between these and the river, the theatres of Pompey and Marcellus, and I know not how many temples, were visible. Across a more crowded region, to the westward, my eye ascended to the cliffs and towers of the Capitol; while, still farther removed from me,

(although less elevated in natural situation,) the gorgeous mansion of the Emperor was seen, lifted up, like some new and separate city, upon its enormous fabric of arcades. Behind me, the Flavian Amphitheatre, the newest and the most majestic of all Roman edifices, detained the eye for a space from all that lay beyond it—the splendid mass of the Esquiline- and those innumerable aqueducts which lie stretched out, arch after arch, and pillar after pillar, across the surrounding plain.

As I stood upon a projecting balcony, I heard some person stepping softly along the floor, and, being screened by some pillars, looked back into the gallery without subjecting myself to observation in return. The noise, I found, was occasioned by one of the slaves of Licinius, (the same I had remarked over night) who had an air of anxious vigilance on this occasion, looking about from side to side as if afraid of being detected in some impropriety. I heard him tap at one of the apartments adjoining my own, and young Sextus, opening the door, eagerly asked, "Well, Dromo, good Dromo, what news?—Have you seen or heard any thing of her?—Speak low, I beseech you, and remember that my preceptor is near." "Which preceptor?" replied Dromo; "count me your best, and I will teach you how to manage all besides."—"Hush!" whispered the young man; "he may be astir with these eternal parchments."—"Be easy," returned the slave; "I have found out facts which will serve to bridle that tongue at any time."—"Dromo," said Sextus, "have a care; remember the thong of sleek leather which hangs at the foot of the stair-case; and many is the time I have saved you from it; for which you may, perhaps, have to thank the

beauty of her who has rendered you necessary to me, as much as my own good nature. But no more idle words at present—what have you to tell me?"

"I have just been down," answered he, "to the herb-market. I had made my bargain, and was coming away, when I met one of old Capito's men, driving an ass laden with articles from the country. So I asked if he was carrying a present to his master's brother. He said he had brought nothing for Lucius but a letter; and that he believed its purport was to invite the two young ladies, to come out to-day and enjoy the beauty of the season. I no sooner got this information, than I ran hither as swiftly as my legs would carry me. You can easily go out, as if by chance, to pay your respects to the Patrician."

"Ah, Sempronia!" sighed Sextus, "shall I approach you at last?—What will she think when she sees me there?—Oh, how will she speak to me?"

While he was uttering these words, Dromo suddenly started, and came peeping on tiptoe towards the place where I stood. I stepped from behind my pillar, and said to the astonished youth, "Fear not, Sextus, that I shall intermeddle with your secrets, or make any use of what I have accidentally overheard. But I wish you would satisfy my curiosity, and inform me who is this lady, and what may be the meaning of all this concealment?"

Here Dromo, perceiving that his young master was a good deal confused, came forward and said, "From observing your looks last night, when I was making a handle of yon barbarian to torture our friend of the porch, I think you are a good-natured person, who would not willingly

bring any of us into trouble. The truth is, that Licinius wishes my young master here to marry a certain lady, who has already had wet eyes over the ashes of a first husband; but who is of noble birth, and very rich. Now Sextus, being only eighteen, does not like this great lady so well as she likes him; and has, in fact, lost his heart elsewhere."—"Dromo," answered I, taking young Sextus by the hand as I spoke, "this is a pretty common sort of story; but I shall take no side till I have seen both of the ladies; and the sooner your ingenuity can bring that about, the more shall I be beholden to you."—"We shall try," replied the slave, observing that I had overcome the reluctance of the lover; "but in the meantime I observe that the clients are beginning to assemble in the porch, to await the forthcoming of Licinius. Go, therefore, and get some breakfast, for, by and by, you will both be expected to accompany the Senator to the Forum, to hear him plead; which, between ourselves, will be a six hours' job for you, unless you manage matters dexterously."

This hint produced a visible effect on Sextus; but we went down together immediately to an apartment, where some bread and grapes were prepared for us; and there, with much ingenuousness, he opened his heart to me. But what surprised me most of all, was to hear, that although he had been enamoured of Sempronia for several months, and was well acquainted with several of her relations, he had never yet seen her, except at certain places of public resort, nor enjoyed any opportunity of making known his passion.

While I was expressing my astonishment at this circumstance, we were interrupted by Xerophrastes, who

came to inform us that Licinius, having already descended into the hall, was about to issue forth, and desirous of my company, if no other occupation detained me. We accordingly followed the philosopher, and found his patron where he had indicated, pacing to and fro, in the highest state of excitation, like a generous steed about to scour the field of battle. The waxen effigies of his ancestors stood at one end of the hall, some of them defaced with age; and upon these he frequently fixed his ardent eyes. Seeing me enter, he immediately cried out, "Come hither, young friend, and I shall presently conduct you to a scene worthy, above all others, of the curiosity of a stranger."

With this, arranging his gown, and putting himself into a dignified attitude, he ordered the porter, who stood chained by the door, to throw wide its massy valves; which being done, the litigants and consulters, who were without, received the orator with acclamations, and surrounded him on all sides. Some of the poorer ones, I observed kissing the hem of his garment, and dodging wistfully at his elbows, without ever attracting a word or look from him; while those of a higher class came forward more familiarly, seeking to impress particular circumstances upon his memory, and paying him compliments on the appearance he had made the day before in the Centum viral Court. Encircled by this motley group, he walked towards the great Forum, followed at a little distance by Sextus, the preceptor, myself, and some freedmen of his household. In moving on, we passed, by accident, the door of another great pleader, by name Bruttianus, who stood there attended in a similar manner. When he perceived Licinius, this man took from his door-

post a green palm-branch, and waved it towards us in a vaunting manner; but our friend, saluting him courteously, cried out, with his sharp and cutting voice, "'We shall try it again.'" Whereon Xerophrastes, immediately stepping up to his patron, began thus, "How this vainglorious person exposes himself!—he is certainly a weak man; and his tones, by Hermes, are more detestable than those of an African fowl."—At which words, Sextus tipped me the wink; but I did not observe that Licinius was at all displeased with them. Yet, soon after, Bruttianus having overtaken us, the processions were joined, and the two pleaders walked the rest of the way together in a loving manner, exchanging complimentary speeches; to which Xerophrastes listened with edifying gravity of visage.

At length we entered that venerable space, every yard of whose surface is consecrated to the peculiar memory of some great incident in the history of Rome. Young Sextus allowed me to contemplate for some time, with silent wonder, the memorable objects which conspired to the decoration of this remarkable place; but after the first gaze of astonishment was satisfied, proceeded to point out, in order, the names and uses of the principal structures which rose on every side over its porticos—above all, of its sublime temples—into whose cool and shady recesses the eye could here and there penetrate through the open valves. Nor did the ancient rostrum from which Tully had declaimed, escape our observation—nor within its guarding rail of silver, the rising shoots of the old mysterious fig-tree of Romulus—nor the rich tessellated pavement which covered the spot that had once yawned an abyss before the steady eye of Curtius

—nor the resplendent Millitary pillar which marked the centre of the place. In a word, had the gathering crowds permitted, I could have willingly spent many hours in listening to the explanation of such magnificent objects; but these, and the elevated voice of Licinius, who was just beginning his harangue, soon compelled me to attend to things of another description.

Within one of the proud ranges of arcade, on the side nearest to the Capitoline stairs, a majestic Patrician had already taken his seat on an elevated tribunal—his assessors being arranged on a lower bench by his side, and the orators and clients congregated beneath. When I heard the clear and harmonious periods of my kinsman; when I observed with what apparent simplicity he laid his foundations in a few plain facts and propositions; with what admirable art he upreared from these a superstructure of conclusions, equally easy as unexpected; when he had conducted us to the end of his argument, and closed with a burst of passionate eloquence, in which he seemed to leave even himself behind him, I could not but feel as if I had now for the first time contemplated the practised strength of intellect. Yet I have lived to discover that the talent which so greatly excited my wonder is often possessed from nature, or acquired through practice, in a measure which at that time would have afforded me scarcely inferior delight, by men of no extraordinary rank.

The keen and lively gestures of the fervid Licinius, whose soul seemed to speak out of every finger he moved, and who appeared to be altogether immersed in the cause he pleaded, were succeeded by the solemn and somewhat