

NOVEL VIII

Sophronia, albeit she deems herself wife to Gisippus, is wife to Titus Quintius Fulvus, and goes with him to Rome, where Gisippus arrives in indigence, and deeming himself scorned by Titus, to compass his own death, avers that he has slain a man. Titus recognizes him, and to save his life, alleges that 'twas he that slew the man: whereof he that did the deed being witness, he discovers himself as the murderer. Whereby it comes to pass that they are all three liberated by Octavianus; and Titus gives Gisippus his sister to wife, and shares with him all his substance.

So ceased Pampinea; and when all the ladies, and most of all the Ghibelline, had commended King Pedro, Filomena by command of the king thus began:

Magnificent my ladies, who wots not that there is nought so great but kings, when they have a mind, may accomplish it? As also that 'tis of them that magnificence is most especially demanded? Now whoso, being powerful, does that which it appertains to him to do, does well; but therein is no such matter of marvel, or occasion of extolling him to the skies, as in his deed, of whom, for that his power is slight, less is demanded. Wherefore, as you are so profuse of your words in exaltation of the fine deeds, as you deem them, of monarchs, I make no manner of doubt, but that the doings of our peers must seem to you yet more delectable and commendable, when they equal or surpass those of kings. Accordingly 'tis a transaction, laudable and magnificent, that passed between two citizens, who were friends, that I purpose to recount to you in my story.

I say, then, that what time Octavianus Caesar, not as yet hight Augustus, but being in the office called Triumvirate, swayed the empire of Rome, there dwelt at Rome a gentleman, Publius Quintius Fulvus by name, who, having a son, Titus Quintius Fulvus, that was a very prodigy of wit, sent him to Athens to study philosophy, and to the best of his power commended him to a nobleman of that city, Chremes by name, who was his very old friend. Chremes lodged Titus in his own house with his son Gisippus, and placed both Titus and Gisippus under a philosopher named Aristippus, to learn of him his doctrine. And the two youths, thus keeping together, found each the other's conversation so congruous with his own, that there grew up between them a friendship so close and brotherly that 'twas never broken by aught but death; nor knew either rest or solace save when he was with the other. So, gifted alike with pre-eminent subtlety of wit, they entered on their studies, and with even pace and prodigious applause scaled together the glorious heights of philosophy. In which way of life, to the exceeding great delight of Chremes, who entreated Titus as no less his son than Gisippus, they continued for full three years. At the end whereof, it befell (after the common course of things mundane) that Chremes (being now aged) departed this life. Whom with equal grief they mourned as a common father; and the friends and kinsfolk of Chremes were alike at a loss to

determine whether of the twain stood in need of the more consolation upon the bereavement.

Some months afterward the friends and kinsfolk of Gisippus came to him and exhorted him, as did also Titus, to take a wife, and found him a maiden, wondrous fair, of one of the most noble houses of Athens, her name Sophronia, and her age about fifteen years. So a time was appointed for their nuptials, and one day, when 'twas near at hand, Gisippus bade Titus come see the maiden, whom as yet he had not seen; and they being come into her house, and she sitting betwixt them, Titus, as he were fain to observe with care the several charms of his friend's wife that was to be, surveyed her with the closest attention, and being delighted beyond measure with all that he saw, grew, as inly he extolled her charms to the skies, enamoured of her with a love as ardent, albeit he gave no sign of it, as ever lover bore to lady. However, after they had tarried a while with her, they took their leave, and went home, where Titus repaired to his chamber, and there gave himself over to solitary musing on the damsel's charms, and the longer he brooded, the more he burned for her. Whereon as he reflected, having heaved many a fervent sigh, thus he began to commune with himself:

Ah! woe worth thy life, Titus! Whom makest thou the mistress of thy soul, thy love, thy hope? Knowest thou not that by reason as well of thy honourable entreatment by Chremes and his kin as of the wholehearted friendship that is between thee and Gisippus, it behoves thee to have his betrothed in even such pious regard as if she were thy sister? Whither art thou suffering beguiling love, delusive hope, to hurry thee? Open the eyes of thine understanding, and see thyself, wretched man, as thou art; obey the dictates of thy reason, refrain thy carnal appetite, control thine inordinate desires, and give thy thoughts another bent; join battle with thy lust at the outset, and conquer thyself while there is yet time. This which thou wouldst have is not meet, is not seemly: this which thou art minded to ensue, thou wouldst rather, though thou wert, as thou art not, sure of its attainment, eschew, hadst thou but the respect thou shouldst have, for the claims of true friendship. So, then, Titus, what wilt thou do? What but abandon this unseemly love, if thou wouldst do as it behoves thee?

But then, as he remembered Sophronia, his thoughts took the contrary direction, and he recanted all he had said, musing on this wise:

The laws of Love are of force above all others; they abrogate not only the law of human friendship, but the law Divine itself. How many times ere now has father loved daughter, brother sister, step-mother step-son? aberrations far more notable than that a friend should love his friend's wife, which has happened a thousand times. Besides which, I am young, and youth is altogether subject to the laws of Love. Love's pleasure, then, should be mine. The seemly is for folk of riper years. 'tis not in my power to will aught save that which Love wills. So beauteous is this damsel that there is none but should love her; and if I love her, who am young, who can justly censure me? I love her not because she is the affianced of Gisippus; no matter whose she was, I should love her all the same. Herein is Fortune to blame, that gave her to my friend, Gisippus, rather than to another. And if she is worthy of love, as for beauty she is, Gisippus, if he should come to know that I love her, ought to be less jealous than another.

Then, scorning himself that he should indulge such thoughts, he relapsed into the opposing mood, albeit not to abide there, but ever veering to and fro, he spent not only the whole of that day and the ensuing night, but many others; insomuch that, being able neither to eat nor to sleep, he grew so weak that he was fain to take to his bed. Gisippus, who had marked his moodiness for some days, and now saw that he was fairly sick, was much distressed; and with sedulous care, never quitting his side, he tended, and strove as best he might to comfort him, not seldom and most earnestly demanding to know of him the cause of his melancholy and his sickness. Many were the subterfuges to which Titus resorted; but, as Gisippus was not to be put off with his fables, finding himself hard pressed by him, with sighs and sobs he made answer on this wise:

"Gisippus, had such been the will of the Gods, I were fain rather to die than to live, seeing that Fortune has brought me to a strait in which needs must my virtue be put to the ordeal, and, to my most grievous shame, 'tis found wanting: whereof I confidently expect my due reward, to wit, death, which will be more welcome to me than to live, haunted ever by the memory of my baseness, which, as there is nought that from thee I either should or can conceal, I, not without burning shame, will discover to thee." And so he recounted the whole story from first to last, the occasion of his melancholy, its several moods, their conflict, and with which of them the victory rested, averring that he was dying of love for Sophronia, and that, knowing how ill such love beseemed him, he had, for penance, elected to die, and deemed the end was now not far off. Gisippus, hearing his words and seeing his tears, for a while knew not what to say, being himself smitten with the damsel's charms, albeit in a less degree than Titus; but ere long he

made up his mind that Sophronia must be less dear to him than his friend's life.

And so, moved to tears by his friend's tears: "Titus," quoth he between his sobs, "but that thou art in need of comfort, I should reproach thee, that thou hast offended against our friendship in that thou hast so long kept close from me this most distressful passion; and albeit thou didst deem it unseemly, yet unseemly things should no more than things seemly be withheld from a friend, for that, as a friend rejoices with his friend in things seemly, so he does his endeavour to wean his friend from things unseemly: but enough of this for the nonce: I pass to that which, I wot, is of greater moment. If thou ardently lovest Sophronia, my affianced, so far from marvelling thereat, I should greatly marvel were it not so, knowing how fair she is, and how noble is thy soul, and thus the apter to be swayed by passion, the more excelling is she by whom thou art charmed. And the juster the cause thou hast to love Sophronia, the greater is the injustice with which thou complainest of Fortune (albeit thou dost it not in so many words) for giving her to me, as if thy love of her had been seemly, had she belonged to any other but me; whereas, if thou art still the wise man thou wast wont to be, thou must know that to none could Fortune have assigned her, with such good cause for thee to thank her, as to me. Had any other had her, albeit thy love had been seemly, he had loved her as his own, rather than as thine; which, if thou deem me even such a friend to thee as I am, thou wilt not apprehend from me, seeing that I mind me not that, since we were friends, I had ever aught that was not as much thine as mine. And so should I entreat thee herein as in all other matters, were the affair gone so far that nought else were possible; but as it is, I can make thee sole possessor of her; and so I mean to do; for I know not what cause thou shouldst have to prize my friendship, if, where in seemly sort it might be done, I knew not how to surrender my will to thine. 'tis true that Sophronia is my betrothed, and that I loved her much, and had great cheer in expectation of the nuptials: but as thou, being much more discerning than I, dost more fervently affect this rare prize, rest assured that she will enter my chamber not mine but thine. Wherefore, away with thy moodiness, banish thy melancholy, recover thy lost health, thy heartiness and jollity, and gladsomely, even from this very hour, anticipate the guerdon of thy love, a love worthier far than mine."

Delightful as was the prospect with which hope flattered Titus, as he heard Gisippus thus speak, no less was the shame with which right reason affected him, admonishing him that the greater was the liberality of Gisippus, the less it would become him to profit thereby. Wherefore, still weeping, he thus constrained himself to make answer:

"Gisippus, thy generous and true friendship leaves me in no doubt as to the manner in which it becomes me to act. God forefend that her, whom, as to the more worthy, He has given to thee, I should ever accept of thee for mine. Had He seen fit that she should be mine, far be it from thee or

any other to suppose that He would ever have awarded her to thee. Renounce not, then, that which thy choice and wise counsel and His gift have made thine, and leave me, to whom, as unworthy, He has appointed no such happiness, to waste my life in tears; for either I shall conquer my grief, which will be grateful to thee, or it will conquer me, and so I shall be quit of my pain." Quoth then Gisippus:

"If our friendship, Titus, is of such a sort as may entitle me to enforce thee to ensue behests of mine, or as may induce thee of thine own free will to ensue the same, such is the use to which, most of all, I am minded to put it; and if thou lend not considerate ear unto my prayers, I shall by force, that force which is lawful in the interest of a friend, make Sophronia thine. I know the might of Love, how redoubtable it is, and how, not once only, but oftentimes, it has brought ill-starred lovers to a miserable death; and thee I see so hard bested that turn back thou mightst not, nor get the better of thy grief, but holding on thy course, must succumb, and perish, and without doubt I should speedily follow thee. And so, had I no other cause to love thee, thy life is precious to me in that my own is bound up with it. Sophronia, then, shall be thine; for thou wouldst not lightly find another so much to thy mind, and I shall readily find another to love, and so shall content both thee and me. In which matter, peradventure, I might not be so liberal, were wives so scarce or hard to find as are friends; wherefore, as 'tis so easy a matter for me to find another wife, I had liefer--I say not lose her, for in giving her to thee lose her I shall not, but only transfer her to one that is my alter ego, and that to her advantage--I had liefer, I say, transfer her to thee than lose thee. And so, if aught my prayers avail with thee, I entreat thee extricate thyself from this thy woeful plight, and comfort at once thyself and me, and in good hope, address thyself to pluck that boon which thy fervent love craves of her for whom thou yearnest."

Still scrupling, for shame, to consent that Sophronia should become his wife, Titus remained yet a while inexorable; but, yielding at last to the solicitations of Love, reinforced by the exhortations of Gisippus, thus he made answer:

"Lo now, Gisippus, I know not how to call it, whether 'tis more thy pleasure than mine, this which I do, seeing that 'tis as thy pleasure that thou so earnestly entreatest me to do it; but, as thy liberality is such that my shame, though becoming, may not withstand it, I will even do it. But of this rest assured, that I do so, witting well that I receive from thee, not only the lady I love, but with her my very life. And, Fate permitting, may the Gods grant me to make thee such honourable and goodly requital as may shew thee how sensible I am of the boon, which thou, more compassionate of me than I am of myself, conferrest on me." Quoth then Gisippus:

"Now, for the giving effect to our purpose, methinks, Titus, we should proceed on this wise. Thou knowest that Sophronia, by treaty at length

concluded between my family and hers, is become my betrothed: were I now to say that she should not be my wife, great indeed were the scandal that would come thereof, and I should affront both her family and mine own; whereof, indeed, I should make no account, so it gave me to see her become thine; but I fear that, were I to give her up at this juncture, her family would forthwith bestow her upon another, perchance, than thee, and so we should both be losers. Wherefore methinks that, so thou approve, I were best to complete what I have begun, bring her home as my wife, and celebrate the nuptials, and thereafter we can arrange that thou lie with her, privily, as thy wife. Then, time and occasion serving, we will disclose the whole affair, and if they are satisfied, well and good; if not, 'twill be done all the same, and as it cannot be undone, they must perforce make the best of it."

Which counsel being approved by Titus, Gisippus brought the lady home as his wife, Titus being now recovered, and quite himself again; and when they had made great cheer, and night was come, the ladies, having bedded the bride, took their departure. Now the chambers of Titus and Gisippus were contiguous, and one might pass from one into the other: Gisippus, therefore, being come into his room, extinguished every ray of light, and stole into that of Titus, and bade him go get him to bed with his lady. Whereat Titus gave way to shame, and would have changed his mind, and refused to go in; but Gisippus, no less zealous at heart than in words to serve his friend, after no small contention prevailed on him to go thither. Now no sooner was Titus abed with the lady, than, taking her in his arms, he, as if jestingly, asked in a low tone whether she were minded to be his wife. She, taking him to be Gisippus, answered, yes; whereupon he set a fair and costly ring on her finger, saying:

"And I am minded to be thy husband." And having presently consummated the marriage, he long and amorously disported him with her, neither she, nor any other, being ever aware that another than Gisippus lay with her.

Now Titus and Sophronia being after this sort wedded, Publius, the father of Titus, departed this life. For which cause Titus was bidden by letter to return forthwith to Rome to see to his affairs; wherefore he took counsel with Gisippus how he might take Sophronia thither with him; which might not well be done without giving her to know how matters stood. Whereof, accordingly, one day, having called her into the chamber, they fully apprised her, Titus for her better assurance bringing to her recollection not a little of what had passed between them. Whereat she, after glancing from one to the other somewhat disdainfully, burst into a flood of tears, and reproached Gisippus that he had so deluded her; and forthwith, saying nought of the matter to any there, she hied her forth of Gisippus' house and home to her father, to whom and her mother she recounted the deceit which Gisippus had practised upon them as upon her, averring that she was the wife not of Gisippus, as they supposed,

but of Titus. Whereby her father was aggrieved exceedingly, and prolonged and grave complaint was made thereof by him and his own and Gisippus' families, and there was not a little parleying, and a world of pother. Gisippus earned the hatred of both his own and Sophronia's kin, and all agreed that he merited not only censure but severe punishment. He, however, averred that he had done a thing seemly, and that Sophronia's kinsfolk owed him thanks for giving her in marriage to one better than himself.

All which Titus witnessed with great suffering, and witting that 'twas the way of the Greeks to launch forth in high words and menaces, and refrain not until they should meet with one that answered them, whereupon they were wont to grow not only humble but even abject, was at length minded that their clavers should no longer pass unanswered; and, as with his Roman temper he united Athenian subtlety, he cleverly contrived to bring the kinsfolk, as well of Gisippus as of Sophronia, together in a temple, where, being entered, attended only by Gisippus, thus (they being intent to hear) he harangued them:

"'Tis the opinion of not a few philosophers that whatsoever mortals do is ordained by the providence of the immortal Gods; for which cause some would have it that nought either is, or ever shall be, done, save of necessity, albeit others there are that restrict this necessity to that which is already done. Regard we but these opinions with some little attention, and we shall very plainly perceive that to censure that which cannot be undone is nought else but to be minded to shew oneself wiser than the Gods; by whom we must suppose that we and our affairs are swayed and governed with uniform and unerring wisdom. Whereby you may very readily understand how vain and foolish a presumption it is to pass judgment on their doings, and what manner and might of chains they need who suffer themselves to be transported to such excess of daring. Among whom, in my judgment, you must one and all be numbered, if 'tis true, what I hear, to wit, that you have complained and do continue to complain that Sophronia, albeit you gave her to Gisippus, is, nevertheless, become my wife; not considering that 'twas ordained from all eternity that she should become, not the wife of Gisippus, but mine, as the fact does now declare.

"But, for that discourse of the secret providence and purposes of the Gods seems to many a matter hard and scarce to be understood, I am willing to assume that they meddle in no wise with our concerns, and to descend to the region of human counsels; in speaking whereof I must needs do two things quite at variance with my wont, to wit, in some degree praise myself and censure or vilify another. But, as in either case I mean not to deviate from the truth, and 'tis what the occasion demands, I shall not fail so to do. With bitter upbraidings, animated rather by rage than by reason, you cease not to murmur, nay, to cry out, against Gisippus, and to harass him with your abuse, and hold him condemned, for that her, whom you saw fit to give

him, he has seen fit to give me, to wife; wherein I deem him worthy of the highest commendation, and that for two reasons, first, because he has done the office of a friend, and secondly, because he has done more wisely than you did. After what sort the sacred laws of friendship prescribe that friend shall entreat friend, 'tis not to my present purpose to declare; 'twill suffice to remind you that the tie of friendship should be more binding than that of blood, or kinship; seeing that our friends are of our own choosing, whereas our kinsfolk are appointed us by Fortune; wherefore, if my life was more to Gisippus than your goodwill, since I am, as I hold myself, his friend, can any wonder thereat?

"But pass we to my second reason; in the exposition whereof I must needs with yet more cogency prove to you that he has been wiser than you, seeing that, methinks, you wot nought of the providence of the Gods, and still less of the consequences of friendship. I say then, that, as 'twas your premeditated and deliberate choice that gave Sophronia to this young philosopher Gisippus, so 'twas his that gave her to another young philosopher. 'twas your counsel that gave her to an Athenian; 'twas his that gave her to a Roman: 'twas your counsel that gave her to a man of gentle birth; 'twas his that gave her to one of birth yet gentler: wealthy was he to whom your counsel gave her, most wealthy he to whom his counsel gave her. Not only did he to whom your counsel gave her, love her not, but he scarce knew her, whereas 'twas to one that loved her beyond all other blessings, nay, more dearly than his own life, that his counsel gave her. And to the end that it may appear more plainly that 'tis even as I say, and Gisippus' counsel more to be commended than yours, let us examine it point by point. That I, like Gisippus, am young and a philosopher, my countenance and my pursuits may, without making more words about the matter, sufficiently attest. We are also of the same age, and have ever kept pace together in our studies. Now true it is that he is an Athenian, and I am a Roman. But, as touching the comparative glory of the cities, should the matter be mooted, I say that I am of a free city, and he of a city tributary; that I am of a city that is mistress of all the world, and he of one that is subject to mine; that I am of a city that flourishes mightily in arms, in empire, and in arts; whereas he cannot boast his city as famous save in arts.

"Moreover, albeit you see me here in the guise of a most humble scholar, I am not born of the dregs of the populace of Rome. My halls and the public places of Rome are full of the antique effigies of my forefathers, and the annals of Rome abound with the records of triumphs led by the Quintii to the Roman Capitol; and so far from age having withered it, to-day, yet more abundantly than ever of yore, flourishes the glory of our name. Of my wealth I forbear, for shame, to speak, being mindful that honest poverty is the time-honoured and richest inheritance of the noble citizens of Rome; but, allowing for the nonce the opinion of the vulgar, which holds poverty in disrepute, and highly

appraises wealth, I, albeit I never sought it, yet, as the favoured of Fortune, have abundant store thereof. Now well I wot that, Gisippus being of your own city, you justly prized and prize an alliance with him; but not a whit less should you prize an alliance with me at Rome, considering that there you will have in me an excellent host, and a patron apt, zealous and potent to serve you as well in matters of public interest as in your private concerns. Who, then, dismissing all bias from his mind, and judging with impartial reason, would deem your counsel more commendable than that of Gisippus? Assuredly none. Sophronia, then, being married to Titus Quintius Fulvus, a citizen of Rome, of an ancient and illustrious house, and wealthy, and a friend of Gisippus, whoso takes umbrage or offence thereat, does that which it behoves him not to do, and knows not what he does.

“Perchance some will say that their complaint is not that Sophronia is the wife of Titus, but that she became his wife after such a sort, to wit, privily, by theft, neither friend nor any of her kin witting aught thereof; but herein is no matter of marvel, no prodigy as yet unheard-of. I need not instance those who before now have taken to them husbands in defiance of their fathers’ will, or have eloped with their lovers and been their mistresses before they were their wives, or of whose marriages no word has been spoken, until their pregnancy or parturition published them to the world, and necessity sanctioned the fact: nought of this has happened in the case of Sophronia; on the contrary, ’twas in proper form, and in meet and seemly sort, that Gisippus gave her to Titus. And others, peradventure, will say that ’twas by one to whom such office belonged not that she was bestowed in marriage. Nay, but this is but vain and womanish querulousness, and comes of scant consideration. Know we not, then, that Fortune varies according to circumstances her methods and her means of disposing events to their predetermined ends? What matters it to me, if it be a cobbler, rather than a philosopher, that Fortune has ordained to compass something for me, whether privily or overtly, so only the result is as it should be? I ought, indeed, to take order, if the cobbler be indiscreet, that he meddle no more in affairs of mine, but, at the same time, I ought to thank him for what he has done. If Gisippus has duly bestowed Sophronia in marriage, it is gratuitous folly to find fault with the manner and the person. If you mistrust his judgment, have a care that it be not in his power to do the like again, but thank him for this turn.

“Nathless, you are to know that I used no cunning practice or deceit to sully in any degree the fair fame of your house in the person of Sophronia; and, albeit I took her privily to wife, I came not as a ravisher to despoil her of her virginity, nor in any hostile sort was I minded to make her mine on dishonourable terms, and spurn your alliance; but, being fervently enamoured of her bewitching beauty and her noble qualities, I wist well that, should I make suit for her with those formalities which you,

perchance, will say were due, then, for the great love you bear her, and for fear lest I should take her away with me to Rome, I might not hope to have her. Accordingly I made use of the secret practice which is now manifest to you, and brought Gisippus to consent in my interest to that whereto he was averse; and thereafter, ardently though I loved her, I sought not to commingle with her as a lover, but as a husband, nor closed with her, until, as she herself by her true witness may assure you, I had with apt words and with the ring made her my lawful wife, asking her if she would have me to husband, whereto she answered, yes. Wherein if she seem to have been tricked, ’tis not I that am to blame, but she, for that she asked me not who I was.

“This, then, is the great wrong, sin, crime, whereof for love and friendship’s sake Gisippus and I are guilty, that Sophronia is privily become the wife of Titus Quintius: ’tis for this that you harass him with your menaces and hostile machinations. What more would you do, had he given her to a villein, to a caitiff, to a slave? Where would you find fetters, dungeons, crosses adequate to your vengeance? But enough of this at present: an event, which I did not expect, has now happened; my father is dead; and I must needs return to Rome; wherefore, being fain to take Sophronia with me, I have discovered to you that which otherwise I had, perchance, still kept close. Whereto, if you are wise, you will gladly reconcile yourselves; for that, if I had been minded to play you false, or put an affront upon you, I might have scornfully abandoned her to you; but God forefend that such baseness be ever harboured in a Roman breast. Sophronia, then, by the will of the Gods, by force of law, and by my own love-taught astuteness, is mine. The which it would seem that you, deeming yourselves, peradventure, wiser than the Gods, or the rest of mankind, do foolishly set at nought, and that in two ways alike most offensive to me; inasmuch as you both withhold from me Sophronia, in whom right, as against me, you have none, and also entreat as your enemy Gisippus, to whom you are rightfully bounden. The folly whereof I purpose not at present fully to expound to you, but in friendly sort to counsel you to abate your wrath and abandon all your schemes of vengeance, and restore Sophronia to me, that I may part from you on terms of amity and alliance, and so abide: but of this rest assured, that whether this, which is done, like you or not, if you are minded to contravene it, I shall take Gisippus hence with me, and once arrived in Rome, shall in your despite find means to recover her who is lawfully mine, and pursuing you with unremitting enmity, will apprise you by experience of the full measure and effect of a Roman’s wrath.”

Having so said, Titus started to his feet, his countenance distorted by anger, and took Gisippus by the hand, and with manifest contempt for all the rest, shaking his head at them and threatening them, led him out of the temple. They that remained in the temple, being partly persuaded by his arguments to accept his alliance and friendship,

partly terrified by his last words, resolved by common consent that 'twas better to have the alliance of Titus, as they had lost that of Gisippus, than to add to that loss the enmity of Titus. Wherefore they followed Titus, and having come up with him, told him that they were well pleased that Sophronia should be his, and that they should prize his alliance and the friendship of dear Gisippus; and having ratified this treaty of amity and alliance with mutual cheer, they departed and sent Sophronia to Titus. Sophronia, discreetly making a virtue of necessity, transferred forthwith to Titus the love she had borne Gisippus, and being come with Titus to Rome, was there received with no small honour. Gisippus tarried in Athens, held in little account by well-nigh all the citizens, and being involved in certain of their broils, was, not long afterwards, with all his household, banished the city, poor, nay, destitute, and condemned to perpetual exile. Thus hard bested, and at length reduced to mendicancy, he made his way, so as least discomfortably he might, to Rome, being minded to see whether Titus would remember him: and there, learning that Titus lived, and was much affected by all the Romans, and having found out his house, he took his stand in front of it, and watched until Titus came by; to whom, for shame of the sorry trim that he was in, he ventured no word, but did his endeavour that he might be seen of him, hoping that Titus might recognize him, and call him by his name: but Titus passing on, Gisippus deeming that he had seen and avoided him, and calling to mind that which aforetime he had done for him, went away wroth and desperate. And fasting and penniless, and—for 'twas now night—knowing not whither he went, and yearning above all for death, he wandered by chance to a spot, which, albeit 'twas within the city, had much of the aspect of a wilderness, and espying a spacious grotto, he took shelter there for the night; and worn out at last with grief, on the bare ground, wretchedly clad as he was, he fell asleep.

Now two men that had that night gone out a thieving, having committed the theft, came towards morning to the grotto, and there quarrelled, and the stronger slew the other, and took himself off. Aroused by the noise, Gisippus witnessed the murder, and deeming that he had now the means of compassing, without suicide, the death for which he so much longed, budged not a jot, but stayed there, until the serjeants of the court, which had already got wind of the affair, came on the scene, and laid violent hands upon him, and led him away. Being examined, he confessed that he had slain the man, and had then been unable to make his escape from the grotto. Wherefore the praetor, Marcus Varro by name, sentenced him to death by crucifixion, as was then the custom. But Titus, who happened at that moment to come into the praetorium, being told the crime for which he was condemned, and scanning the poor wretch's face, presently recognized him for Gisippus, and marvelled how he should come to be there, and in such a woeful plight. And most ardently desiring to succour him,

nor seeing other way to save his life except to exonerate him by accusing himself, he straightway stepped forward, and said with a loud voice:

“Marcus Varro, call back the poor man on whom thou hast passed sentence, for he is innocent. 'tis enough that I have incurred the wrath of the Gods by one deed of violence, to wit, the murder of him whom your serjeants found dead this morning, without aggravating my offence by the death of another innocent man.” Perplexed, and vexed that he should have been heard by all in the praetorium, but unable honourably to avoid compliance with that which the laws enjoined, Varro had Gisippus brought back, and in presence of Titus said to him:

“How camest thou to be so mad as, though no constraint was put upon thee, to confess a deed thou never didst, thy life being at stake? Thou saidst that 'twas thou by whom the man was slain last night, and now comes this other, and says that 'twas not thou but he that slew him.” Gisippus looked, and seeing Titus, wist well that, being grateful for the service rendered by him in the past, Titus was now minded to save his life at the cost of his own: wherefore, affected to tears, he said:

“Nay but, Varro, in very sooth I slew him, and 'tis now too late, this tender solicitude of Titus for my deliverance.” But on his part:

“Praetor,” quoth Titus, “thou seest this man is a stranger, and was found unarmed beside the murdered man; thou canst not doubt that he was fain of death for very wretchedness: wherefore discharge him, and let punishment light on me who have merited it.”

Marvelling at the importunity of both, Varro readily surmised that neither was guilty. And while he was casting about how he might acquit them, lo, in came a young man, one Publius Ambustus, a desperate character, and known to all the Romans for an arrant thief. He it was that had verily committed the murder, and witting both the men to be innocent of that of which each accused himself, so sore at heart was he by reason of their innocence, that, overborne by an exceeding great compassion, he presented himself before Varro, and:

“Praetor,” quoth he, “'tis destiny draws me hither to loose the knot of these men's contention; and some God within me leaves me no peace of his whips and stings, until I discover my offence: wherefore know that neither of these men is guilty of that of which each accuses himself. 'tis verily I that slew the man this morning about daybreak; and before I slew him, while I was sharing our plunder with him, I espied this poor fellow asleep there. Nought need I say to clear Titus: the general bruit of his illustrious renown attests that he is not a man of such a sort. Discharge him, therefore, and exact from me the penalty prescribed by the laws.”

The affair had by this time come to the ears of Octavianus, who caused all three to be brought before him, and demanded to know the causes by which they had been severally moved to accuse themselves; and, each having told his story, Octavianus released the two by reason of their

innocence, and the third for love of them. Titus took Gisippus home, having first chidden him not a little for his faint-heartedness and diffidence, and there, Sophronia receiving him as a brother, did him marvellous cheer; and having comforted him a while, and arrayed him in apparel befitting his worth and birth, he first shared with him all his substance, and then gave him his sister, a young damsel named Fulvia, to wife, and said to him:

“Choose now, Gisippus, whether thou wilt tarry here with me, or go back to Achaia with all that I have given thee.”

Partly perforce of his banishment from his city, partly for that the sweet friendship of Titus was justly dear to him, Gisippus consented to become a Roman. And so, long and happily they lived together at Rome, Gisippus with his Fulvia, and Titus with his Sophronia, in the same house, growing, if possible, greater friends day by day.

Exceeding sacred then, is friendship, and worthy not only to be had in veneration, but to be extolled with never-ending praise, as the most dutiful mother of magnificence and seemliness, sister of gratitude and charity, and foe to enmity and avarice; ever, without waiting to be asked, ready to do as generously by another as she would be done by herself. Rarely indeed is it to-day that twain are found, in whom her most holy fruits are manifest; for which is most shamefully answerable the covetousness of mankind, which, regarding only private interest, has banished friendship beyond earth's farthest bourne, there to abide in perpetual exile. How should love, or wealth, or kinship, how

should aught but friendship have so quickened the soul of Gisippus that the tears and sighs of Titus should incline his heart to cede to him the fair and gracious lady that was his betrothed and his beloved? Laws, menaces, terror! How should these, how should aught but friendship, have withheld Gisippus, in lonely places, in hidden retreats, in his own bed, from enfolding (not perchance unsolicited by her) the fair damsel within his youthful embrace? Honours, rewards, gains! Would Gisippus for these, would he for aught but friendship, have made nothing of the loss of kindred--his own and Sophronia's--have made nothing of the injurious murmurs of the populace, have made nothing of mocks and scorns, so only he might content his friend? And on the other hand, for what other cause than friendship had Titus, when he might decently have feigned not to see, have striven with the utmost zeal to compass his own death, and set himself upon the cross in Gisippus' stead? And what but friendship had left no place for suspicion in the soul of Titus, and filled it with a most fervent desire to give his sister to Gisippus, albeit he saw him to be reduced to extreme penury and destitution? But so it is that men covet hosts of acquaintance, troops of kinsfolk, offspring in plenty; and the number of their dependants increases with their wealth; and they reflect not that there is none of these, be he who he may, but will be more apprehensive of the least peril threatening himself than cumbered to avert a great peril from his lord or kinsman, whereas between friends we know 'tis quite contrariwise.