

'And inoffensive person has been condemned to die a fearful death. His father—his aged father—is here, to supplicate through me thy clemency. Let him not suffer thus. *This is my boon!*'

'Thou speakest in vain, boy!' replied the Prætor. 'His doom is sealed—his sentence is pronounced. The people will not be tampered with. Had'st thou plead thus before?'

'It matters not, oh! father?' Lucius replied, with eloquent energy—(increased, it must be confessed, by the consciousness that the eyes of the fair Grecian were bent upon him) 'the people's pleasures are as nothing when weighed in the balance 'gainst a human life. Say—wilt thou protect him?'

'It is impossible.'

'Think! Were it *thy* son who stood thus chained before thee—condemned to perish by the lion's tooth, and thou a witness. Can'st thou look on yon group, and not be moved?'

Cominius was evidently wavering, but a murmuring arose at this moment among the populace, and the other dignitaries, fearful of an outbreak, arose and consulted hurriedly together. A death-like silence reigned throughout the room, and then arose again the sullen clamors of the anxious mob.

Cominius at length stepped forward, and while a lictor proceeded toward the astonished captive, and busied himself in striking off his chains, the former addressed a few words of explanation to the multitude—promising them another victim on the morrow. The murmuring continued, but it was more subdued, and while the disappointed crowd was pouring like a stream into the outer corridor, the rescued captive embraced his sister and his aged father, and then turned to thank the young noble, who had interested himself so unexpectedly and with such a happy result in their poor welfare.

'Nay,' said Cominius, 'thou owest me no thanks, therefore reserve them. The deed I have performed was one of *duty*, not of choice, and for the blessed results which have followed my interference, thank thou rather the gods, who have enabled me to render thee this service.'

With this modest and truly noble disclaimer, he turned away and left them. But the face of the beautiful Greek was indelibly stamped upon his memory, and her voice rang like ethereal music in his ears, long after the windings of the street had shut the scene of his generous interference from his view.

#### PART II.—THE ERUPTION.

All Herculaneum was in commotion.—Groups of pale-faced citizens loitered about the streets, discoursing in an undertone, while all eyes were turned toward the crater of the neighboring volcano, from which came, at irregular intervals, smoke and fire. There was a gloom upon the air, and the sun gleamed with a sickly reddish hue through the sulphurous clouds which overhung the city with a dim foreshadowing of an evil time to come. The atmosphere, too, was impregnated with sulphurous particles, and all things betokened that some strange convulsion of nature was at hand. Business was suspended in the public marts, and the hammer of the smith, the song of the artisan, and the shrill voice of the scolding publican were hushed. Children suspended their sports in the midst, and fled to their mother's laps, to escape the coming danger.

On the great road which led toward the nearest seaport, Salernum, a motley procession of all grades and classes had taken up its march. Rude, lumbering wagons, laden with goods and chattels of various descriptions, were slowly progressing toward the sea.

From the fields bordering upon the road the strange, anxious lowing of the cattle—which, with their peculiar instinct, seemed to scent the peril afar—smote unpleasantly upon the ears of the panic-stricken fugitives: who turned back ever and anon to cast a look upon the burning mountain.

Some there were, even in Herculaneum, who affected to laugh at what they termed the idle terrors of the people; but these were few, for the majority believed that a convulsion was at hand, although many did not think the danger was near, and others were too slothful to decamp, until they saw some more certain evidences of an eruption.

Meanwhile Ctesiphon, the young Greek, with his sister and aged father, had lost no time in proceeding toward the sea, in company with those of their countrymen who had the good fortune to gain their liberty in the general exchange of prisoners which usually followed an engagement. A small but safe galley was waiting for them at the coast, and long before the inauspicious appearance above alluded to had taken place, they were far from the land, and in a fair way, with prosperous breezes and some exertion, of soon making the home from which they had so recently been exiled.

But great was the happiness of the reunited family at the termination of their troubles, there was one among them whose gratification was not unmixed with regret.

Lydia could not but remember with feelings of deep and earnest gratitude the noble and disinterested conduct of her brother's preserver, and she could not repress a few tears when she reflected that they were never to meet again. As they receded from the shore, these sensations became still stronger, and the poor girl, at last, felt as though, instead of her returning to her native land in company with the beloved brother whom she had despaired of seeing again, she was on the point of being banished forever.

On the second day, Lydia was aroused from her slumbers by her brother, who asked her to observe the singular appearance of the sky, and also of the ocean—which was unusually calm and motionless for the season. The air, too, was almost insufferably warm, and there was a pale, black lustre appearance in the heavens, which caused a feeling of vague apprehension in the minds of all who observed it.

'This is somewhat strange,' remarked the master of the frail vessel, as he stood upon the poop, and surveyed the sky from beneath his uplifted palm. 'I have travelled this main many a time before, yet never met with such weather. I doubt this calm portends a fearful tempest.'

'Heaven grant thy foreboding be groundless,' said Ctesiphon, thinking only of his sister, who, leaning heavily upon his arm, watched languidly the singular manifestations which had called forth the unpalatable prophecy of the captain.

Toward evening the sky became still more overcast, and a heavy shower fell, bringing with it a cloud of ashes and dust of a peculiar color, which spread over the sails and deck of the vessel, and over the garments of such as were obliged to remain exposed to the inclemency of the storm. The waves now ran mountains high, and the little craft was buffeted about in all directions at the mercy of the billows. The captain still maintained his post, and though his look betrayed considerable anxiety, he gave no vent to his fear in words, but remained with his eyes fixed steadfastly in the direction whence they had come, as if anticipating the storm which he knew too well was shortly to follow.

During the interval occupied by this scene, one of a widely different nature was taking place at Herculaneum. The unusual signs observed by the inhabitants had been on the increase hourly, until the event which they had foreboded had come to pass. Then it was that those who had been the loudest in their ridicule of such as had prudently fled from the wrath to come, became mute and terror-stricken. Among the railers, the father of young Cominius had been most prominent. But now he deeply repented the inactivity which had led him to expose his family to the fury of the volcano, and to spurn, until too late, as it proved, the only avenue of safety left open for them.

At the first breaking out of the eruption—which was announced by a sudden trembling of the ground and a discharge of stones and lava, a portion of which fell within the city gates, and did grievous damage to some wooden sheds for stabling, situated therein—the Prætor hastily abandoned the seat of justice, and fled to the succor of his unprotected family. But Cominius had been before him, and only a faithful servant remained behind, braving the perils of the approaching catastrophe with that noble devotion which characterised the men of old, to denote to him the direction they had taken. The whole town was by this time in motion, with the exception of some, who, not so easily intimidated as the rest, remained behind to gather up their most valuable chattels, or to plunder the houses of those whose sudden flight had compelled them to abandon everything, and the aged Prætor, with many an inward misgiving, gave one backward glance at the angry and fuming leviathan, which threatened the annihilation of his late peaceful home, ere he grasped the hand of his faithful servant, and hurried him away. It was his last look, for the instant of his turning a more terrible convulsion shook the earth, and falling upon his side from the effects of the concussion, he was immediately overwhelmed by the falling fragments of his own dwelling—while his slave, Juba, disdaining to fly, shared the same terrible fate.

On all sides nothing now met the gaze of the terrified fugitives but the tottering walls of temples and the bleeding remains of those unfortunates who, being too slow in their movements, had been involved in the common ruin. From the summit of Vesuvius came forth an impenetrable cloud, that darkened the atmosphere for miles around, and hundreds, both in town and on the roads, rendered by this sudden darkness unable to distinguish their road, fell by the way, and were instantaneously suffocated by the descending clouds of ashes.—Amid all this confusion arose incessantly, combined with the cries of men and women, and the crash of crumbling edifices, the frightful roaring of the wild beasts caged within the walls of the otherwise deserted Amphitheatre.

The younger Cominius, meanwhile, in company with his mother and sister, seated in one of his father's chariots, into which he had hastily collected such of their household wealth as the urgency of the occasion allowed them to get together, was urging his horses furiously toward the coast—ever and anon looking anxiously back with the forlorn hope of seeing his father following in their track. But such consolation was to be denied him.

Arrived on the borders of the sea, another difficulty presented itself. In the hurry of the moment Cominius had mistaken the road to the nearest port of embarkation, and much time was spent in looking about them for a sure conveyance to some place of safety beyond the sea. This difficulty was conquered, however, in brief time, and although the waves ran to a great height, and their shallow bark labored fearfully in the heavy surf, they were soon carried by the breeze to a distance sufficiently great at least to secure them from the prospect of immediate danger.

'The gods be praised!' was the first exclamation of Cominius, when they were at length fairly out of sight

of the land, although by no means certain as yet of their entire security. 'We may now take time to repose us, after the travails we have so recently undergone. Nay, droop not, Lucia,' he added, addressing his sister, who appeared deeply dejected, and did not seem to share the joy of her companions; 'droop not, sweet—the greatest evil is past, and we may now look around us without a particle of fear.'

'Alas, brother!' she replied, mournfully; 'I thought not of our own danger. Our father, Lucius!'

'Nay,' said Lucius, whose forebodings were no less melancholy than hers, although for obvious reasons he did not hesitate to conceal them from her; 'dreading lest the disclosure, coupled with the trials she already sustained, might be too much for her delicate frame to bear. 'He is safe, beyond question. All Herculaneum was afoot as we passed on, and I doubt not our beloved father was among the fugitives. This commotion will soon subside, and a few days, at farthest, will reunite us.'

Her brother's words did not altogether fail in their object, for the poor girl ceased weeping, and became more cheerful, if not absolutely contented. Still, however, there was a doubt, and as there were few on board the little vessel who had not left behind a beloved friend or relative, there was a general gloom upon the spirits of the party which nothing could avail to dissipate.

Their trials, however, had but commenced, for it seemed as if, in flying from a great danger on the land, they had only embarked to encounter greater disasters upon the water. They had been but a day at sea, when a fierce storm arose—the same as that noticed by the crew and passengers of the galley in which Lydia with her father and brother had embarked—and so great was the damage sustained by their vessel, that they were at last obliged to construct a small raft, on which they placed themselves without loss of time, and were soon at the mercy of the unsparing elements. Certain death now stared them in the face, and they were just on the point of yielding to despair—even Cominius, who had been the last to submit—when, to the great joy of all, a sail appeared in sight, and the storm suddenly abating, they were enabled by degrees to make the strange bark understand their signals, and hasten to their assistance. But the hopes of the tempest-tossed crew were suddenly crushed, when in the persons of those whom they had summoned to their aid, they recognised those of their most redoubtable enemies, the Greeks.

'All hope is indeed extinct,' exclaimed Cominius, regretfully, though without the least manifestation of a desire to avert the fate which he felt too surely awaited him. 'I would not care for my own poor safety, but thee, Lucia, and my mother—it is hard to know that ye also must participate in our sufferings.'

It was here that the energy of her woman's character was made apparent in his sister.—Rising to her full height, and glancing with a holy confidence toward the brightening sky, she rejoined:

'We are all in the keeping of a higher power. For myself, dear brother, I fear not—for I feel confident there is a brighter prospect for us beyond the grave. Lo! how yon sunbeam bursts its way from amidst the dense masses of cloud which on every side have environed us. Such will be our awakening, after our troubles shall be o'er!'

'Noble girl!' said her brother, proudly embracing her. 'Thou art worthy to be the daughter of an emperor!'

'It is sufficient for me if I am worthy to be the sister of so kind and generous a brother,' she answered modestly.

By this time the two parties had approached near enough to enable those respectively belonging to them to distinguish the habiliments of their rivals. As soon as they perceived the nation of those to whose rescue they were hastening, the Greeks, as Cominius dreaded, put about with the intention of passing on their course, and abandoning the shipwrecked party to their fate; but at this crisis a general movement was apparent upon the deck, and in a short time they again veered about, and the distressed fugitives were received on board.

Great was the astonishment of Cominius when in the persons of those to whom he was indebted for his deliverance he recognized Ctesiphon and his lovely sister Lydia. The secret of the friendly conduct of their adversaries was now fully apparent. Recognizing among the tenants of the raft her brother's benefactor, the grateful girl had interfered in the behalf of Cominius and his party, and by rehearsing the story of her brother's late escape from the lion, she succeeded in enlisting the feelings of her countrymen in their behalf.

Two weeks after the above occurrence, there was a solemn ceremony performed in the presence of the actors in the foregoing scenes: the principal parties in which were Lucius Cominius, and Lydia, the beautiful Greek.

## AGRICULTURE.

### TO PROTECT POTATOES AGAINST DISEASE.

The following method of protecting potatoes from disease has attracted much notice in Germany, and the Prussian Government have promised the discoverer a reward of 2000 dollars if it should be found practicable. The plan has been made public, with a view of ascertaining its results by experiments on an extensive scale, and we extract the following description of it from the *Gardener's Chronicle*:—