

CHAPTER 10 - THE RIFT IN THE WALL

When Ulpus suddenly departed from Numerian's house on the morning of the siege, it was with no distinct intention of betaking himself to any particular place, or devoting himself to any immediate employment. It was to give vent to his joy--to the ecstasy that now filled his heart to bursting--that he sought the open streets. His whole moral being was exalted by that overwhelming sense of triumph, which urges the physical nature into action. He hurried into the free air, as a child runs on a bright day in the wide fields; his delight was too wild to expand under a roof; his excess of bliss swelled irrepressibly beyond all artificial limits of space.

The Goths were in sight! A few hours more, and their scaling ladders would be planted against the walls. On a city so weakly guarded as Rome, their assault must be almost instantaneously successful. Thirsting for plunder, they would descend in infuriated multitudes on the defenceless streets. Christians though they were, the restraints of religion would, in that moment of fierce triumph, be powerless with such a nation of marauders against the temptations to pillage. Churches would be ravaged and destroyed; priests would be murdered in attempting the defence of their ecclesiastical treasures; fire and sword would waste to its remotest confines the stronghold of Christianity, and overwhelm in death and oblivion the boldest of Christianity's devotees! Then, when the hurricane of ruin and crime had passed over the city, when a new people were ripe for another government and another religion--then would be the time to invest the banished gods of old Rome with their former rule; to bid the survivors of the stricken multitude remember the judgment that their apostasy to their ancient faith had demanded and incurred; to strike the very remembrance of the Cross out of the memory of man; and to reinstate Paganism on her throne of sacrifices, and under her roof of gold, more powerful from her past persecutions; more universal in her sudden restoration, than in all the glories of her ancient rule!

Such thoughts as these passed through the Pagan's toiling mind as, unobservant of all outward events, he paced through the streets of the beleaguered city. Already he beheld the array of the Goths preparing the way, as the unconscious pioneers of the returning gods, for the march of that mighty revolution which he was determined to lead. The warmth of his past eloquence, the glow of his old courage, thrilled through his heart, as he figured to himself the prospect that would soon stretch before him--a city laid waste, a people terrified, a government distracted, a religion destroyed. Then, arising amid this darkness and ruin; amid this solitude, desolation, and decay, it would be his glorious privilege to summon an unfaithful people

to return to the mistress of their ancient love; to rise from prostration beneath a dismantled Church; and to seek prosperity in temples re peopled and at shrines restored!

All remembrance of late events now entirely vanished from his mind. Numerian, Vetricano, Antonina, they were all forgotten in this memorable advent of the Goths! His slavery in the mines, his last visit to Alexandria, his earlier wanderings--even these, so present to his memory until the morning of the siege, were swept from its very surface now. Age, solitude, infirmity--hitherto the mournful sensations which were proofs to him that he still continued to exist--suddenly vanished from his perceptions, as things that were not; and now at length he forgot that he was an outcast, and remembered triumphantly that he was still a priest. He felt animated by the same hopes, elevated by the same aspirations, as in those early days when he had harangued the wavering Pagans in the Temple, and first plotted the overthrow of the Christian Church.

It was a terrible and warning proof of the omnipotent influence that a single idea may exercise over a whole life, to see that old man wandering among the crowds around him, still enslaved, after years of suffering and solitude, degradation, and crime, by the same ruling ambition, which had crushed the promise of his early youth! It was an awful testimony to the eternal and mysterious nature of thought, to behold that wasted and weakened frame; and then to observe how the unassailable mind within still swayed the wreck of body yet left to it--how faithfully the last exhausted resources of failing vigour rallied into action at its fierce command--how quickly, at its mocking voice, the sunken eye lightened again with a gleam of hope, and the pale, thin lips parted mechanically with an exulting smile!

The hours passed, but he still walked on--whither or among whom he neither knew nor cared. No remorse touched his heart for the destruction that he had wreaked on the Christian who had sheltered him; no terror appalled his soul at the contemplation of the miseries that he believed to be in preparation for the city from the enemy at its gates. The end that had hallowed to him the long series of his former offences and former sufferings, now obliterated iniquities just passed, and stripped of all their horrors, atrocities immediately to come.

The Goths might be destroyers to others, but they were benefactors to him; for they were harbingers of the ruin which would be the material of his reform, and the source of his triumph. It never entered his imagination that, as an inhabitant of Rome, he shared the approaching perils of the citizens, and in the moment of the assault might share their doom. He beheld only

the new and gorgeous prospect that war and rapine were opening before him. He thought only of the time that must elapse ere his new efforts could be commenced--of the orders of the people among whom he should successively make his voice heard--of the temples which he should select for restoration--of the quarter of Rome which should first be chosen for the reception of his daring reform.

At length he paused; his exhausted energies yielded under the exertions imposed on them, and obliged him to bethink himself of refreshment and repose. It was now noon. The course of his wanderings had insensibly conducted him again to the precincts of his old, familiar dwelling-place; he found himself at the back of the Pincian Mount, and only separated by a strip of uneven woody ground, from the base of the city wall. The place was very solitary. It was divided from the streets and mansions above by thick groves and extensive gardens, which stretched along the undulating descent of the hill. A short distance to the westward lay the Pincian Gate, but an abrupt turn in the wall and some olive trees which grew near it, shut out all view of objects in that direction. On the other side, towards the eastward, the ramparts were discernible, running in a straight line of some length, until they suddenly turned inwards at a right angle and were concealed from further observation by the walls of a distant palace and the pine trees of a public garden. The only living figure discernible near this lonely spot, was that of a sentinel, who occasionally passed over the ramparts above, which--situated as they were between two stations of soldiery, one at the Pincian Gate and the other where the wall made the angle already described--were untenanted, save by the guard within the limits of whose watch they happened to be placed. Here, for a short space of time, the Pagan rested his weary frame, and aroused himself insensibly from the enthralling meditations which had hitherto blinded him to the troubled aspect of the world around him.

He now for the first time heard on all sides distinctly, the confused noises which still rose from every quarter of Rome. The same incessant strife of struggling voices and hurrying footsteps, which had caught his ear in the early morning, attracted his attention now; but no shrieks of distress, no clash of weapons, no shouts of fury and defiance, were mingled with them; although, as he perceived by the position of the sun, the day had sufficiently advanced to have brought the Gothic army long since to the foot of the walls. What could be the cause of this delay in the assault; of this ominous tranquillity on the ramparts above him? Had the impetuosity of the Goths suddenly vanished at the sight of Rome? Had negotiations for peace been organised with the first appearance of the invaders? He listened again. No sounds caught his ear differing in character from those he had just heard.

Though besieged, the city was evidently--from some mysterious cause--not even threatened by an assault.

Suddenly there appeared from a little pathway near him, which led round the base of the wall, a woman preceded by a child, who called to her impatiently, as he ran on, 'Hasten, mother, hasten! There is no crowd here. Yonder is the Gate. We shall have a noble view of the Goths!'

There was something in the address of the child to the woman that gave Ulpius a suspicion, even then, of the discovery that flushed upon him soon after. He rose and followed them. They passed onward by the wall, through the olive trees beyond, and then gained the open space before the Pincian Gate. Here a great concourse of people had assembled, and were suffered, in their proper turn, to ascend the ramparts in divisions, by some soldiers who guarded the steps by which they were approached. After a short delay, Ulpius and those around him were permitted to gratify their curiosity, as others had done before them. They mounted the walls, and beheld, stretched over the ground within and beyond the suburbs, the vast circumference of the Gothic lines.

Terrible and almost sublime as was the prospect of that immense multitude, seen under the brilliant illumination of the noontide sun, it was not impressive enough to silence the turbulent loquacity rooted in the dispositions of the people of Rome. Men, women, and children, all made their noisy and conflicting observations on the sight before them, in every variety of tone, from the tremulous accents of terror, to the loud vociferations of bravado.

Some spoke boastfully of the achievements that would be performed by the Romans, when their expected auxiliaries arrived from Ravenna. Others foreboded, in undissembled terror, an assault under cover of the night. Here, a group abused, in low confidential tones, the policy of the government in its relations with the Goths. There, a company of ragged vagabonds amused themselves by pompously confiding to each other their positive conviction, that at that very moment the barbarians must be trembling in their camp, at the mere sight of the all-powerful Capital of the World. In one direction, people were heard noisily speculating whether the Goths would be driven from the walls by the soldiers of Rome, or be honoured by an invitation to conclude a peace with the august Empire, which they had so treasonably ventured to invade. In another, the more sober and reputable among the spectators audibly expressed their apprehensions of starvation, dishonour, and defeat, should the authorities of the city be foolhardy enough to venture a resistance to Alaric and his barbarian hosts. But wide

as was the difference of the particular opinions hazarded among the citizens, they all agreed in one unavoidable conviction, that Rome had escaped the immediate horrors of an assault, to be threatened--if unaided by the legions at Ravenna--by the prospective miseries of a blockade.

Amid the confusion of voices around him, that word 'blockade' alone reached the Pagan's ear. It brought with it a flood of emotions that overwhelmed him. All that he saw, all that he heard, connected itself imperceptibly with that expression. A sudden darkness, neither to be dissipated nor escaped, seemed to obscure his faculties in an instant. He struggled mechanically through the crowd, descended the steps of the ramparts, and returned to the solitary spot where he had first beheld the woman and the child.

The city was blockaded! The Goths were bent then, on obtaining a peace and not on achieving a conquest! The city was blockaded! It was no error of the ignorant multitude--he had seen with his own eyes the tents and positions of the enemy, he had heard the soldiers on the wall discoursing on the admirable disposition of Alaric's forces, on the impossibility of obtaining the smallest communication with the surrounding country, on the vigilant watch that had been set over the navigation of the Tiber. There was no doubt on the matter--the barbarians had determined on a blockade!

There was even less uncertainty upon the results which would be produced by this unimaginable policy of the Goths--the city would be saved! Rome had not scrupled in former years to purchase the withdrawal of all enemies from her distant provinces; and now that the very centre of her glory, the very pinnacle of her declining power, was threatened with sudden and unexpected ruin, she would lavish on the Goths the treasures of the whole empire, to bribe them to peace and to tempt them to retreat. The Senate might possibly delay the necessary concessions, from hopes of assistance that would never be realised; but sooner or later the hour of negotiation would arrive; northern rapacity would be satisfied with southern wealth; and in the very moment when it seemed inevitable, the ruin from which the Pagan revolution was to derive its vigorous source, would be diverted from the churches of Rome.

Could the old renown of the Roman name have retained so much of its ancient influence as to daunt the hardy Goths, after they had so successfully penetrated the empire as to have reached the walls of its vaunted capital? Could Alaric have conceived so exaggerated an idea of the strength of the forces in the city as to despair, with all his multitudes, of storming it with success? It could not be otherwise! No other consideration

could have induced the barbarian general to abandon such an achievement as the destruction of Rome. With the chance of an assault the prospects of Paganism had brightened--with the certainty of a blockade, they sunk immediately into disheartening gloom!

Filled with these thoughts, Ulpus paced backwards and forwards in his solitary retreat, utterly abandoned by the exaltation of feeling which had restored to his faculties in the morning, the long-lost vigour of their former youth. Once more, he experienced the infirmities of his age; once more he remembered the miseries that had made his existence one unending martyrdom; once more he felt the presence of his ambition within him, like a judgment that he was doomed to welcome, like a curse that he was created to cherish. To say that his sensations at this moment were those of the culprit who hears the order for his execution when he had been assured of a reprieve, is to convey but a faint idea of the fierce emotions of rage, grief, and despair, that now united to rend the Pagan's heart.

Overpowered with weariness both of body and mind, he flung himself down under the shade of some bushes that clothed the base of the wall above him. As he lay there--so still in his heavy lassitude that life itself seemed to have left him--one of the long green lizards, common to Italy, crawled over his shoulder. He seized the animal--doubtful for the moment whether it might not be of the poisonous species--and examined it. At the first glance he discovered that it was of the harmless order of its race, and would have flung it carelessly from him, but for something in its appearance which, in the wayward irritability of his present mood, he felt a strange and sudden pleasure in contemplating.

Through its exquisitely marked and transparent skin he could perceive the action of the creature's heart, and saw that it was beating violently, in the agony of fear caused to the animal by its imprisonment in his hand. As he looked on it, and thought how continually a being so timid must be thwarted in its humble anxieties, in its small efforts, in its little journeys from one patch of grass to another, by a hundred obstacles, which, trifles though they might be to animals of a higher species, were yet of fatal importance to creatures constituted like itself, he began to find an imperfect, yet remarkable analogy between his own destiny and that of this small unit of creation. He felt that, in its petty sphere, the short life of the humble animal before him must have been the prey of crosses and disappointments, as serious to it, as the more severed and destructive afflictions of which he, in his existence, had been the victim; and, as he watched the shadow-like movement of the little fluttering heart of the lizard, he experienced a cruel pleasure in perceiving that there were other beings in the creation, even

down to the most insignificant, who inherited a part of his misery, and suffered a portion of his despair.

Ere long, however, his emotions took a sterner and a darker hue. The sight of the animal wearied him, and he flung it contemptuously aside. It disappeared in the direction of the ramparts; and almost at the same moment he heard a slight sound, resembling the falling of several minute particles of brick or light stone, which seemed to come from the wall behind him.

That such a noise should proceed from so massive a structure appeared unaccountable. He rose, and, parting the bushes before him, advanced close to the surface of the lofty wall. To his astonishment, he found that the brickwork had in many places so completely mouldered away, that he could move it easily with his fingers. The cause of the trifling noise that he had heard was now fully explained: hundreds of lizards had made their homes between the fissures of the bricks; the animal that he had permitted to escape had taken refuge in one of these cavities, and in the hurry of its flight had detached several of the loose crumbling fragments that surrounded its hiding-place.

Not content, however, with the discovery he had already made, he retired a little, and, looking stedfastly up through some trees which in this particular place grew at the foot of the wall, he saw that its surface was pierced in many places by great irregular rifts, some of which extended nearly to its whole height. In addition to this, he perceived that the mass of the structure at one particular point, leaned considerably out of the perpendicular. Astounded at what he beheld, he took a stick from the ground, and inserting it in one of the lowest and smallest of the cracks, easily succeeded in forcing it entirely into the wall, part of which seemed to be hollow, and part composed of the same rotten brickwork which had at first attracted his attention.

It was now evident that the whole structure, over a breadth of several yards, had been either weakly and carelessly built, or had at some former period suffered a sudden and violent shock. He left the stick in the wall to mark the place; and was about to retire, when he heard the footstep of the sentinel on the rampart immediately above. Suddenly cautious, though from what motive he would have been at that moment hardly able to explain, he remained in the concealment of the trees and bushes, until the guard had passed onward; then he cautiously emerged from the place; and, retiring to some distance, fell into a train of earnest and absorbing thought.

To account to the reader for the phenomenon which now engrossed the Pagan's attention, it will be necessary to make a brief digression to the history of the walls of Rome.

The circumference of the first fortifications of the city, built by Romulus, was thirteen miles. The greater part, however, of this large area was occupied by fields and gardens, which it was the object of the founder of the empire to preserve for arable purposes, from the incursions of the different enemies by whom he was threatened from without. As Rome gradually increased in size, its walls were progressively enlarged and altered by subsequent rulers. But it was not until the reign of the Emperor Aurelian (A.D. 270), that any extraordinary or important change was effected in the defences of the city. That potentate commenced the erection of walls, twenty-one miles in circumference, which were finally completed in the reign of Probus (A.D. 276), were restored by Belisarius (A.D. 537), and are to be seen in detached portions, in the fortifications of the modern city, to the present day.

At the date of our story, then (A.D. 408), the walls remained precisely as they had been constructed in the reigns of Aurelian and Probus. They were for the most part made of brick; and in a few places, probably, a sort of soft sandstone might have been added to the pervading material. At several points in their circumference, and particularly in the part behind the Pincian Hill, these walls were built in arches, forming deep recesses, and occasionally disposed in double rows. The method of building employed in their erection, was generally that mentioned by Vitruvius, in whose time it originated, as 'opus reticulatum'.

The 'opus reticulatum' was composed of small bricks (or stones) set together on their angles, instead of horizontally, and giving the surface of a wall the appearance of a sort of solid network. This was considered by some architects of antiquity a perishable mode of construction; and Vitruvius asserts that some buildings where he had seen it used, had fallen down. From the imperfect specimens of it which remain in modern times, it would be difficult to decide upon its merits. That it was assuredly insufficient to support the weight of the bank of the Pincian Mount, which rose immediately behind it, in the solitary spot described some pages back, is still made evident by the appearance of the wall at that part of the city, which remains in modern times bent out of the perpendicular, and cracked in some places almost from top to bottom. This ruin is now known to the present race of Italians, under the expressive title of 'Il Muro Torto' or, The Crooked Wall.

We may here observe that it is extremely improbable that the existence of this natural breach in the fortifications of Rome was noticed, or if noticed, regarded with the slightest anxiety or attention by the majority of the careless and indolent inhabitants, at the period of the present romance. It is supposed to have been visible as early as the time of Aurelian, but is only particularly mentioned by Procopius, an historian of the sixth century, who relates that Belisarius, in strengthening the city against a siege of the Goths, attempted to repair this weak point in the wall, but was hindered in his intended labour by the devout populace, who declared that it was under the peculiar protection of St. Peter, and that it would be consequently impious to meddle with it. The general submitted without remonstrance to the decision of the inhabitants, and found no cause afterwards to repent of his facility of compliance; for, to use the translated words of the writer above-mentioned, 'During the siege neither the enemy nor the Romans regarded this place.' It is to be supposed that so extraordinary an event as this, gave the wall that sacred character, which deterred subsequent rulers from attempting its repair; which permitted it to remain crooked and rent through the convulsions of the middle ages; and which still preserves it, to attest the veracity of historians, by appealing to the antiquarian curiosity of the traveller of modern times.

We now return to Ulpius. It is a peculiarity observable in the characters of men living under the ascendancy of one ruling idea, that they intuitively distort whatever attracts their attention in the outer world, into a connection more or less intimate with the single object of their mental contemplation. Since the time when he had been exiled from the Temple, the Pagan's faculties had, unconsciously to himself, acted solely in reference to the daring design which it was the business of his whole existence to entertain. Influenced, therefore, by this obliquity of moral feeling, he had scarcely reflected on the discovery that he had just made at the base of the city wall, ere his mind instantly reverted to the ambitious meditations which had occupied it in the morning; and the next moment, the first dawning conception of a bold and perilous project began to absorb his restless thoughts.

He reflected on the peculiarities and position of the wall before him. Although the widest and most important of the rents which he had observed in it, existed too near the rampart to be reached without the assistance of a ladder, there were others as low as the ground, which he knew, by the result of the trial he had already made, might be successfully and immensely widened by the most ordinary exertion and perseverance. The interior of the wall, if judged by the condition of the surface, could offer no insuperable obstacles to an attempt at penetration so partial as to be limited to a height

and width of a few feet. The ramparts, from their position between two guard-houses, would be unencumbered by an inquisitive populace. The sentinel, within the limits of whose allotted watch it happened to fall, would, when night came on, be the only human being likely to pass the spot; and at such an hour his attention must necessarily be fixed--in the circumstances under which the city was now placed--on the prospect beyond, rather than on the ground below and behind him. It seemed, therefore, almost a matter of certainty, that a cautious man, labouring under cover of the night, might pursue whatever investigations he pleased at the base of the wall.

He examined the ground where he now stood. Nothing could be more lonely than its present appearance. The private gardens on the hill above it shut out all communication from that quarter. It could only be approached by the foot-path that ran round the Pincian Mount, and along the base of the walls. In the state of affairs now existing in the city, it was not probable that any one would seek this solitary place, whence nothing could be seen, and where little could be heard, in preference to mixing with the spirit-stirring confusion in the streets, or observing the Gothic encampment from such positions on the ramparts as were easily attainable to all. In addition to the secrecy offered by the loneliness of this patch of ground to whatever employments were undertaken on it, was the further advantage afforded by the trees and thickets which covered its lower end, and which would effectually screen an intruder, during the darkness of night, from the most penetrating observation directed from the wall above.

Reflecting thus, he doubted not that a cunning and determined man might with impunity so far widen any one of the inferior breaches in the lower part of the wall as to make a cavity (large enough to admit a human figure) that should pierce to its outer surface, and afford that liberty of departing from the city and penetrating the Gothic camp which the closed gates now denied to all the inhabitants alike. To discover the practicability of such an attempt as this was, to a mind filled with such aspirations as the Pagan's, to determine irrevocably on its immediate execution. He resolved as soon as night approached to begin his labours on the wall; to seek--if the breach were made good, and the darkness favoured him--the tent of Alaric; and once arrived there, to acquaint the Gothic King with the weakness of the materials for defence within the city, and dilapidated condition of the fortifications below the Pincian Mount, insisting, as the condition of his treachery, on an assurance from the barbarian leader (which he doubted not would be gladly and instantly accorded) of the destruction of the Christian churches, the pillage of the Christian possessions, and the massacre of the Christian priests.

He retired cautiously from the lonely place that had now become the centre of his new hopes; and entering the streets of the city, proceeded to provide himself with an instrument that would facilitate his approaching labours, and food that would give him strength to prosecute his intended efforts, unthreatened by the hindrance of fatigue. As he thought on the daring treachery of his project, his morning's exultation began to return to him again. All his previous attempts to organise the restoration of Paganism sunk into sudden insignificance before his present design. His defence of the Temple of Serapis, his conspiracy at Alexandria, his intrigue with Vetrico, were the efforts of a man; but this projected destruction of the priests, the churches, and the treasures of a whole city, through the agency of a mighty army, moved by the unaided machinations of a single individual, would be the dazzling achievement of a god!

The hours loitered slowly onward. The sun waned in the gorgeous heaven, and set, surrounded by red and murky clouds. Then came silence and darkness. The Gothic watch-fires flamed one by one into the dusky air. The guards were doubled at the different posts. The populace were driven from the ramparts, and the fortifications of the great city echoed to no sound now but the tramp of the restless sentinel, or the clash of arms from the distant guard-houses that dotted the long line of the lofty walls.

It was then that Ulpius, passing cautiously along the least-frequented streets, gained unnoticed the place of his destination. A thick vapour lay over the lonely and marshy spot. Nothing was now visible from it but the dim, uncertain outline of the palaces above, and the mass, so sunk in obscurity that it looked like a dark layer of mist itself, of the rifted fortifications. A smile of exultation passed over the Pagan's countenance, as he perceived the shrouding and welcome thickness of the atmosphere. Groping his way softly through the thickets, he arrived at the base of the wall. For some time he passed slowly along it, feeling the width of the different rents wherever he could stretch his hand. At length he paused at one more extensive than the rest, drew from its concealment in his garments a thick bar of iron sharpened at one end, and began to labour at the breach.

Chance had led him to the place best adapted to his purpose. The ground he stood on was only encumbered close to the wall by rank weeds and low thickets, and was principally composed of damp, soft turf. The bricks, therefore, as he carefully detached them, made no greater noise in falling than the slight rustling caused by their sudden contact with the boughs through which they descended. Insignificant as this sound was, it aroused the apprehension of the wary Pagan. He laid down his iron bar, and removed the thickets by dragging them up, or breaking them at the roots,

until he had cleared a space of some feet in extent before the base of the wall. He then returned to his toilsome task, and with hands bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the thorns he had grasped in removing the thickets continued his labour at the brick-work. He pursued his employment with perfect impunity; the darkness covered him from observation; no one disturbed him by approaching the solitary scene of his operations; and of the two sentinels who were placed near the part of the wall which was the centre of all his exertions, one remained motionless at the most distant extremity of his post, and the other paced restlessly backwards and forwards on the rampart, singing a wild, rambling song about war, and women, and wine, which, whatever liberty it might allow to his organs of perception, effectually hindered the vigilant exercise of his faculties of hearing.

Brick after brick yielded to the vigorous and well-timed efforts of Ulpus. He had already made a cavity, in an oblique direction, large enough to creep through, and was preparing to penetrate still further, when a portion of the rotten material of the interior of the wall suddenly yielded in a mass to a chance pressure of his iron bar, and slowly sunk down inwards into a bed which, judging by such faint sounds as were audible at the moment, must have been partly water, and partly marshy earth and rotten brick-work. After having first listened, to be sure that the slight noise caused by this event had not reached the ears or excited the suspicions of the careless sentinels, Ulpus crept into the cavity he had made, groping his way with his bar, until he reached the brink of a chasm, the depth of which he could not probe, and the breadth of which he could not ascertain.

He lingered irresolute; the darkness around him was impenetrable; he could feel toads and noisome animals crawling over his limbs. The damp atmosphere of the place began to thrill through him to his very bones; his whole frame trembled under the excess of his past exertions. Without light, he could neither attempt to proceed, nor hope to discover the size and extent of the chasm which he had partially laid open. The mist was fast vanishing as the night advanced: it was necessary to arrive at a resolution ere it would be too late.

He crept out of the cavity. Just as he had gained the open air, the sentinel halted over the very spot where the Pagan stood, and paused suddenly in his song. There was an instant's interval of silence, during which the inmost soul of Ulpus quailed beneath an apprehension as vivid, as that which had throbbed in the heart of the despised lizard, whose flight had guided him to his discovery at the wall. Soon, however, he heard the voice of the soldier calling cheerfully to his fellow sentinel, 'Comrade, do you see the

moon? She is rising to cheer our watch!

Nothing had been discovered!--he was still safe! But if he stayed at the cavity till the mists faded before the moonlight, could he be certain of preserving his security? He felt that he could not!

What mattered a night more or a night less, to such a project as his? Months might elapse before the Goths retired from the walls. It was better to suffer delay than to risk discovery. He determined to leave the place, and to return on the following night provided with a lantern, the light of which he would conceal until he entered the cavity. Once there, it could not be perceived by the sentinels above--it would guide him through all obstacles, preserve him through all dangers. Massive as it was, he felt convinced that the interior of the wall was in as ruinous a condition as the outside. Caution and perseverance were sufficient of themselves to insure to his efforts the speediest and completest success.

He waited until the sentinel had again betaken himself to the furthest limits of his watch, and then softly gathering up the brushwood that lay round him, he concealed with it the mouth of the cavity in the outer wall, and the fragments of brick-work that had fallen on the turf beneath. This done, he again listened, to assure himself that he had been unobserved; then, stepping with the utmost caution, he departed by the path that led round the slope of the Pincian Hill.

'Strength--patience--and to-morrow night!' muttered the Pagan to himself, as he entered the streets, and congregated once more with the citizens of Rome.