

**LET US
FOLLOW HIM**

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Let Us Follow Him by Henryk Siekiewicz

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HENRYK SIEKIEWICZ

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"He rested His gaze on her pale suffering face."—Page 67.

° Let Us Follow Him

BY

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

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CHAPTER I.

CAIUS SEPTIMUS CINNA was a Roman patrician. His youth was spent in the hard life of the camp. Later he returned to Rome to enjoy his honors and to spend, in luxurious living, his large but rapidly diminishing fortune. He enjoyed to his full bent all that the great city could give him. His nights were spent at feasts in magnificent suburban villas; his days were passed in polemical controversies with the lanists, in discussions with the rhetors at the *trepidaria*, where they had debates interspersed with gossip of the city and the world; at the circuses, at the races, at the fights of the gladiators, with the Thracian fortune-tellers, and with the wonderful

dancing girls brought from the islands of the archipelago.

Being a relative, on his mother's side, of the famous Lucullus, he inherited the tastes of an epicure. At his table were served Greek wines, oysters from Neapolis, locusts from Numidia, preserved in honey from Pontus, and all that Rome possessed he obtained, beginning with the fishes from the Red Sea, to the white birds from the banks of the Boristenes. He used the good things of this world not only as a soldier who boisterously feasts, but also as a patrician who daintily selects. He persuaded himself to, or perhaps awakened within himself an admiration for beautiful things; for statues excavated from the ruins of Corinth, for the epilychnia from Attica, for Etruscan vases or those brought from the misty Sericum, for Roman mosaics, for textile fabrics from the vicinity of the Euphrates, for

Arabian incense, and for all those small objects which go to fill up the emptiness of patrician life. He knew how to speak of them as a connoisseur with the older patricians who ornamented their bald heads with garlands of roses, and who chewed heliotrope after their feasts. He felt equally the beauty of the periods of Cicero, of the verses of Horace or Ovid. Being educated by an Athenian rhetor, he spoke Greek fluently, memorized whole chapters of the Iliad, and during the feasts would sing the songs of Anacreon until he was either drunk or hoarse. Through his master and the rhetors he became familiar with the philosophies to such an extent that he understood the architecture of the different mental structures reared in Hellas and the Colonies; he further understood that they were lying in ruins. He knew personally a great many stoics who were not congenial to

him because he regarded them rather as a political party, and also as tetricks who are opposed to the joys of life. The skeptics were often seated at his table, where between courses they upset whole systems of philosophy, proclaiming, by the craters filled with wine, that the delights of life were vanity, that truth was something unattainable, that absolute quietude was the true aim of all sages.

He heard all this, but it made no deep impression on him. He did not profess any particular principles, and did not care to do so. He looked upon life as upon the sea, where the wind blew as it pleased, and wisdom to him was the art of trimming his sails. Besides, he valued the broad shoulders which he possessed, his healthy stomach, his handsome Roman head, with its strong profile and mighty jaws; with these he felt sure he could pass safely through the world.