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Title: Victor Serenus

Author: Henry Wood

Release Date: July 30, 2017 [Ebook 55225]

Language: English

START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK VICTOR SERENUS

high barrier of mountains which sweep from the coast irregularly around it are two passes, one leading up to the interior of Asia Minor, and the other giving access to the valley of the Orontes. It was naturally the meeting-place, and on the highway of trading caravans and military expeditions. Through this richly historic country, Cyrus marched to depose his brother from the Persian throne. It was on this plain that Alexander gained his decisive victory over Darius. Here have since been encamped the great hosts of western crusaders, and indeed, from the early dawn of history, this plain was the theatre of great events and conflicts, which had much to do with the shaping of empires, and the progress of the world's civilization.

The cold and rapid river Cydnus, fed by the snows of the Taurus range of mountains, flows through this fertile country; and Tarsus, the capital of the whole province, which was a mean city, was located upon its banks. Its coins reveal its importance during the period between Xerxes and Alexander, and also while under Roman sway, when it was dignified by the name of Metropolis. Strabo says that in all that relates to philosophy and general education it was more illustrious than Athens or Alexandria. In the main it had the character of a Greek city; and the Grecian language, literature, and philosophy were generally cultivated. But there were also many Romans, Hebrews, Persians, and Syrians, with a sprinkling of other tribes and peoples, such as characterized an Oriental metropolis. On its busy wharves were great piles of merchandise, surrounded by groups of merchants and traders in many costumes, and speaking a variety of dialects.[4]

It was one of the most important epochs of history; a time when colossal personalities and events were stamping their impress upon the destiny of races and nations. The shores of the Mediterranean formed the heart of the world's civilization; and Roman militarism, legality, and control were permeating and compacting that great empire, east and west. The Greek and

Hebrew were important but subordinate elements in the human conglomerate of that eventful period. Various and unlike races were commingling; their customs and even their religions were shading into each other, and their languages becoming considerably interchangeable. The Roman represented law, government, conquest, and dominion; the Greek the more subtile ideals of philosophy, art, and intellectuality; while the Hebrew, intense and tenacious, was unconsciously laying the foundation, through his religious zeal, for the coming spread of Judaism, great outgrowth, rival, and successor, Christianity. His hard religiosity and punctilious ceremonialism were not perceptibly softened even by close contact with Grecian poetry and idealism. Even Roman jurisprudence on the one hand, and idolatry on the other,
[5] could not penetrate them. As a rule, the various tributaries to the great current of human history in its evolutionary course gradually mingle, each adding something of its own hue to the common volume, but the Hebraistic economy was the rare exception. Its oil would not mix with the general water of other systems.

At the particular time with which we are dealing, general peace prevailed. There was one of those alternations of calmness which intervene between the fierce storms of racial conflict and religious strife and persecution.

The Jewish procession, small in numbers, but important in spirit and destiny, threaded its way through the winding thoroughfares, attracting but a passing glance from the cosmopolitans which made up the multiform currents of every-day life in Tarsus. At length it halted in front of a family residence in the better part of the Hebrew quarter, into which one of the priests with the father of the child entered, followed by the mother with her young son in her arms, while the others dispersed. The babe, Saulus Paulus, was forty days old, and, in conformity to the Jewish ritual, had been taken to the synagogue for the prescribed presentation service.

Before leaving the household, the priest tenderly took the child

in his arms to give him a final blessing. Raising his eyes toward heaven, he seemed to feel a spirit of prophetic inspiration. With his right hand upon the head of the child, he reverently presumed to lift the curtain which veils the future, fervently exclaiming,

Son of Abraham, scion of the tribe of Benjamin, and heir of Benoni! The living blood of the Covenant flows in thy veins! Thou shalt wax strong, and be learned in all that pertaineth to [1] the Law! Thou shalt be a tongue of the God of Jacob, and many shall tremble when thou speakest! Thou shalt be a defender of Israel, and bring judgment to the Gentiles! Thou shalt open thy mouth and utter mighty things that are hidden from the Greek and Roman! Thou shalt sorely vex the enemies of the Circumcision, and bring them to naught! With holy zeal shalt thou pursue them

Then his visage became fixed, and he was like one in a trance. A voice, not his own, seemed to use his lips. Behold judgment defeat darkness! The uncircumcised prevail!

Abdiel, the priest, trembled like an aspen, and upon coming to himself, declared that he had seen a disturbing vision.

The ancient Judaism accepted no compromise, and bowed to no defeat. When surrounded, and even almost submerged, by prevailing idolatry, polytheism, and heathenism, like a bow temporarily bent, it at length sprang back, and regained its original integrity. It was a casting in rigid form of a conglomerate of truth and error, righteousness and pride. It loathed other creeds and philosophies, and its Deity was limited by a racial boundary. It was a political theocracy.

Phariseeism, which was the leading element of Jewish religiosity, was a compound of spiritual pride, exclusiveness, and intolerance. Missionary effort among other nations was not thought of because they were not worth it. God was the God of Israel. The Chosen People felt that they had a monopoly of the divine favor, and they proposed to keep it. But the teaching of the ancient seers and expounders of righteousness, originally [2]

good, had become incrusted with a superficial formalism, and all vitality had left it. Even the Mosaic Law and the later sublime poems and religious compositions, though constantly and formally recited, were loaded down with traditions, and had become a complex system of polished dry bones. Notwithstanding the discipline of previous dispersions and captivities, such was the spirit of the Chosen People during the earliest years of the Christian era.

CHAPTER II
AN EVENING EXCURSION ON THE CYDNUS

The residence of Benoni was situated upon the more elevated plateau which embraced the northwestern portion of the Cilician metropolis. A little distance to the north was the Orontes Gate, through which a thoroughfare, paved with much-worn gray and white flags, led out to the fertile regions in the broad plain above. Through this portal surged a continuous stream of life, alternating in direction during the different hours of the day like the tides in an inlet from the sea. Here were donkeys, with panniers bursting with fruits, lentils, onions, and beans, and awkward camels, raw-boned, rough, and gray, with great saddles hung over their backs, the capacious folds of which contained seemingly endless resources of baskets, boxes, and miscellaneous merchandise. Horses, roughly harnessed to light wagons which were heaped with dates, figs, grapes, and pomegranates, and at intervals small flocks of sheep, calves, and other animals for the food-supply of a great city, added to the picturesque conglomerate of life and bustle. Here entered blatant sellers of ducks, doves, and pigeons, mingling their shrill cries with the general din and confusion. The massive arched gateway formed the framework for a shifting panorama of races, tribes, costumes, and dialects. Interspersed [9] in the throng were red and blue cloaks more or less dingy, white turbans, faded tunics, long beards, and bare legs. Oriental display and decoration were seen in golden ornaments, including necklaces, bracelets, and pendants, all lending a gleam and sparkle to the motley streams of humanity. Here and there were women of the common classes, wearing loosely gathered long frocks, and

upon their heads veils or wimples ample enough to fall in graceful folds about the shoulders. Some were leading brown-bodied and half-naked children, with hair and features indexing the blood of Greek, Jew, Cilician, or barbarian in picturesque contrast.

Three broad streets converged at the Orontes Gate; and these were lined with small shops containing merchandise, fruits, skins filled with wines and other strong drinks, jewelry, garments, articles for personal adornment, unguents for anointing, besides amulets, charms, and images in endless variety and abundance.

The dwelling of Benoni, though not far away, was shut off from the noise and confusion by a high street-wall in the rear, while in front the sloping grounds extended directly to the wide, silvery Cydnus. There were three broad terraces, with here and there clusters of acacias, almonds, spice-trees, roses, oleander, and jasmine between the winding paths. At intervals there were rustic seats sheltered by bowers of flowering plants and shrubs.

The house was two stories in height, substantial but not pretentious, and built around a quadrangular court. While not ornate, [10] it was attractive and well proportioned. The flat roof was surrounded by a low parapet, and was furnished with a few wicker seats covered with simple canopies. During the mild seasons the family spent much time upon the roof, especially in the early morning and evening hours.

The simple carvings and embellishments of the house were Hebraic in design, and many of the utensils were deeply suggestive of ancient symbolism and ritual. Extending around the interior court was a cornice carved in low relief, with designs depicting scenes from the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the receiving of the Law by Moses, the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, and representations of the Temple at Jerusalem, its courts, and the seven golden candlesticks. In the atrium, or principal apartment, stood an ancient cabinet, in which was preserved with great care, in many wrappings, a scroll of parchment, upon which was inscribed a record of the direct genealogical line

of descent from Abraham, through the tribe of Benjamin, down to Benoni. The very atmosphere of this house of Hebrew of the Hebrews was almost redolent with the odor of incense, and its flavor was that of instituted feasts and festivals.

Tarsus, though advanced in sophistical logic and philosophy, was in its leading characteristics morally depraved. The seat of celebrated schools of letters, it was, at the same time, the home of Eastern cults, whose mad sensuality and weird superstition made up a pagan corruption rarely equalled. A part of its idolatry consisted of the very types and ideals of luxurious effeminacy, gluttony, and sensuality. The iridescent film of intellectual culture, which was drawn over the mass of moral degradation, gave it a charm and external refinement which was more seductive than naked barbarism. One of the chief festivals included the worship, with elaborate rites, of statues of Sardanapalus and Semiramis, upon the base or pedestal of which was engraved,

EAT, DRINK, ENJOY THYSELF; THE REST IS NOTHING.

To the Jews of the Dispersion who dwelt in Tarsus, the spectacles of heathenism inspired in general a sense of disgust. The very bigotry with which their economy had become incrusted formed a kind of protection against which a more plastic and characterless religion would have measurably yielded. Under the intense glare of the law such a paganism appeared in all its abnormal deformity. The Jew was no sophist or sentimentalist; and the Tarsian iniquity and abandon, far from being attractive, strongly confirmed him in his own traditions.

The prejudices of Phariseeism surrounded the very cradle of the son of Benoni. Intolerance, fanaticism, national pride, and exclusiveness built themselves deeply into the organism of his childish nature. At the age of five he had learned many passages from the sacred rolls of parchment, and at six he could recite the Shema and Hallel. At seven he was taken to his

or school, which was attached to the synagogue; and at ten he commenced the simpler doctrines of the oral law which were collected in the Mishna.

Abdiel, the priest, often came to visit the family, and was zealous touching the training of Saulus in ritual and tradition.
[12] But though the vision of the triumph of the uncircumcised had never been repeated, intervening years had not entirely destroyed its portentous impression, even though he had feigned to forget it. Thirteen years had passed, and the son of Benoni had been confirmed as a Son of the Commandment. He was now prepared to go up to Jerusalem for the acquirement of a deeper learning in one of the great schools of the prophets where he might become a Rabbi.

Benoni also had two daughters, the elder of whom had married long before, and removed from Tarsus. Rebecca, the younger, was three years older than Saulus, and was known among the Greeks of the neighborhood as the beautiful Jewess. No brother and sister could be more devotedly attached to each other; and their interests, studies, and recreations were shared in common. They were quite unlike in nature and disposition; but, as is often the case, this seemed to strengthen their bond of affection. Each supplied what was lacking in the other. He was intense, impetuous, and unyielding, while she was placid and rarely ruffled even under great provocation. Though of recognized Jewish type in feature and form, she was faultless even from the artistic standpoint of the Greek. The artlessness and innocence which from a pure soul also shone out through her personality lent an additional charm. She usually appeared with her jet-black hair gathered in two ample braids falling gracefully behind, and interspersed near the ends with golden threads, terminating in a small ornament with pendants. A silken cap of light fabric and delicate shading rested lightly upon her head, and around her
[13] neck was a network of delicate chains intermingled with precious stones. The folds of her white loose-fitting robe were gathered

by a braided scarlet girdle, ornamented with delicate pendants of pearl; and her neck and arms were but lightly covered by a gauze scarf, upon which was a scattered embroidery of golden thread. Every detail of personality and costume indicated a refinement which was genuine and graceful.

At the close of one sultry August day, the family were seated in their usual cosey corner upon the house-top, as was their wont in warm weather. The fierce Cilician sun was just sinking behind the great brown Taurus mountains in the western horizon. The furnace-like air of the great shimmering plain to the north and west, which had been wavy with heat, was reluctantly yielding to a more endurable temperature, and the lengthening shadows gradually softened the glare of the broad landscape which stretched away beyond the city to the great mountain wall in the distant haze. The silvery current of the Cydnus, with its foliage-lined banks, could be followed by the eye, winding its zigzag way, and narrowing in the dim distance almost to a thread when traced toward its native mountain hiding-place. The purple light, which lingered about the summits of the far-away range, had a weird and foreboding look; and the great chasm in the Taurus, into which the orb of day had plunged, glowed with an unwonted and sullen obstinacy as it slowly yielded to the darkening shadows. A few heavy clouds which hung over the highest peaks were lined with a crimson glory, which, while gorgeous, seemed restless and fateful.

If Nature was in a serious and contemplative mood, the family [11] of Benoni was not less absorbed in revery. Silence long prevailed. All were gazing, not so much at the white roofs and gilded domes beyond the Cydnus, toward which they faced, nor upon the garden in the immediate foreground, as into the vista of the future. Eyes were looking out, but thoughts were turned within.

What of the morrow? What of the far-reaching consequences of the movement just to begin? Kaleidoscopic visions of coming

days flitted through their minds. Stillness prevailed over the city. The very atmosphere was stagnant. The household of Benoni seemed to have a prophetic foregleam of great events, but their character and detail were hidden in the impenetrable mists of the future.

Saulus was seated beside his mother, with her arm encircling him, and her hand gently stroking his cheek. To-morrow they were to part. Rebecca was the first to break the silence. She drew herself to the other side of her brother, and taking his hand in her own, gave him a warm kiss upon his cheek.

Brother, dear! How can we give thee up? Our hearts fail us when we think of thy journey which begins with to-morrow's sun.

But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be with thee, my son, said the mother. And thou wilt see the great Rabban Gamaliel,[2] and be taught of him. Thou wilt bring honor upon the [15] house of Benoni, O my Saulus!

She folded him in closer embrace, and stroking back his curly locks, pressed repeated kisses upon his forehead.

O my mother! no one will ever love me as thou dost. My life hath been thine, but I must now give it to the God of Israel and the Chosen People. I will grow to be a leader, and help to gather them from their dispersion. I will bring to naught the counsel of the Gentiles. Thou art yielding me to the service of our people, and in due time I will render a worthy account of my doings. O my mother! I will learn wisdom of the great Rabban, and be a true son of the covenant.

The father aroused himself from his revery and drew nearer.

Son, thou hast my blessing. Thy words proclaim thy zeal for the Law. Thou wilt surely prevail! Hast thou everything prepared

[2] There were only seven of the Rabbis to whom the Jews gave the title of Rabban; and three of these were Gamaliels of this family, who each in turn rose to the high distinction of Nasî or President of the School.

for the journey? The ship will set sail to-morrow at the third hour.

My good mother hath helped me to make all things ready.

Benoni was to go up to the Holy City with his son.

Would there were a ship for Cæsarea that knows the God of Israel! said the father.

In what ship do we set sail?

My son, it is a Phœnician vessel, which is dedicated to the gods of Tyre, and it carries the sign of Castor and Pollux.

The mother raised her head inquiringly. Is there not peril from pirates?

Nay; the Romans have cleared the seas of them.

Again a long pause, and even the impulsive Saulus was sad and thoughtful. Noticing that his mother had buried her face in her hands, he gently drew them aside and gave her another kiss.

O my mother! dry thy tears. The days will pass speedily when I may return from the Holy City. My love for thee shall never wane.

The shades of evening had gathered, and anon the clear full moon appeared above the horizon, flooding the broad expanse of white roofs with a pale, misty light. The Cydnus hurried quietly past, gleaming like a stream of molten silver. By a general impulse the little group awakened from their quietude.

Saulus turned toward his sister.

The river is serene. Get thy lute, and let us take the shallop, that I may feel the oars once more before my departure.

Hand in hand the two darted down the stone stairway, and after a hasty change of outer costume, made their way down one of the well-worn paths to the river's bank. Unlocking the little boat-house, Saulus pushed the light shallop to the landing, and the two stepped in for an excursion. The young Israelite grasped the oars with his usual alacrity; and the scions of the house of Benoni glided out upon the stream and quickly disappeared, making their way against the broad current of the Cydnus.

[17]

CHAPTER III
IN THE TOILS

By Pallas! A bird hath flown into our net. The tempest hath driven her to shelter.

A riddle for my interpretation, Marcius?

Thou judgest rightly.

Methinks I am already on the trail, my gallant; or art thou an impostor? Come, I am impatient! Doth the bird sing?

Thou wilt find out the particulars for thyself.

A truce. Solve thine own riddle, I say.

Well, my gay Leander, the slaves down-stairs say that we are honored by a call rather unceremonious, I must admit from a beautiful young Jewess.

Ha! A bird of that feather will stir the pulses.

Thou sayest well. The sun warms and the breeze refreshes.

The Roman smiled, and his dark eyes sparkled from beneath their heavy brows.

A much-needed addition to our coterie, Marcius. The gods are propitious to-night.

Thy discrimination is fine, my genial Greek. Variety is fitting.

Fortune commands us to be hospitable.

We will obey with alacrity, and make the young Jewess quite
[18] at home.

Even the elements bespeak a welcome with their noisy commotion.

A truce to thy poetic fancies, my gallant. They say the bird hath an incumbrance.

A lover in her train, sayest thou?

Nay; a small brother.

Did the skies drop them down with the hail-stones in the storm that just passed over, Marcius?

I cannot swear to it, my Leander; but it seemeth likely, for the slaves say that they appeared just afterwards at the gate which opens toward the Cydnus.

O thou prosaic Roman! It is the gods who are prodigal with their favors.

Be it so. Who recks the wind, where it blows, so that it ministers to our fancies. Thou art an ardent votary of thy favorite divinities; but miracles like this are not common.

Ah! the Muses whisper to us:

Love, sons of earth for love is earths soft lore,
Look where ye will earth overflows with me,
Learn from the waves that ever kiss the shore,
And the winds nestling on the heaving sea.

Son of the Muses! Descend from thy flight among the deities, and be assured that to the commonplace god of Necessity this visit of our guests is due. Their light shallop being disabled, they made a very unexpected but necessary landing upon the dock within our enclosing walls.

The shades of Daphne be praised, Marcius; but what of the lad in attendance? [19]

If we find no service for him within the palace, we may have to offer him to the gods as a Hebrew sacrifice, or, in other words, present him as a graceful tribute to the waters of the Cydnus.

Thou sayest well. The Styx is often a shady but poetic necessity. The gods give their favorites early release.

A happy turn to a shadowy sentiment, my gay Leander, and quite worthy of thy ever-presiding Muse.

But will not our guest feel neglected at this delay in her reception, Marcius?

Nay, my gallant; she must be made presentable. The slave woman, Chloe, informs me that she was terribly dishevelled from

the storm, but that her beauty is marvellous. She is being warmed and refreshed.

Ah! my favorite Muse again comes to the front:

In the veins of the calix foams and glows
The blood of the mantling vine;
But oh! in the bowl of Youth there glows
A Lesbium more divine!
Bright, Bright,
As the liquid light,
Its waves through thine eyelids shine!

A very graceful song. From whence is it?

Oh, it is but a ripple on the surface of the great sea of Grecian lore.

Be it so. But a truce to the lore of the past. Let us now to the present. Pour a libation to Venus, and bring a vessel of the wine of Lesbos, and we will drink to the health of the fair one the
[20] last to come under our gracious protection.

Thou sayest well, Marcius. What the immortal gods send, let us receive with thanks, and let it be consecrated in the charmed halls of our temple of Eros.

The two seated themselves, and in a little time each had drained a large amphora of wine once repeated. Soon the blood shot like flashes of fire through their veins. At length Leander arose, and took from a vase a handful of rare flowers.

I weave a chaplet for my Jewish maiden, and chant once more in her honor:

We are fallen, but not forlorn,
If something is left to cherish;
As Love was the earliest born,
So Love is the last to perish.

With the continued draughts of wine, the Greek and the Roman grew more talkative and noisy.

By Bacchus! Leander, did my ears deceive me? Didst thou say my Jewish maiden before thy song?

Gently, impetuous Roman. I drank to my Jewish maiden.

We shall see, O thou effeminate Greek!

We shall see, then, perfidious Roman!

Ha! rash dolt! We will have no Brutus here. Slaves! Chloe! Bring up my guest and introduce her.

At the same moment he dealt the Greek a powerful blow, which caused him to measure his length on the bear-skin rugs that were spread upon the polished, inlaid floor. Then, clapping his hands for a slave to assist him, they bore the prostrate Leander into an adjoining chamber, and deposited him upon a couch. Marcius then returned to receive the latest guest.

While the episode just narrated had been going on, there had come floating in from a distance the tones of unseen minstrelsy now swelling, now diminishing in a way to hold the soul spellbound. This was an accompaniment to the nightly revelry and orgies.

Adjoining the apartment where the comrades had held converse, and separated from it by heavy draperies, was a large banquet-room, and still beyond, the room from whence came the strains of music. Mingled with the melody and with the measured rhythm of the dance, there escaped fragments of hilarity, merrymaking, and the echo of voices in pleasing confusion.

All the apartments and their accessories were eloquent with a voluptuous refinement. Culture, wealth, and depravity seemed here to form a close combination. The occupants evidently were of patrician blood, corrupted by luxury and sensuality, while the pictures, statuary, symbols, and images indicated that their oft-invoked divinities were as cruel and degenerate as themselves. The whole interior of the palace was an intricate but beautiful maze, arranged to confuse and captivate the senses. It was one of those

highly organized efforts, in a luxurious and depraved age, in a heathen metropolis, to storm the citadels of supposed pleasure, and to compel the inverted mechanism of Nature herself to yield without reserve the last charm that is contained in her storehouse. Art, nature, the flowers, the stars, rhythm, melody, beauty, and feeling, with cruelty and brutality interwoveneverything was
[22] placed under contribution in the mad and exhaustive search for a perfect sentient paradise. It was an age when the senses and instincts of mankind seemed to reach a climax of abnormity, while outwardly gilded with artistic charm and gracefulness. It was an era of intellectual delusion and spiritual insanity. Man must crowd and surfeit his baser nature to the bursting-point to-day, for to-morrow he is not.

The palace was brilliant with numberless lights; and the warm air was heavy with the odors of myrrh, violets, jasmine, and other flowers and spices. Fountains cast up a delicate spray which glittered like star-dust in their pulsating prismatic play. Mirrors of polished steel duplicated every beautiful object, dazzled the bewildered senses, and flung chaplets of rosy chains around the soul of every captive and victim. To breathe the magic air was to experience a delicious intoxication.

The vaulted ceilings of the principal apartments were frescoed with a sky in which were floating fleecy clouds of rosy hue, from the midst of which smiled faces of bewildering shape and beauty.

In the dances and religious processions that were painted upon panels trooped forms of the divinest beauty, bearing garlands and chaplets and lyres, keeping time to the soft minstrelsy of melody which seemed to issue from the very walls. Every ornament, picture, and statue silently chanted an invitation to ENJOY.

The door from below opened, and Chloe ushered the pure Jewish maiden into the presence of Marcius. But she came not alone. The small brother, though uninvited, appeared also, and they were hand in hand.

CHAPTER IV
THE NET IS RENT

Saulus plied the oars with a steady stroke that would have done credit to more mature muscles, and the light shallop with its precious freight glided rapidly over the mirror-like surface of the Cydnus. The air was laden with fragrant exhalations from spicy shrubs, the bending branches of which hung over the water on either bank; the grounds immediately upon the river being generally laid out in gardens, which, like those of Benoni, extended to the water's edge. The lily and rose-tree, the oleander and mulberry, each made its contribution of sweet odors, while their misty shadows quivered upon the surface of the water as the two moved gently by. Out of the thick foliage, here and there, came the song of a nightingale, the soft whistle of a quail, or the cooing of a turtle-dove calling its mate, perchance disturbed by the plash of the oars.

The poetic inspiration and openness to nature's voices, so prominent during the former days of Jewish psalmody and prophecy, had greatly decayed under the influence of a harsh formalism. The children of Benoni, while not indifferent to the beauty about them, were rather dwelling amid vague visions of the future.

The full moon was now almost overhead. The evening air, [24] while calm, had a preternatural closeness and intensity. A portentous pause prevailed—a lingering as if on the brink of fateful destiny. Nature seemed prophetically to be holding her breath. But the reveries of the scions of Benoni were not disturbed by portentous signs. Nothing so motionless could cause them to forget the riches of ancient Hebrew lore, or obscure the bright plans in the near future for Saulus. As each was wrapped in

meditation, some time passed without a word being spoken. But at length strains of music in the far distance came floating over the water, and Saulus was aroused by their suggestiveness.

Attune thy lute, my sister, and sing one of the songs of Israel. If thou wilt, let it be the song of Miriam.

Rebecca took up her favorite instrument, and soon the echoes of her pure voice with its dulcet accompaniment floated out over the waves.

Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Other songs and chants of the Chosen People followed; and then the Holy City, the Temple, and its services formed the theme of converse.

The time had flown swiftly.

Peace be with thee, my brother! Have we not come far? Let us turn homeward.

The evening is well spent; but the Cydnus is serene, and the current favors our return.

The shallop was quickly put about, and Saulus grasped the
[25] oars for a steady pull; but, as they turned their gaze down the river, the white roofs and towers of the city were hidden by a great black curtain.

O my Rebecca! a tempest is at hand!

Saulus bent to the oars with an energy born of desperation. Soon a blinding flash of lightning illumined the broad expanse, followed by a heavy peal of thunder.

The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will be with and keep us, my brotherBehold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The storm came on apace. The density of the darkness was intensified by the lightning-flashes which like great darting serpents thrust themselves athwart the sky. The fierce roar of the wind was now mingled with the thunder; and although Saulus

struggled heroically to keep the sharp prow to the wind, the little craft was borne uncontrollably along, barely being kept upright.

O God of our fathers! Thou who didst bring Israel through the Red Sea, save us, or we perish! exclaimed Rebecca.

They were swept along; and when the boat was just about to fill, it was dashed violently upon the shore. The momentum which crushed their frail bark as it struck landed them suddenly upon the ground.

The children of Benoni were saved. Partially stunned, but otherwise unharmed, they arose, and in each other's embrace looked up, and thanked the God of Israel for deliverance. Turning to explore their landing-place, they found themselves in the yard of a large house or palace, which was brilliantly lighted, and from which issued the confused noise of voices, mingled with music and laughter. [26]

We have fallen among the Gentiles, said Saulus.

On either side of the yard was a high wall, and nothing remained but to knock at the Cydnus gate of the palace for admission and relief. They were kindly received in the basement by the slaves in attendance, who took them in, and administered warmth and refreshment.

At length Chloe, the head female slave, who had informed Marcius of their sad plight, received a message from him. She turned to Rebecca.

O my fair Jewess! Marcius, the master, craves an audience with thee in the hall above.

Chloe then conducted her up-stairs into the presence of the Roman, and Saulus followed unbidden.

Marcius advanced with a gracious bow, taking no notice of the boy.

Methinks thou art an unexpected, but very welcome guest.

Rebecca gave no answer, but drew back with a shudder.

Come, my fair one! It becometh us to dispense with formality. Thou hast escaped the waves, and we give thee shelter and protection. Welcome to these fair halls. As the poet hath sung:

And no god on heaven or earth
Not the Paphian Queen of Mirth,
Nor the vivid Lord of Light,
Nor the triple Maid of Night,
Nor the Thunderer himself, shall be
Blest and honored more than thee!

O thou noble Roman! said the Hebrew lad, opening his eyes
[27] wide upon Marcius. We thank thee for thy hospitality to the children of Benoni; and now we will depart. Peace be with thee!

My young son of Israel! The tempest still rages without. The night is chill and boisterous for thy fair sister.

We mind not the storm, and the God of our fathers will be with us. I pray thee, let us depart in peace.

The Roman deigned no reply.

The color came and went in the face of the young Jew; for though but a youth, he penetrated the smooth mask of the Roman, and divined his treachery and cruelty.

Marcius again addressed himself to Rebecca.

My fair Jewess! Thou shouldst thank the gods or thy Hebrew Jehovah for thy deliverance from the cold embrace of the Cydnus. We offer thee warmth and music and poetry and wine, and be it so love, whose cup we may gently quaff.

Rebecca cast a beseeching look.

O Roman citizen of Tarsus! I pray thee bid us to depart. We fear not the storm. The hearts of our father and mother will be made glad by our return. The Romans have honor! We will now go in peace.

A sullen frown was the only reply.

With compressed lip and fiery blood coursing through every vein, Saulus bent his gaze upon the Roman, but was silent from the very intensity of his thoughts.

Marcius, heated by the wine which he had drunk with Leander, gradually became more harsh and pitiless.

Doth the beautiful Jewess scorn the devotion of a patrician? Ah! The divinity of the son of Aphrodite is supreme! The [28] Jewish life is poor and barren! The Roman is rich, and offers thee jewels and banquets, and slaves for thy service. Away with thine indifference, and join the revelry with me in yonder banquet-hall.

Thou base and brutal Roman! cried Saulus. Thou uncircumcised heathen and idolater! The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will smite thee, and deliver us out of thy hand.

Hebrew stripling of the house of Benoni! Thy tongue is sharp! Start not! I only ask thy sister in marriage. Think of an alliance with patrician blood! Remain in the palace with slaves to do thy bidding! We will train thee in all the graces of Greek and Roman art, poetry, and music.

Seeing at a glance that he had made no impression, he resumed in a sarcastic tone,

Thy body and that of the fair one will be vainly sought, far below, amid the drift-wood that will be thrown upon the shore by the swollen Cydnus. In such a tempest, all trace of the children of Benoni will be lost, lost, rash boy!

Again assuming a blandness which but illy concealed the fierce passions which were burning behind it, he continued,

Foolish captives! To the knowledge of your tribe, the Jewess and her small brother have been swallowed up by the tempest, and so they will remain! Be it so. But I promise, if ye be willing captives, every luxury shall be heaped upon you. Consider well! The Roman builds his palace with massive walls.

The children of Benoni read their fate as in an open book. [29] A Tarsian house of iniquity had closed around them. As they

glanced about, every statue and picture and idol seemed to mock them, and every mirror duplicated the mockery. O cruel fate! Bare, jagged prison-walls would have seemed more hospitable!

Did this strange hour belong to the same evening in which they had started for a joyous moonlight excursion on the Cydnus? Where were all the happy dreams of three short hours ago? Where were now the bright pictures of the Holy City, the Temple, and the school of the great Rabban? Were they not the reality and this a mere hideous dream?

But for the heat of the wine, it seemed as though Marcius must have quailed before the pure indignation of the Hebrew children.

The tempest still raged without.

Saulus held his sister tightly by the hand; and though but a lad in stature, he stood firmly erect, and his eyes shot defiant glances at Marcius. Stirred to the depths of his young soul by the baseness of the Roman, he seemed to live through years of experience in a short hour.

Marcius seated himself, and with an impatient scowl waited for their submission. He could afford to give a little time, because there could be but one possible outcome. But, though master of the palace, with all to do his will, he glanced uneasily about, as if the walls might have ears. He looked into the next room where Leander, though but partially stunned by his blow, was lying in a stupor of intoxication. He then resumed his seat, and again
[30] turned towards Rebecca.

My sweet caged bird, why ruffle thy plumage more? Give thy Roman lord some gracious favor, and thou shalt want for nothing. The tempest which rages without, and also that slight commotion which disturbs thine own mind, will soon be stilled and forgotten.

Rebecca covered her face with her hands, while Saulus exclaimed with a strong gesture,

Jehovah will deliver his children! We are his chosen people!

Then, looking upward, he cried,

We await thy salvation!

By Bacchus! Who is the God of Israel? But, my impetuous infant, I will proceed with order and dignity. Willing or unwilling captives? Ha! Now for a final, sagacious answer before the sand runs through this small glass[3].

The moments slipped away, and only the roar outside broke the stillness.

The surging of human passion, the constancy of affection, the happiness and misery of common life, the epochs of trial and triumph, and the mystery of fate, all span the wide chasms of time and space. Human life is one. Its outward circumstances may be never so varied, but within there is a universal correspondence. Through some shape, in the evolution of character, the same battles must be fought and the same victories won. Customs, races, languages, and governments come and go; but love, hate, friendship, passion, vice, and virtue remain. The Present is only the Past with a new countenance.

The Hebrew maiden and her young brother remained firm[by] unconquerable. They even became calm and confident with assurance. They had an unmistakable vision of deliverance, and felt that it was at hand. Its form or manner they could not divine. There is an intrinsic faculty which awakens in some souls, and takes hold upon the future. It feels coming events as though they were already present. That it is not commonly developed by no means proves its non-existence. It deals with great crises or turning-points, rather than their details.

Marcius sat watching the tiny stream of sand as it passed through the small orifice. The last grain had fallen.

Captives! willing or unwilling?

The answer came from an unexpected quarter. A flash of forked lightning illumined the palace, and rent it from roof to foundation. Marcius was prostrated and lay as one dead. The

[3] A ten-minute hour-glass.

Hebrew children, though stunned and momentarily unconscious, soon aroused themselves. There was a panic in the palace, and a hurrying to and fro of all who had escaped unharmed. A part of the slaves, thinking the building was about to fall, unbarred the front portal and hurried into the street. Saulus and Rebecca, hand in hand, fled down the broad stairway, where they met Chloe, who was hastily gathering up a few valuables before making her escape.

The gods demanded your release, said she; and guiding them through an intricate passage-way to the front portal, they soon found themselves in the street.

CHAPTER V
TWO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Our feet are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem
Jerusalem, that art builded
As a city that is compact together:
Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord,
For a testimony unto Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there are set thrones for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

The great Temple which crowned the summit of Mount Moriah in the Holy City formed the visible pivotal centre of Judaism, and was the pride and joy of every son and daughter of Israel. It was surrounded by a broad porch, which extended entirely around its four sides, forming a most imposing feature and approach. Immediately within was the great court of the Gentiles, which enclosed the more exclusive courts and the Temple proper. Then came the court of the Women, and next beyond, and extending on three sides around the court of the Priests and inner Temple, was the court of Israel. Here was located the session-room of the Sanhedrin; and near by, or adjoining, was the great lecture-room of Gamaliel. This eminent Rabban of the school of Hillel was held in great respect for his wisdom; and the most promising [33] youth of the tribes, far and near, gathered to become his pupils. While a legal Israelite and nominal Pharisee, he was tolerant, and permitted great liberty in discussion. His students, being from many different provinces, embraced among their number not only Pharisees and Sadducees of different grades, but also

many adherents of other sects and philosophies. Some of the Essenes, Gnostics, and those of Hellenistic and Aramaic opinion of various shades, including even Cyrenians and Alexandrians, sent their sons to this famous Hebrew university. Many of its students were quite familiar with Greek literature and philosophy. The widespread reputation of Gamaliel, and the liberty of private opinion which he permitted, gave his school a broad and cosmopolitan character, as contrasted with the smaller Rabbinical schools, which often simply taught the letter of the Jewish law. It was an Assembly of the Wise, where a degree of freedom was enjoyed which was probably unparalleled in its era.

Gamaliel occupied a high seat or tribune in his assembly-room, while his students were grouped around and below him, literally at his feet. At stated times there were dialectical discussions, when he was more their moderator than teacher.

Perhaps some text of Old Testament Scripture would be taken for the subject of commentary. Various interpretations were then given; a comparison with other religions instituted, aphorisms defined, different writers compared, allegories translated, and opinions and authorities quoted and discussed. The pupils were encouraged to criticise each other, and to question the Rabban, and divergent views were expressed and invited. [34]

According to the Talmud, the remarkable body of Rabbinical jurisprudence could well be compared to the Roman body of civil law, or even with English common law, in the vast accumulation of precedents, arguments, and opinions. It included not merely Jewish theology, but the whole civil code and practice. From the best accounts, this Hebrew university bore some resemblance to the discussions of Plato in the Academy, or the lectures of Aristotle in the Lyceum. The students received an excellent training in dialectics; and many became not only good logicians, but capable of felicitous literary style and poetic expression.

In the university there were incipient sects, parties, and factions of various shades, often with their recognized leaders or

exponents. The great Rabban, within reasonable limits, encouraged the spirit of free thought and inquiry.

Saulus, being of ardent temperament, soon became not only an eager and untiring student, but an intense partisan. He rapidly became noted for his powerful invective towards his opponents, and even though but a boy, was so jealous of the traditions of the fathers that many times he was involved in disputes and quarrels. Intellectually acute and with retentive memory, his mind was well stored with hard sentences of old, and confirmatory quotations from the Scriptures were always at his command. Moreover, he gradually became belligerent, and was ready to fight for his opinions. Instead of being softened or modified by the variety of elements which surrounded him, he grew more aggressive. His intemperate zeal led him towards intolerance and even persecution, so far as his position rendered it possible. [36] As a strict literalist, he soon persuaded himself that those who were careless of the letter of the law were accursed of God, and therefore not deserving of much mercy at the hands of man.

The khan, or inn, where Saulus and a few other ultra Pharisees lived, was a headquarters for zealous literalists, and fronted upon a square known as the Sheepmarket, which was a little to the north of Mount Moriah, and but a short distance from the Tower of Antonia. It was but a few minutes' walk from the Sheepgate, which was one of the portals in the city wall which led eastward through the Valley of Jehosaphat to Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives beyond.

Among the pupils of Gamaliel was one, Victor Serenus by name, who had become the recognized leader of an important following in the assembly. Although three years older than Saulus, they were members of the same class. He was a native of Alexandria, Egypt, and his parents were liberal Jewish Hellenists. He was rather tall, well-proportioned, of blond complexion, and had a mass of wavy chestnut hair, which crowned a face and head of ideal form and expression. The sparkle and clearness of

his dark blue eyes indexed a delicate soul and noble nature. A marked repose and lofty bearing, combined with brightness and optimism in his demeanor, formed a combination as rare as it was attractive. An inward purity and strength of soul seemed tangibly to shine out through his physical organism. He had early possessed the advantages of the best intellectual culture of his
[36] native city, and was an intimate friend and associate of Philo, who then was just beginning to lay the foundation for the world-wide reputation which he afterwards gained as an eminent writer and philosopher. Though not a member of any Jewish sect, he was familiar with the doctrines of the Gnostics, Essenes, Therapeutæ, and other systems of the Jewish dispersion. Belonging definitely to no one of them, he seemed to have absorbed a large measure of the truth contained in all, leaving behind their limitations and exclusiveness. Soon after coming to the Holy City to supplement an education already of unusual quality, he gradually became the recognized leader of the broadest and most liberal element of the assembly. This came about not from any aggressiveness, but from innate quality and character, the power of which could not be hidden.

On the other hand, Saulus, from inherent brilliancy and great force of character, became the recognized champion of the dogmatists and literalists. It naturally happened, that, in the free discussions which were permitted by Rabban Gamaliel, Serenus and Saulus found themselves at the head of opposing factions.

The seasons flew rapidly by, and the fourth year of Saulus life in the Holy City was drawing to a close. Although still small in stature, his growth in mental acquirement and intensity since he had entered the school of Gamaliel had been remarkable. His rather insignificant physical appearance had considerable compensation in an executive talent and power which easily marked
[37] him as a born leader of men. With plain and unattractive features of the pronounced Jewish type, and a mixture of pale and red

in his complexion, he was outwardly commonplace; but when enlisted in disputation a quick flush would pass over his countenance, and, with changed expression, the commanding dignity and fire of his bearing would astonish all beholders. Loyal to his convictions and faithful to his friends, he was at the same time intolerant, impetuous, and terrible toward all whom he regarded as opposers of the strictest Jewish economy. His violent temper made itself felt in his orations and debates, and already had involved him in several tumults and perils. After receiving repeated warnings from Rabban Gamaliel, he had barely escaped formal condemnation and dismissal. Tendencies had already developed and antagonisms been definitely formed that were destined to play an important part in coming time.

Since the brief and tempestuous reign of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great, the Roman Emperor, Cæsar Augustus, in order to humiliate the Holy City, had removed the seat of the Judean government to Cæsarea, Jerusalem thereby becoming a secondary provincial city. During this period the high priest, Annas, who was thoroughly the creature of the Roman dominion, kept up the semblance of a court in the Herodian palace on Mount Zion. Every considerable Judean town and city was garrisoned with Roman soldiers. The Tower of Antonia was held by a strong force, and Roman guards kept every gate of the city and palace. Merciless taxation and exaction kept the Jews in abject subjugation. Having lost every vestige of political independence, they now devoted themselves more closely than [38] ever before to the complicated ceremonialism of their national religion.

Just adjoining and opening out of Gamaliel's main auditorium was a commodious hall, known as the Lyceum, which was used for the informal disputations of the pupils of the assembly. Here at stated times were discussed various questions of philosophy, law, theology, and especially the doctrines and interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. On these occasions, which were quite

distinct from the regular and official exercises of the assembly, some one of the students often presided, and the sessions were open to the public of all classes. Here were often gathered Jews of high and low degree, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and publicans, both from the city and provinces, with a sprinkling of Greeks and Romans; so that not infrequently there were seen mingled in the mass the broad phylactery of a Rabbi, the gorgeous costume of a centurion, or the gilded helmet of a soldier of the garrison. The Holy City was full of factions, some of which were bigoted, fanatical, and even bloodthirsty; and often representatives of these classes would be found in the Lyceum, drawn thither by the warmth and excitement of the disputations. Nothing less than the iron grip of Rome could keep all these pent-up elements in outward order and subjection; but, in spite of all repression, outbreaks and persecutions were frequent.

Slightly raised and back of the tribune from which the speakers made their arguments was a gallery reserved for women, who [39] were freely admitted to these informal debates.

The Roman rule, though politically tyrannous, was entirely tolerant, as to all questions of philosophy and religion, so long as its own political control was not disturbed. It did not trouble itself about the institutes of Moses, the Psalms of David, the messages of the prophets, the speculations of Greek philosophy, or the doctrines of the scribes and Pharisees, so long as Cæsar mandates were unquestioned and his tribute willingly rendered.

CHAPTER VI
TO THE TOWER OF ANTONIA

Whom the gods destroy they first make mad.

God is a jealous God, and he will not be the God of the heathen until they submit and bow to him as the God of Israel! They are accursed!

It was the voice of Saulus; and his words, uttered in vehement tones, rang through the Lyceum. His countenance was flushed, hands tightly clinched, and his gestures violent.

A tumult of applause followed from the ultra-Pharisaical party, who were all partisans of Saulus.

The hall was thronged with a motley crowd from the streets, including people of all degrees, as well as the pupils of Gamaliel. The disputation was one of unwonted fervor, so that several were finally drawn into it who had come in only as lookers-on. The Rabban was not present; and, as the controversy became heated, the young student who was presiding found it impossible to preserve any semblance of order.

Victor Serenus arose to answer the argument of Saulus, who had ended a long harangue for Jewish exclusiveness with the words above given. His commanding presence, serene bearing, and perfect self-command caused a sudden hush. With dignified mien and a graceful wave of the hand he commenced his argument.

I bring you peace, but I must judge righteously. I also am a Jew of the Dispersion, but must call in question the conclusion of the matter as given by my friend Saulus. As a native of Alexandria, a friend of Philo, and a disciple of the eminent and

tolerant Rabban, my voice is for spiritual freedom. To-day, O fellow-members of the Assembly! I openly wash my hands of the mint, anise, and cummin of the sect of the Pharisees. I hesitate no longer to boldly affirm the truth which I have long felt stirring within me. The traditions taught by the scribes and elders have become burdens upon men's shoulders too grievous to be longer borne. God is God over all, and no respecter of persons. He is not merely a tribal Deity, local and Jewish, but the Father of all nations and peoples to the ends of the earth.

The liberal faction, including a few Greeks and Romans who were scattered among the throng, signified their approval, while the adherents of Saulus cried out with fierce exclamations of condemnation.

A little apart from the common seats, in the gallery of the women, was a place especially reserved for the wives and daughters of the Rabban and his friends. Here was seated a young girl who was an interested observer of the disputation. As we shall have somewhat to do with her in the future, a brief introduction is not amiss. Her features, which were mildly of the Jewish type, were very regular and beautiful, and her bearing and expression bore evidence of grace and refinement. Her form was of medium
[42] size, willowy and symmetrical; and from under rather prominent brows and lashes shone out large soft dark eyes, radiantly expressive and ingenuous. She was in the early flush of youth. A richly embroidered Syrian gauze scarf was wrapped lightly about her head; and her dark locks, which slightly curled, were loosely gathered in a light golden clasp, which was ornamented with pearls, at the back of the neck. She wore a robe of delicate hue, which was clasped lightly about her form, simply but richly ornamented. While outwardly serene, there seemed to be that within the damsel which, perchance, could be stirred into a tempest of feeling, and melt the outward reserve by its warmth and intensity. If there was the slight semblance of coldness, it was so thin as to be almost transparent. She bore a dignified air

of quality, not as signifying pride or exclusiveness, but as if the outward form was only the setting of a precious gem. A spiritual interpreter would have divined the subtile individual richness as rare soul-quality. But withal her eyes were the dazzling feature of her whole personality. They might truly be defined as both melting and penetrative. The warmth of a pure and lovely soul was poured out through them.

As the tumult continued, Victor Serenus turned about; and while carelessly surveying the throng, his glance met that of the damsel, which seemed to be intently fastened upon him. Serenus was thrilled, as by an electric shock, and for a moment forgot the uproar, his argument himself. The innocent cause of this unwonted perturbation was Amabel, the only daughter of the Rabban. The clamor of the throng died away, and Serenus quickly recovered himself and continued, [43]

Judaism must have a higher and freer development, for the spirit of the law hath been killed by the letter. O brothers of the assembly! We must free ourselves from an entanglement of dead ordinances and ceremonies, and be interpreters of the truth, not only to the Gentiles, but to the families of Israel. If ye have an indwelling experience of a divine faith, the outward letter of sacrifices, anointings, phylacteries, and disfigured faces is but chaff and without meaning. O my brothers! we must, from the heart, have such a purity of mind and thought that our very bodies shall become incarnations of divinity. A true revelation of the Spirit of Truth is not vouchsafed unto the worldly-wise and prudent, but to the childlike, the poor in spirit, and the pure in heart. The heavenly germ is within; but no man knoweth it, until it be quickened into life, when it bringeth forth a witness of fruits, love, joy, peace, and healing. I adjure you, that as ye live unto the flesh or even after ceremonial traditions, ye shall reap a Gehenna in yourselves and in your members. Ye say: Behold we have Abraham to our father, but ye are not his children unless ye show forth his spirit.

Behold the blasphemer! cried Saulus, interrupting. He sets at naught the religion of our fathers, and reviles the God of Israel! He slanders the priests of the Temple, and makes light of the Circumcision! Away with him!

Saulus and his partisans rose up to lay hold of him; but in a moment Serenus was surrounded by a body of defenders, who insisted that he should be heard. The clamor increased until the [44] chairman called upon a centurion, who was in the midst, to order the tumult stayed. The Roman captain slowly arose, and with an air of mingled dignity and disdain, commanded silence.

By the gods of Cæsar! Young Hebrews, to your seats! Be ye circumcised or uncircumcised, the Roman will have order, and save you from each other! Silence! A cell in yonder Tower gapes for him who doth not heed! Now, young disputant, finish thine oration!

Victor Serenus still stood calmly in his place in the tribune, without a trace, either of anger or fear, in his countenance. The noise was stilled, and he resumed.

Men of the assembly, and friends! The time is at hand for a proclamation of righteousness. We declare that the cup of Pharisaical hypocrisy and violence is filled to the full. The spirit of the prophets of Israel is worm-eaten and corrupted, and the ordinances of the Law have become a stumbling-block. I proclaim deliverance from the bondage and leadership of blind guides. The Jewish economy must be rent in twain, and the true separated from the false. I am persuaded that our worthy master, the Rabban, discerns signs of reformation. I proclaim a new heaven and a new earth; for old things will pass away. A judgment is nigh, and will not long tarry. The God of the whole earth is to be worshipped by Jew and Gentile alike. The religion of the Hebrew is to burst its bonds; for with it must be mingled the best of the philosophy, mind, and ideals of the Greek and other Gentile nations. The many shall become as one, through the truth which sets men free. I feel the spirit of prophecy upon

me, and have been constrained to give it utterance. [45]

He involuntarily turned, and the maidens eyes were still radiantly centred upon him.

He then took his seat.

The chairman arose, and beckoned for silence.

The chief disputants having made their arguments, the discussion is now open to others.

But before the last words had fallen from his lips, Saulus was again upon his feet.

The pestilent Hellenist is a base traducer of the Chosen People.

A tumult was again raised; and a score were on their feet speaking, or beckoning for a chance to be heard.

Away with the heretic!

Serenus is right!

Down with the Alexandrian!

Traitors to the Law of Moses!

The zealots are mad!

Take them to the valley of Gehenna!

Blasphemer of the holy prophets!

Great is Serenus! Defend him!

Kill him, and do God service,cried Saulus.

Half a score of menacing fists were stretched out toward Serenus, while as many more forcibly held them back. The noise of the tumult drew together a great rabble.

The second outbreak had been so sudden that the centurion was taken by surprise, but he again made himself heard.

Dogs of Jews! he cried, I am minded to let ye devour one another as ye deserve!

But after a moments hesitation, he continued, [46]

Rome will rule the circumcised, if they cannot rule themselves.

Then calling upon two or three Roman soldiers, who were among the throng, he gave command, pointing to Saulus,

Take him to the Tower!

The rabble were awed and fell back; the partisans of Saulus melted away, and he was seized, and hurried away to the Tower of Antonia.

CHAPTER VII
A TARSIAN FESTIVAL TO APOLLO

The morning was bright; and a light, cool breeze from the Taurus mountains swept down the valley of the Cydnus, bathing the city of Tarsus with its freshness. The sun had just risen, and was beginning to quaff his fill of mist and dew, and to kiss with a golden sheen the towers, roofs, sails, and masts of the Cilician metropolis. But though the hour was yet early, the city was already astir. Buyers and sellers in the open markets by the city gates were scattered in little groups, and chaffered over their traffic with the easy air of Oriental contentment. The streets and lanes wore a more busy aspect than was wont; and the number of people in festal costumes, hurrying to and fro with garlands and palm-branches in their hands, betokened a general holiday.

> As sweet and musical
> As bright Apollo s lute, strung with his hair;
> And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
> Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.

It was the most important of the festivals of Apollo, and was celebrated annually by a grand procession to the chief temple of the city; followed by sacrifices, priestly rites and ceremonies, oracular messages and predictions, sorcery and soothsaying, ending at night, with orgies which characterized the Oriental city of the period.

The main temple with its oracle, consecrated to the gods of Tarsus, was situated in the midst of a large garden in the extreme northwestern, or most elevated part of the city. It commanded a charming view of the beautiful Cydnus for nearly its whole length, as it wound its way, like a silver thread, through the plain

in its course from the distant mountains to the sea. The ground about the temple was tastefully laid out with walks, vine-clad summer-houses, fountains, grottos, groups of sycamore and palm trees, and at short intervals adorned with statues, vases, and other creations of Greek art and handiwork.

The blossoms of the bending branches of spicy plants loaded the air with sweet odors, which held the visitor in the delicate bonds of a subtile enchantment. The oleander and jasmine, rose and lilac, tulip and lily, each lent its charm to the chorus of beauty and exhalation. Bounteous Nature was drawn upon to the utmost for rich contributions to consecrate Apollo's great temple-garden, and enhance its mystical fascination.

In threading one's way through this sensuous paradise, one would often find himself at the entrance of some graceful booth, where a priest or priestess of Apollo would dispense love-philtres, or be inquired of concerning the misty future, peradventure to its complete unveiling.

The temple itself was built of Parian marble, and surrounded
[49] by a porch, with a row of lofty Corinthian columns in front, and a corresponding peristyle, surmounted by an entablature, stretching out from either side. The pediments were richly covered with designs in *alto-rilievo*. Among them were representations of Apollo, Diana, the setting sun, Hercules slaying the Hydra, Dionysus and a Giant, Fauns, Bacchantes, and triumphal processions. In the *pronaos*, or vestibule, there was a series of broad panels, upon which were inscribed maxims from the Seven Sages of Greece.

Beyond the vestibule, on either side were two overflowing fountains, each surrounded with statues of Triton, Neptune, Amphitrite, Apollo slaying the great serpent Pytho, with other gods, goddesses, Nymphs, and Dryads. Invalids who drank of a certain fountain, or bathed in it, and were healed, threw pieces of money into it as a recompense. In the back part of the *cella* was the great hearth with the perpetual fire; and in the *adytum*, or inner shrine,

were the sacred tripod and other mysteries of the sanctum. Below this was a subterranean chamber, from the sacred recesses of which ascended the vapor of prophecy.

The oracular messages were often conveyed by dreams, preceding which, fasting was customary, followed by sacrifices, and sleeping upon the skin of the animal which had been offered. Other auguries were received in writing, sometimes by means of the descending pencil which hung suspended, and wrote by invisible, though intelligent and fateful impulse. Sealed communications on parchment also received answers from occult and mysterious sources.

Magic, prophecy, and oracular deliverances were not peculiar [sic] to the great Oracle at Delphi, but common in the less noted temples of other cities. The offices of priest and soothsayer were blended. The favor and guidance of the gods were invoked upon every undertaking, and through sacrifice and propitiation offered their friendly aid was bestowed. Nothing was undertaken without their sanction, whether going to war, engaging in business, or making love. The healing of invalids, augury, and the interpretation of visions, were not only legal and ethical, but they formed an integral part of religion.

To the modern student of mental phenomena it is interesting to look back upon the multiform manifestations of mind in the past. Under the reign of polytheism, everything including even the inner psychological forces that are common to all was deified. Each phenomenon was due to the action of some god. But after all, when we get below the surface of things, is the change a very radical one? The god, with them, is some divine orderly law with us. Either term involves the idea of a force which is more or less mysterious. They were destitute of the understanding of the inherent unity and inter-relation of all things, and consequently each phenomenon was disconnected from its relations, and directly credited to a special deity. There was no idea of a great comprehensive Unit. The universe of mind and matter

was a fragmentary mass. Its various factions were presided over by deities who were often warring against each other. The great modern inspiration is, not only cosmic oneness, but universality of law. Even the monotheism of the Jew was largely mechanical
[51] and incongruous.

Law as all pervading with the latest refinement, in its unvarying beneficence, when correctly interpreted, furnishes the key which will resolve age-long mysteries. With the present understanding of the creative power of mental states, and the potency of thought, even when set in motion by motives of pure superstition, much of the remarkable phenomena of the past can be interpreted and rendered congruous. The prophecies, oracular messages, healings, divinations, soothsaying, and other miraculous transactions of history, though doubtless often exaggerated, have an important basis of truth. They are in accord with the legitimate or illegitimate use of laws now measurably understood. As we become increasingly aware of the possibilities of hypnotism, telepathy, the sub-conscious mind, suggestion, psychical development, and spiritualistic experiences, the strange things of both ancient and later times are seen to be natural and explainable. The so-called supernatural was just what might have been expected under the known conditions. There was no suspension of universal law, but only the orderly result of real forces which exist in man, even though often unrecognized and misused.

Under both the Gentile and Jewish economies, there was an endless mass of occurrences, attributed to special deific intervention, but all belong to the realm of the one Divine unchangeable and universal order. This has never been suspended and never will be, for God does not contradict himself. Prophets and priests could perform wonderful works through the medium of principles which they could not define. Miraculous colorings are
[52] always in the eyes of the beholder. Human equipment, which has had much unintelligent employment, is now clearly interpreted.

But withal, it may be questioned, whether it be not better to

attribute too much to the gods than like some moderns to become so coldly agnostic and pseudo-scientific as to deny everything which is above the plane of the material and sensuous.

The gods favored thee, fair lady.

These words were addressed to Rebecca, the daughter of Benoni.

She turned to see from whence they came.

Say not the gods, my good woman, but the God of Israel.

Rebecca and her father were returning from the morning service of the synagogue, and had halted for a moment to make some trifling purchase at a small bazaar. Rebecca observed that the woman who had spoken, and who seemed to be an assistant in the bazaar, was surveying her with unwonted interest.

What wouldst thou? said the Jewish maiden.

Forgive me, but thy sweet face brings a terrible vision before me. Thou hast not forgotten the palace and the storm?

The scene of two years before flashed upon her. A shudder ran through her frame. Her color fled, and for a brief moment she again lived over the tragic experience. But waving aside the hideous recollection, she quickly commanded herself, and greeted Chloe with a warm salutation, and then turning to her father, said, [53]

O my father! this is the woman who led our way out of the lion s den.

The blessing of the God of The Chosen People be upon thee, said Benoni. His thunderbolts and your good guidance gave me back my scions. Art thou yet a slave?

Alas! I am still in bondage.

I will pay thy ransom; and, if thou wilt, thou shalt serve in my house for liberal hire.

Chloe fell on her knees, and with tears of gratitude thanked her kind benefactor in the name of all the gods, but was again reminded of the Hebrew Jehovah.

Just then the distant echoes of cymbals, trumpets, and songs, which betokened the coming of the great festal procession, fell upon the ears of the trio. It was manifest that its line of march was to be directly through the street into which the portal of the bazaar opened, where they were standing. Casting their eyes down the long vista toward the approaching column, they were spellbound by its grandeur as it threaded its way with slow elastic rhythm through the crowded thoroughfare. It was on its joyous march to the garden and temple of Apollo.

Benoni was first to break the silence.

Verily, the heathen rage and imagine a vain thing, but the enemies of the Lord shall yet be sore vexed.

Soon the thud of hoofs and the rumble of wheels betokened a company of charioteers which composed the advance division of the pageant. Each chariot was richly decorated with chaplets and
[54] ribbons, and drawn by three horses abreast, of the same color, all gorgeously caparisoned.

The charioteers were chanting a chorus:

Since life s so short, we ll live to laugh.
Ah! wherefore waste a minute!
If youth s the cup we yet can quaff,
Be love the pearl within it!

Near the front, and abreast of each other, were two charioteers who merit a description somewhat more in detail. The prancing steeds driven by one were snowy white, and those of the other jet black. The driver of the latter was tall and erect, with head thrown back, long black curly hair, dark complexion, strong face, Roman nose, and a physical organization which might be the envy of an athlete. His head was bare, with the exception of a wreath of myrtle, likewise his throat, arms, and legs below the knee. His tunic was of crimson fabric, woven of silk, gathered by a girdle of gold chain, and clasped in front by an elaborate jewelled ornament.

The other was more delicate in complexion, with wavy brown hair, dark blue eyes, and refined features of the Grecian cast. A chaplet of laurel encircled his brow, his throat and arms were bare, and an easy gracefulness characterized every movement. The skirt of his belted tunic, of soft white woollen fabric, dropped to the knee, and was decorated with a border of gold embroidery. The throat, arms, and legs, where exposed, had a pearly whiteness which betokened a perfect service of baths, oils, and polishing. He was lighter in build and less stern in demeanor [52] than his companion, and there was a sparkle in his eyes which certified to a warm and poetic temperament. They had arrived at a point just opposite where the three were standing, when Chloe gave a start, and turning, grasped the arm of Rebecca.

See! see! It is

But the fair Jewess recognized them at the same moment, and quickly turned her back upon the cruel faces of hateful recollection.

[56]

CHAPTER VIII
THE MYSTERIES OF THE ADYTUM

Tarsus gave itself up with full abandon to the festival. The Tarsian religion of the period, though outwardly adorned by the polish of Greek art, letters, and philosophy, was largely orgiastic and Oriental in its internal character. The popular faith contained a strange mixture of Greek, Roman, Phrygian, Phœnician, and even Egyptian elements, for the mingling of which the intermediate situation of the Cilician metropolis was especially favorable. In Greece itself, a terrible decadence had taken place since the earlier philosophy and idealism of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato; but in Tarsus, the religion, though nominally Grecian, was permeated with the fanaticism and magic of Eastern cults. It was sensual, superstitious, and spectacular, though it had an iridescent Hellenic film of grace and beauty.

But with all the depravity of the period, there was a spontaneity and natural optimism, which, while not atoning for its excesses, should not be left out of the account. A hard and narrow asceticism, which during mediæval ages made life a bed of spikes, was the future great sweep of the human pendulum to the other extreme. If there was less seriousness, there was at the same time less pessimism and morbidity. The ripening
[57] process in humanity is a matter of millenniums, and only in the broad sunshine of the higher evolutionary philosophy can proper adjustments and allowances for wide vibrations be made.

The law of correspondence is universal. The relation between the seen and the unseen is not only intimate but perfectly fitting. The soul, whether of low or high attainment, has its extension into, and connection with, spiritual forces of its own quality and on its own plane. By a subtle mysterious union, each mingles

with its own. Like attracts like. But yet lives of selfishness and sensuality have within them the germs of finer instincts; and sooner or later, when needed lessons have been learned, there will be a drawing upward of the divinity, now latent within, toward its transcendent correspondence, even though the recognition long be dim.

Evil is a misdirection of forces within that are good per se.

Every one has some supreme ideal; and for the present this concept, even though low and limited, is to him godlike—in fact, his god. Human ideals of God are ever to rise and become more perfect, for man has all potentiality within him.

Linked with all the corruption of the sensuous age in question, there was a strong impulse toward worship. Pantheism recognized a divine ordination of all possible unseen forces, as well as seen objects; and then, in order not to miss the fulness of religion, it erected altars to the unknown God. The instinct of deific devotion was great in quantity, but low in quality. The sacred mysteries were all absorbing, but took little hold upon the moral nature.

Weighed by the delicate but immutable balances of thought-quality, the morals of the various ages might not be so dissimilar. Vice is no less vice when it is secretive. The world has learned to dissemble. Before the present age can greatly boast of its own moral purity, as compared with that of the past, it must apply the inner as well as the external test. Even low instincts, when idealized and sanctified, are in some measure purified by the quality of thought concerning them. If by the accepted ethics of one age, a certain course of conduct be not only regular but correct, and by those of another low and vile, who shall declare that their moral quality is identical? Judgment, to be just, must be tempered, or at least somewhat relative rather than absolute. An age which held that every real force, sex-principle, and sensuous or artistic instinct was some manifestation of, or in close relation with the Deity, or deities, should be studied in the clarifying light

of the evolutionary philosophy.

While the majority of the Tarsian population did not join the procession, they generally surrendered fully to the exuberant spirit of the occasion, thereby pleasing themselves and gaining the favor of the gods. The morning was superb; and the great moving human panorama began to unroll itself from the lower part of the city, in a stream, kaleidoscopic in its changes, toward the temple. The chariots, in column two abreast, led the way, crowding back the dense mass of people on either side, thereby
[59] clearing a path for the less resistant portions of the great procession. These were followed by companies of men, dressed in various symbolic costumes, bearing offerings and instruments which pertained to the mysteries of prophecy, music, poetry, and medicine, and the other arts and muses. Some bore banners, inscribed with occult signs and emblems; others swung smoking censers with a slow rhythmical measure which corresponded to the march. Then followed a long procession of girls, chanting and dancing to the measured time of the music of tabourets and harps which vibrated to their own light touch. Their long hair was thrown loosely back to the soft breeze; their faces, necks, and arms fully exposed to the sunlight, and their lithe, shapely forms and white limbs were but lightly veiled by free-flowing pink or golden-hued robes. There were priests wearing tall cone-shaped hats, and priestesses with hair coiled and intertwined with symbolic leaves, flowers, and garlands, some wearing charms and amulets, and waving their wands to the beat of the movement. Some bore bunches of grapes or other fruits, and others carried small cornucopias of spices and sweets for their rich odors and for consumption upon the altars which were about the temple. There were also cows, sheep, and goats, bedecked with trappings, ribbons, and garlands, for sacrifice, or other symbolic ceremonies and priestly rites.

Everything beautiful in nature, its flowers, trees, birds, air, and sunshine, lent their charm for the enrichment of the service

to the Tarsian gods, and the honor of their temple. The chariots of Marcius and Leander were prominent in the procession, side by side. [60]

Shades of Daphne! Marcius, I saw old Chloe, and a beautiful young Jewess with her, in the rabble just past.

Ah! I have seen the features of that charmer before! Mine eyes deceive me not! Dost thou recall the storm, the lightning, the crash, and thine own discomfiture? Methinks thou wert dreaming at that particular moment.

By Pallas! I am not unmindful that the gods kept us from a threatened descent to the shades of Pluto.

Ah, my gallant! But with that I cannot forget that the cage was rent, and the bird flew out.

Send regrets to the breezes, stern Roman! The Muse whispers that we may yet,

Wreathe then the roses, wreathe,
The Beautiful still is ours;
While the stream shall flow, and the sky shall glow,
The Beautiful still is ours.

A truce to thine overflowing poetic sentiment, Leander; but to return to events. Dost thou think that old Chloe recognized us?

Peradventure not, though her eyes are sharp; but what recks it? Doubtless she thinks we perished in the ruin, else she would have returned. The dead has buried its dead.

But the dead sometimes rise, my effeminate Greek.

Dost thou believe in spirits?

Too well I know them. They are more in number than the gods.

What of signs, omens, and dreams?

I believe the most impossible dreams may become true. [61]

Dost thou think there are life and feeling and motion beyond the Styx, Marcius?

Shades of Hades! I do. But I would rather be a slave beneath the sun than a king in the Cimmerian regions of the under-world.

I believe nothing, Marcius. Thou art superstitious. Show me a shade from the under-world, and I will give him a hearty greeting.

Away with your stories of Hades,
Which the Flamen has forged to affright us.
We laugh at your three Maiden Ladies,
Your Fates and your sullen Cocytus.

A graceful turn to a shady subject, and quite worthy of thine ever ready Muse. But, nevertheless, shades there are, my poet, and perchance they may yet give thee an unwelcome greeting.

Black or white, I invite them!

Oh! blest be the bright Epicurus,
Who taught us to laugh at such fables;
On Hades they wanted to moor us,
But his hand cut the terrible cables.

We approach the temple. I have heard that in the mysterious recesses of the adytum one may receive, not only responses from the Oracle, but, perchance, messages from the ghosts of the departed. Wilt thou enter the inner shrine, and envelop thyself in the vapor of mystical enchantment?

I will gladly greet all the shapeless spirits that come, even an endless procession, but I count them dull and insipid. Give me shapely form and graceful feature! I quaff real wine and not an
[62] empty goblet.

We will penetrate to the heart of the mysteries and inquire our fate. The gods grant us an unveiling.

But see! We are at the end of our route, and the temple with all its riches is before us. Thou hast managed thy steeds well, luxurious Greek. Charioteer! poet! gallant! and now seeker of mysteries!

The procession wound gracefully through the peristyle on one side and back on the other, thence into the avenues of the great garden, finally losing itself and melting away in its intricate mazes.

After sending away their chariots by attendants, Marcius and Leander lingered for some time among the bowers and grottoes of the temple grounds.

Among the bewildering charms of the garden was a shimmering pond in its midst, the banks of which were decked with groves of lotus and blooming rose-trees. Clustered around the numerous statues, delicate jets of perfumed water threw up their fine spray, and loaded the air with aromatic fragrance. Graceful shallops, shaped like swans or fish, moved about in the pond, filled with lightly draped rowers of both sexes, whose gilded oars kept time to the music of harps and citharæ, played by girls in unnumbered smaller craft which circled around them. Some were dressed as Sirens, covered with green net-work in imitation of scales. Trooping out from among high clusters of plants and flowers were groups disguised as Fauns, Satyrs, Nymphs, and Dryads, playing on tabourets, drums, flutes, or tambourines. The water of the pond responsively heaved to the rhythm of oars which beat in unison. As night drew on, the echoes of voices, horns, and trumpets grew louder; and the votaries of Bacchus and Venus, amid shouts and laughter, threw all restraint to the winds. On the shores and terraces shone swarms of lights, while other parts of the groves were dark and hidden.

It was late in the evening when Marcius and Leander, satiated and sobered by the excesses of the day, entered, arm in arm, the pronaosof the temple. On each side were low seats, comfortably cushioned; and by a mutual impulse they sat down for a little rest before penetrating farther into the interior. The Roman seemed in a dejected mood. His black eyes were heavy and dull; and his mien, usually so haughty and imperious, was tame and passive. He turned towards Leander.

Life is a hollow mockery. When shall my eyes open to the true Olympus, where real gods make their abode? I feel a strange unrest, and confess myself weary of the Tarsian deities.

Ah, my high and mighty Marcius! Thou art downcast to-night. Get rid of thyself, that is, drive away thy thoughts.

My thoughts are too deep to be rooted out. They hold me in thraldom! Genius decays! Vice vanquishes virtue! How will it all end? What has the unseen future in store for us?

Leave the future! The gods serve us to-day as we serve them. To-day! to-day is all!

If hope is lost and freedom fled,
The more excuse for pleasure.

By all the divinities of Rome! Nothing less than the oars of
[64] Charon himself will ever break thine everlasting trail of poetry. But a truce to thy chatter! Let us to the Mysteries and inquire our respective fates!

Perchance they will brighten thy spirits and calm thy temper.

Slowly rising, they made their way into the cella of the temple.

The perpetual fire was burning upon the great sacred hearth; and before it were a few persons who had prostrated themselves, each waiting the slow turn for their introduction to the inner Mysteries. The cella was unlighted save by the fitful glare of the fire on the hearth. The strange symbols and inscriptions which covered the walls and ceiling produced a weird and unearthly effect.

In a recess, just above the fire, were great gilded, interlaced triangles, and over those the symbolic Winged Globe. These were surrounded with divine monograms, emblems of the powers of Nature. On the ceiling was a large design of the crux Ansata, the oldest known hieroglyph, also the Greek divine Logos representing inner illumination. The walls were covered with other mysterious characters, the key of Hermes, the serpent in a circle, cabalistic names, a talisman of Pythagoras, monogram

of Fire, or the generative principle, symbolisms of the divine Wreath, hieroglyph of Eros, monograms of the three Delphic mysteries and the re-born soul. Harps of Æolia which hung in the valves of the outer walls filled the air with sweet and plaintive melody in fitful measure.

Marcius and Leander waited for a full hour at the sacred fire for the numbers to be called which would give them their turn for an introduction to the inner Mysteria Sacra. A feeling of awe [65] gradually crept through their souls, a sense of having left the world behind. Unseen influences were bearing down upon them. The hieroglyphs seemed alive and engaged in an ominous dance, frowning upon them and calling them to judgment. They grasped each other's hands, and looked into each other's eyes to reassure themselves.

At length the number of Marcius was called, and he was ushered into the adytum. The valve closed behind him; and as he passed forward, there hung, directly overhead, a great flaming symbol of the Mysteria Eleusinia. Its brightness slowly faded until, in a little time, it only cast a dim blue ghastly light in flashes, so that he could see but indistinctly. He was impelled still farther on, and soon a cool breeze swept gently up from cavernous depths below. The walls melted and retreated; and the courageous Roman, nearly overcome, pinched himself to find if he were still in the body. He involuntarily turned to retreat, but the valve had disappeared.

Am I alive? or is this Hades?

But see! a vapor ascends in the dim blue light from the cavernous realm below. It winds itself upward, and anon within it there are great forbidding and uncanny Shapes; and with be-deviled mien, leering faces, and ominous gestures they beckon to Marcius.

Soon a pungent aromatic odor diffused itself through the air, which mysteriously stilled his excited senses so that he regained his wonted composure.

The column of vapor rolled itself up, growing more dense, and anon something like a defined form slowly gathered itself
[66] together from it. For a little time the dim misty light only revealed indistinct outlines; but soon it grew clearer, and advanced a step toward Marcius, a part of the vaporous cloud forming a soft background. The transformation now became rapid, and anon there stood before him a beautiful young woman. With a flash of recognition the heart of the Roman leaped to his throat.

Marcius!

Alethea!

The light increased; and the form, in every detail, stood out with lifelike color and distinctness. She wore a long silvery white robe, the folds of which were lightly gathered by a girdle, and swept in easy lines to her feet. The bare neck, arms, and shoulders were of a pale rose-color or flesh-tint, and the bosom palpitated with emotion. The face was clear, calm, and natural, with an expression of sadness about the eyes; and the blond hair, thrown lightly behind the shoulders, reached below the waist. There was breath and life.

Alethea! Dost thou still live? Was thy death, then, an idle tale? Whence camest thou to this place?

Marcius! I come from the world of spirits.

Surely, thou art no ghost! Thy bosom heaves with life, and thine eyes glisten with warm emotion. Let me again fold thy beautiful form to my breast, and feel thy warm breath; for I love thee still.

Marcius! thou wert false, heartless cruel! I loved thee with a pure and single devotion. After deceiving me, thou didst cast me off.

Oh, say not so! Try me once again and I will be

[67] Nay, thy time has past. Thou art incapable of love, and it shall remain unknown to thee. Thy baseness hath blasted it forever! From henceforth the world shall be to thee a wilderness.

Alethea! curse me not! Thou art living flesh and blood! Thou hast not died! Come to me once more!

Marcius, I curse thee not! but mortals must reap as they have sown.

Not so! I will persuade thee! Alethea, thou shalt again be mine!

He advanced, and clasped her in his embrace. But his arms encircled only the thin, cold air.

It grew suddenly dark, and voices and groans and shrieks echoed from all directions. Thrusting his fingers in his ears, and with a chill which penetrated to his very bones, he turned and fled to the cella.

[68]

CHAPTER IX
SOLILOQUY OF GAMALIEL S DAUGHTER

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

The tumultuous concourse at Gamaliel's Lyceum dispersed; and Saulus was conveyed, under guard, to the Tower of Antonia. Amabel, who had remained in her seat, catching every note of the disputation with intense interest until its end, stole quietly through the boisterous throng as it hurried into the street, and rapidly made her way toward home. The palace of her father, the Rabban, was situated on Mount Zion, a little to the northeast of the palace of Herod, and commanded a fine view of the Holy City and its environs. As she passed into the entrance-hall, she started directly to acquaint her father with the scene at the Lyceum, but found herself stirred by emotions so unusual that she was impelled to pass the portal of his library, and go quietly to her own apartment. She must have time to think. The air seemed oppressive; and she hurriedly made her way to the house-top, where there was a secluded nook to which she often resorted for study and meditation. Throwing herself into an easy seat, which was sheltered by a light canopy, she mechanically looked down upon the gilded towers, domes, and white roofs which
[69] were spread out below.

The sun, which was just sinking, seemed to linger a little upon the summit of the western mountains, sportively shooting back his rays, and tinting through and through the fleecy cloud-forms which hung lightly over the city, burnishing its bastioned walls and battlements. Just across the valley of the Cheesemongers,

and crowning the summit of Mount Moriah, was the great Temple, with its endless courts, each marked by long rows of white marble columns, and proudly lifting itself in the midst of all, the Holy of Holies, wearing a crown of beaten gold. Here was the head and heart of Judaism, including its religion, history, law, prophecy, and patriotism, now, alas! shackled by the heavy hand of Rome, so that even the simplest daily ritual was only possible by the gracious permission of the enemy. From the valley immediately to the north the Towers of Mariamne, Phasælus, and Hippicus lifted their proud heads; while to the east, beyond the Kedron, the bold steeps of the Mount of Olives, scantily clothed with fig-trees and wild olives, were softened and bathed in a purple haze, the parting gift of the orb of day. Jerusalem, and the mountains round about her, were suffused with an ambient air of peace and serenity.

But the soul of Amabel did not reflect the calm of the world outside. She gave but a passing glance to the familiar surroundings which were wont to be so attractive, because a new world within, but just discovered, demanded attention.

As the loving and dutiful daughter of the Rabban, she was loyal to her religion and people. She had been feared and educated in the light of its more liberal teachings, and was deeply interested in their promulgation and dominance. But the broader spiritual liberalism of Victor Serenus appealed deeply to her. She started to review his earnest arguments, but was surprised to find that her thoughts constantly glanced from the oration to the orator. After several attempts at calm reasoning, Amabel became impatient with herself. Intellectually gifted, she never before had failed in the efficient command of her faculties. Her interest in religion had been vital, and her devotion thorough; but all at once they seemed to have faded in the light of a new vision which proved rudely aggressive. Again she tried to gather up the eloquent line of reasoning; but anon a mental image, its noble bearing, graceful gestures, manly form, and most peculiarly those eyes seemed

fastened upon her.

What have I to do with thee?

Her own question gave her a shock.

My logic never before hath denied me service. Thou mysterious, stately, haunting stranger! Why doth thine eyes shine upon me, and thy form possess my imagination? I bid thee adieu!

But beyond her control something had taken shape and life, and stood before her, at the sight of which she was thrilled and spellbound. It was an Idealher Ideal.

Away, airy phantom! I will be myself!

But an ideal that fits its place takes possession. It persistently makes itself at home, and receives, not only deserved recognition, but a conscious or unconscious welcome.

[71] She tried to step outside of herself and look in, in order to interpret, if possible, the vision from an impartial standpoint. Its charm was not lessened.

A mind may be deeply intuitive, and even philosophical, and yet naïve and artless. With a delightful and childlike simplicity, Amabel was unconscious of her own loveliness.

She threw aside the light scarf from her head; and her hair, somewhat disordered by the light breeze, played about the ivory neck which her light robe partially displayed. Her cheeks were flushed, and her large dark eyes unwontedly shining and liquid. Again she turned her gaze within. More truly, the new and mysterious Thing which had possessed her was there, rather than in the distance. Its correspondence or occasion might be without, but it was a subjective force which stirred the Hebrew maiden heart. There was a new, unfathomable, and heavenly quickening. Something had been awakened which no power on earth could turn back to its native slumbering latency.

The evening drew on, but she was unconscious of the flight of time. A charming and divine unrest, which she could not dislodge if she would, filled her soul. O daughter of humanity! who shall interpret thee to thyself?

She looked out upon the lamps that twinkled over the Holy City, but saw only the Ideal. The soft evening breeze that fanned her cheek whispered of it, and even the starry heavens smiled upon her and reflected it back.

* * * * * * * *

The time sped on. Amabel was missed from the evening family repast; and it was only after some apprehension and search that she was aroused from her revery, and took her accustomed place in the household. It was taken for granted that she had been sleeping. [72]

Early on the following morning, Victor Serenus made his way to the palace of Gamaliel, and sought an audience with the Rabban. This was not difficult for any member of the assembly; and, besides, Serenus was influential and favored. He was cordially received, and after being shown to a seat proceeded to unfold the purpose of his visit.

Most worthy Rabban, I crave thine indulgence for this liberty, but would make a request in behalf of a fellow-student.

What wouldst thou, Serenus?

Perchance thou hast received a report of the tumult which took place yesterday at the Lyceum.

I have been informed of the disorder, and also of the arrest of Saulus.

It is this which prompted me to call, and petition for thy clemency and intervention in his behalf.

Was he not the leader of the disturbance, and did he not insult and attack thee?

It was as thou sayest.

Doth not, then, his punishment seem fitting?

Most excellent master, it is plain that such would be the regular order of procedure. A centurion was witness to the offence, and gave order for the arrest. But yet I seek thy intervention for his pardon and release.

[73] I do not understand thee, Serenus! Would thou have me set at naught the ends of justice, even when administered by the unrighteous Roman?

Pardon, noble teacher, but Saulus is young and vehement. His zeal hath hidden his wisdom, and I am persuaded that by this hour he may repent. He is exceeding jealous for the faith of the Chosen People, even though the spirit be swallowed up by the letter.

Is he still thy opponent, or dost thou come to me at his request?

Worthy Rabban, as my opponent, I forgive him. He is unaware of my petition, and I would that he be not informed of the same.

Serenus, thou art a noble student, goodly in spirit and conduct, even though thou seemest to have but light regard for our traditions. I commend thee for thy good-will toward thy fellow-disciple, and will freely grant thy request. I am persuaded that I can compass his release without formal trial, for his transgression is of slight moment to the Romans. It was but an excess of youthful zeal.

Serenus was about to take his leave, when Amabel hastily entered the library to make some slight request of her father. It was too late to retreat, and in the twinkling of an eye she unexpectedly found herself face to face with her own heroic mystery of the previous evening. The Rabban had a kind heart, and without hesitation presented his gifted pupil to his daughter.

Serenus made a graceful salutation, and at once recognized the radiant eyes which had so disconcerted him at the Lyceum.

[74] He was about to quietly withdraw, feeling that the forced introduction gave no warrant for conversation, when Amabel broke the silence.

I was present at the debate yesterday, and much interested in thine argument.

Ah! I recall thy face as one that I noticed in the gallery of the women, but was unaware that it was the daughter of the Rabban who thus honored me.

Both thy reasoning and calm self-command were much to thy favor, she softly replied; and then the thought of her boldness disconcerted her, and brought a sudden flush of rich color to her cheeks.

A thought flashed upon Serenus,—How beautiful! but the conversation was not further continued.

But immediately regaining his composure, he graciously thanked the Rabban and his daughter, and took his leave. But those large liquid eyes haunted him. They seemed to be the outlet for a beautiful soul which spoke through them.

Gamaliel repaired to the Tower of Antonia; and as no charge of violation of Roman law had been entered against Saulus, the Rabbans plea that the offence was but a youthful misdemeanor was sufficient, and the young Jew was set free. He was only made aware that he received his liberty through the influence of Gamaliel, and at once inferred from this intercession that the master was willing to forgive, or perchance approve, his over-zealous conduct on account of his unwavering faithfulness to doctrine.

After a light reprimand, he passed out from beneath the frowning battlements of the Tower, and returned to his lodging in the Sheepmarket. A warm greeting was given by the innkeeper, and his family. They were surprised to behold him at liberty; and Cassia was unwontedly joyful, but her swollen eyes gave evidence of recent weeping.

The family of Almon were Pharisees of the strictest sect; and the inn was the resort of a faction, composed of certain members of the assembly, of whom Saulus was the acknowledged leader and champion.

My young friend, said Almon, warmly saluting him,how didst thou so soon loosen the iron grip of the Roman?

Verily, mine host Almon, the Rabban takes care of his own. Even the Gentile tyrant holdeth him in respect. I am persuaded that his immediate intercession may be a sign that the heresy of that apostate, Serenus, is to be overthrown.

Were the keepers at the Tower kind to thee during thy captivity? inquired Cassia, with deep interest.

Fair Cassia, I suffered no harm at their hands.

Surely, thou art wearied, and must needs have rest and nourishment speedily.

My rest and refreshment will be to bring to naught the betrayers of the faith of Israel, whether of the Jews or Gentiles!

The maiden kept her fan in rapid motion, and nodded her satisfaction.

Cæsar hath his foot on our necks, continued Saulus; but the time draweth nigh when it will slip, and we shall arise. We are the seed of Abraham; and though every Roman were a Cæsar, we shall throw off our yoke. The keepers of covenants will inherit
[76] their promised rewards, and the pulse of every Hebrew throbs at the coming deliverance. By the light of Judean prophecy, I have a vision of the proud Roman as trodden dust.

May the rising and setting of the sun be hastened, said Almon, when the Circumcision shall inherit the earth! But, O Lord of our fathers! how long? The tramp of Roman legions shakes the land until it trembles like a threshing-floor beaten with flails! The breast of the Holy City is bruised with hammers until her blood flows, and she is covered with wounds! Our holy places are contemned, the oil of our anointing is wasted, and our burnt offerings are defiled!

It is even so, O Almon; but Jehovah will spoil the power of Rome, and the sophistry of the Greek will be an abomination. The horns of the Altar will be exalted, and the Gentile bow to the wisdom of the Jew. But the heathen never knew the God of Israel, and therefore cannot forget him. Cursed, and thrice cursed be those who have learned the law and the prophets, and then

turn and make light of them. Cæsar hordes, in their ignorance, pay homage to their vile divinities; but the reprobate Serenus and his followers befoul our traditions, and abundantly deserve a resting-place in the valley of Gehenna. But for the heavy hand of Tiberius, the Circumcision might now purify itself, and cast out its own dregs.

At the first pause, the little Cassia again put in a plea.

O my father! Saulus must be faint and weary. The food which I have bespoken awaiteth him.

The hour was not yet come for the common midday repast; so Saulus followed her to the inner court, and Cassia with her own hands brought a wooden platter upon which were some thin cakes, with honey, figs, and olives, and a small silver amphora of wine. She watched him with satisfaction while he partook of the frugal repast.

We have missed thee, Saulus. We wot not but something terrible had befallen thee.

Her face was childlike and tender, and she seemed filled with gladness at his deliverance.

Little one, thou art kind to think of me.

There was a quickening in his heart-beat, and he drew a long breath as he gazed upon her happy smile and dimpled cheeks. Her slight form was lithe and shapely; her large eyes, arched by drooping lids, downcast, and the full ripe lips, carelessly parted, seemed like those of a child. But in the soft air of Judea, and under the genial warmth of an Oriental sun, children, like plants, blossom early.

Saulus, thou art brave! No other man so valiantly defendeth the religion of our fathers. Would that I had been at the Lyceum to witness thy valor; for of all young Hebrews, thou art the most gifted.

Thou dost honor me too much, little daughter of the house of Almon! But thou art a graceful flower in the garden of Israel.

He looked into her sweet, innocent face, and reverently took her hand, and pressed it to his lips; then quickly turning, went out, and again passed near the frowning Tower, upon which he cast a momentary scowl, as he made his way up to the assembly on Mount Moriah.

[78] On the evening of the same day, there was to be a meeting of the society of the Urim.[4] This was a secret Pharisaic organization composed of certain pupils of Gamaliel. Some were regular lodgers at the inn, but the larger part were dwellers in other houses. Saulus had been chosen chief officer, and its members were his zealous partisans. Their place of meeting was in an upper hall in which about threescore persons could comfortably convene. Though in an adjoining building, it could only be entered from the inn of Almon. To reach it, it was necessary to ascend to the roof, and pass through a long covered passage-way, thence through a small vestibule or anteroom.

The society designed to give Saulus a warm and befitting reception, in acknowledgment of his valor shown upon the day before, and to becomingly celebrate the release of their leader from the hated Tower.

The evening arrived, and the gathering was of unwonted interest, and the ardor uncurbed. As they passed in, the members identified themselves, one by one, by a certain symbolic phrase and gesture, given to the doorkeeper; and soon the room was well filled. When all had assembled, the doors were barred so that there could be no intrusion from without.

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[4] Professor Plumptre supposes the Urim to have been a clear and colorless stone set in the breastplate of the high priest as a symbol of light, answering to the mystic scarab in the pectoral plate of the ancient Egyptian priests, and that the Thummim was an image corresponding to that worn by the priestly judges of Egypt, as a symbol of truth and purity of motive. By gazing steadfastly on these, he may have been thrown into a mysterious, half-ecstatic state, akin to hypnotism, in which he lost all personal consciousness, and received a spiritual illumination and insight.

CHAPTER X
MAGIC AND MYSTERY: STRANGE VISIONS

Magic is limited to no race, age, or condition. Whatever the religion or ethical system of a people, there are underlying and intermingled many intangible and occult elements that are common to humanity. Often the modern world comes into recognition of some veiled principle or potentiality, and marks and christens it *de novo*, believing it to be an original discovery. A deeper investigation, however, reveals evidences of its power and presence, extending backward indefinitely. Both the real mysteries and the superstitions that prevail during successive epochs change their form of manifestation, but a slight excavation shows that the same psychical germs and roots are indigenous to every soil.

The Hebrews, like other races, made research among all that is latent and mystical in nature and man. Although more has been written regarding the magic and occultism of the Chaldeans, Persians, and Greeks, yet a search in the light of the Present, through the ancient Hebrew writings, shows them to be crowded with accounts of psychical phenomena, though expressed in historic terms. These were counted as supernatural, which signified beyond the realm of law, and outside of the logical relation [80] of cause and effect. This view has continued in large degree down to the present time. It was supposed that Jehovah was constantly revealing himself by special volition through dreams, visions, trances, voices, and signs; and spirits, both good and evil, are of frequent mention. Their chronological distance, together with a preternatural glamour which has been cast upon

them, has caused their recorded phenomena to seem unique or special, rather than universal. But they are intermingled with every system of worship which the world has known.

Even the revelation of the divine has come through inward states of consciousness rather than by outward observation. This is its orderly method. The mind of man is ever sounding its own hidden deeps, and striving to bring to light its infinite wealth of fundamental and occult mysteries. It instinctively feels that there is a divine inlet at its profound centre.

Creative art is ever transcending the real in its search for the coming ideal. Even Nature herself is subservient to the mastery of Mind. A true magic is divine; while its inversion and abuse, sometimes called black magic, in the very nature of things, kindles Tartarean pains and penalties.

Genius can never be satisfied with the world as it is, therefore it can and must make a new one. Science discovers and classifies; while art, which is but the name for active human imaging, is divine in that it creates. Next in value to a seen Utopia is one which can be conjured into existence, and such is awaiting every
[81] one's command.

But magic, as commonly defined, is a two-edged instrument. Misused, it becomes evil genii, who summon foul shapes, and clothe them with realism. Passions, hates, and evil imagings in the mist of mind sometimes become solidified embodiments that haunt and persecute their creators. He who peers into the raging billows of a disorderly imagination beholds monsters into which he has breathed the breath of life.

The secret society of the Urim had assembled, and the doors were closed. Their meeting-place was a remarkable occult study, for every decoration and furnishing possessed some mystical or symbolic significance. In each of the four corners, upon an elevated pedestal of white marble, stood a tall brass candelabrum of beaten work, containing seven branches upon its shaft, each

having a lamp filled with pure olive oil for the light, with knop and cup fashioned like an almond-blossom. At the east end of the room there was a heavy table of acacia wood, the top of which was curiously engraved, and upon each corner was a horn of one piece with it. Just over its centre, and suspended from the ceiling by a silken cord, was a large quartzoid of transparent rock-crystal. It was believed that at certain seasons a steady, concentrated gaze into its pellucid depths would produce visions, or at least symbols of future events, and sometimes there was included glimpses of things distant. The table was enclosed by a curtain of blue, gold, and scarlet, held in place by ouches or sockets attached to a finely woven band supported by standards of beaten brass. [82]

At the opposite end of the room were small wheels, cunningly devised of dark steel mirrors, made to revolve, section within section, mystifying and trance-producing in their occult power, and held to be symbolic of the wheels of the prophet Ezekiel. The walls and ceiling were bespangled with tracings, emblematic of prophecy, miracle, sacrifice, circumcision, and the covenants.

In the centre of the room there was a small brazen altar, consecrated to the burning of stacte, onycha, frankincense, and other aromatic spices. Near the entrance stood a cabinet of olive-wood containing flagons and bowls from which wine was served, and also platters containing thin wheaten wafers.

The rites of the society were commonly a matter of somewhat formal routine; but on special occasions or anniversaries they included revels, psychic agitations, disorderly and ungoverned excitements, trances, and enchantments. At times the Jew, with all the weight of the Covenant upon him, gave himself up to those things which corresponded to the orgies of the neighboring religions. But his excesses, though violent, were far less gross.

With the rapid growth of sectarian bigotry among the disciples of Gamaliel, the antagonism of the hyper-Pharisaic faction had become exceedingly bitter. This was embodied strongly in

Saulus, as the natural leader; and his followers were wont to glorify him without bound. His release from the Tower through the intercession of the Rabban, being misunderstood, greatly emboldened them.

[83] After the society had convened, each young Jew donned the insignia of the order, and appeared in his place. At a given signal, all arose, formed in procession, and passed slowly around the room, each in turn quaffing a small flagon of wine, which was the opening act of formal ceremony. After the last had been served, the column began a stately march around a large circle, which was symbolically marked upon the floor, falling into the rhythm of a spirited chant dedicated to their leader, in which all joined.

Saulus we praise,
Our defender is strong,
His standard we raise,
His days shall be long.

The Roman we dare;
The apostate we hate;
Ho! brothers, we swear
By Israel s fate.

The mystical Urim
Will care for its own;
We chant our bold hymn
Through night until morn.

Judea will rise,
Her natal fires glow,
Her fame reach the skies:
Woe be to her foe.

At length, after the observance of an imposing ritual according to the order of the society, the chairman, who had been chosen for the occasion, mounted the tribune, and made an address.

[84] Brothers of the Urim! Hebrew princes of the East and of the West, of the North and of the South! Warders of the mysteries of our noble order! We have met to engage in the exercise of our secret rites, and also to honor our most worthy Dictator, Saulus. O sons of prophets! It belongeth to our brotherhood to establish a sovereignty among the disciples of Gamaliel, and to discomfit the destroyers of our Judean traditions, who deceitfully continue to wear our name and covenant. Our adversaries are near. Even the worthy Rabban scents not their plottings, so disguised are they with professions of good-will and liberality. The Roman is an open foe whose courage wins respect; but they who betray our doctrine, covenant, and circumcision are the real enemies of the Most High and of the Chosen People. Honor to Saulus! Guides of the Inner and Outer Circle! Present our special guest of the night for our welcome!

Saulus was conducted with much ceremony to a seat raised upon a dais which was canopied with an elaborate baldachin, and which was used only upon rare and notable occasions. A crown of laurel was placed upon his head; and a dance in slow rhythm, which was emblematic of laudation, was performed in a circle about him. At length the ceremony ended, and Saulus arose and addressed a few words to his fellow-members.

[85] Guides and guardians of the Urim, and comrades! I am thrilled by your unwonted devotion, but accept it as a tribute to our worthy cause, which I would faithfully serve. May the mysteries and visions of our prophetic ritual this night be propitious!

The formal exercises were ended.

[86] Saulus lightly laid aside the laurel wreath, and descended to the midst of his fellows. The members of the Outer Circle then withdrew; while those of the Inner, among whom was Saulus,

remained to seek for signs and wonders.[5]

After the doors were rebarred, a flame was lighted upon the small brazen altar, and aromatic spices were placed upon it for slow consumption. The members then seated themselves around it, with hands joined, and remained silent for some time, breathing in deep, concerted, rhythmical measure. A pungent but fascinating odor gradually filled the room, and a charmed exhilaration stole by degrees upon the minds and senses of the brotherhood of the Inner Circle. A subtle enchantment, delightful in quality, transported them to empyrean heights of consciousness, so that the every-day world of objective events receded and became distant and misty. They craved some prophetic symbolism of the future.

After a short sitting they arose, and four of the number, Saulus [86] being one, passed to the acacia table, where they seated themselves, each grasping one of its horns, and turning a fixed gaze into the transparent deeps of the great crystal which hung in their midst. The others seated themselves in a semicircle facing the revolving wheel of mirrors, and yielded passively to such impressions as might float in upon them. Soon there was a change, a peculiar abstraction being apparent.

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[5] It is probable that no racewhatever its religion ever existed, among which there were not some who craved mystical and psychical developments, and who often carried them to excess. Temperaments of ardent and imaginative quality are swayed with an overpowering desire to delve into the future and unseen. We may well suppose that the Rabban would have disapproved of the excesses of this society had he been aware of them; but what teacher, ancient or modern, was ever able to curb and control, or even to find out, the devices of his youthful students?

It is well known that crystal-gazing and some other mechanical expedients, under certain conditions, produce hypnosis, clairvoyance, visions, trances, and other unusual and abnormal psychical phenomena. In many cases they seem to include truthful hints and foregleams of future events or distant scenes. Like attracts like, and sometimes gives it symbolic embodiment. An objective vision may come from subjective roots, and its creations often haunt the consciousness.

For a full hour a delicious ecstatic consciousness prevailed, and perfect silence reigned. The room seemed like a bower of roses. Fruits were heaped in golden baskets, and fine sprays of perfumed water from invisible fountains filled the air. Jasper floors stretched away in the distance, and upon them were spread mats of shining crystals of variegated hues. Life, action, color, and warmth pervaded the atmosphere so thickly that one could float in their shimmering wavelets. Reverberations of unearthly music flowed gently in, as if a myriad of Æolian harps were hung above, below, and on all sides, which were swept by heavenly breezes. The energies of Nature were melted into an impalpable but all-embracing voluptuous harmony.

But at length there were symptoms of discord, and a gradual transformation began to be manifest. Harshness and disorder slowly emerged in uncanny shapes from the dim background. The psychical intoxication which prevailed was perceptibly embittered, and subtle forms of mysterious portent crept in. The ambient air became streaked with dark patches which grew thicker and wider. The night-winds sprang up, and muffled mutterings from without were borne in with sullen discordance. The erstwhile film of iridescence shrivelled and parted, and flitting [97] out from behind were grim faces of sin and crime, anon hiding behind clouds of blackness. The blood-streaked moon that had arisen in a brazen sky poured forth a flood of wan, sickly light which entered the casement and seemed offensive. The vapors that ascended from the altar were resolved into a semblance of moving figures of dark and gloomy mien, with hollow and gusty voices, and eyeballs which glowed like living coals. Suddenly a bluish flash filled the room, and upon the walls letters of fire were traced without the aid of mortal hand. Then it seemed as though the room were fissured and rent by a strange and resistless pressure from without. Deep, jarring sounds rumbled below like the mad bellowing of an unborn earthquake. The black shadow of a Great Hand moved slowly across the ceiling.

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A living Shape emerged through the wall, and seated itself in the chair upon the dais which Saulus before had occupied. It was thickly veiled, and appeared more like some misshapen reptile than a human form. Its intolerable eyes looked out with an appalling stare of hate and mockery. It was a nameless Horror, with an aspect of deadly malignity, and a wreath of fire, shaped like the laurel chaplet that Saulus had worn, was upon its head.

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A crackling explosion! Then passing directly through the barred door, a procession of foul dancing figures entered in pairs, and tripped lightly around the larger mystic circle which was
[88] marked upon the floor. Hatred and Revenge led the way, each with his name in letters of flame upon his forehead. Treachery and Conspiracy followed, arm in arm, and next, Persecution and Slaughter, with a host of lesser imps bringing up the rear. They wheeled about, and with ever-quickening step, each in turn bowed to the Nameless One who occupied the chair upon the dais. Another blinding crash! and the whole scene was dissolved into the blackness of darkness.

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Every member of the Inner Circle was suddenly awakened from a heavy sleep. The lamps had been extinguished, and the flame upon the altar had expired. The lights were soon rekindled, and everything was found as had been wont. The ashy pallor and cold perspiration which was upon every face gradually passed away, and courage and calmness resumed their sway. Each had dreamed a dream of delicious enchantment, followed by a visit to the Tartarean regions, but no two saw them quite alike.

The chairman of the session, with a bewildered look, turned to Saulus.

Most worthy Dictator! Perchance thou canst interpret the mystery of these unwonted visions?

A shade of perplexity passed over the face of the son of Benoni; but after a brief wavering he replied,

Comrades of the Urim! Awake and arise! The signs are propitious! It hath ever been so, even in the days of the patriarchs and prophets. The chosen and righteous call out burning enmity, which is made known through ghostly and malignant shapes. We must exorcise the unhallowed Phantom which would thrust itself [89] into our Covenant and Tradition. Brothers of the Inner Circle! we incarnated the spirit of prophecy, and must needs look upon the ghostly symbolic visions of warfare. They crowd themselves upon us as mystical revealers of those who wickedly betray the doctrine of Israel. Only by glimpses of such shades of Tophet could we be forewarned. They are sent to fire us with a holy zeal in overcoming the false-hearted. The vengeance of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob waxes against all who burn strange fire upon our sacred altars; and we must needs have signs of their abomination brought before our eyes.

The comrades of Saulus were reassured by his eloquence, and his interpretation found favor.

Victor Serenus is the arch adversary, cried one.

The hand that smiteth him shall be blessed, added another.

He deceiveth the disciples of the Rabban, and is not worthy to live, cried a third, and there was a mingling of voices.

Woe to Serenus!

Spoil his house!

To Gehenna with him!

Saulus waved his hand for silence, and then said, with a violent gesture,

Comrades of the Urim! If ye will, ye may smite him before the cock-crowing, for the Lord regardeth him not.

There was a general clamor to be led against the apostate. [90]

Members of the Inner Circle! I wot we may take him unawares while darkness is still over the Holy City.

After further taking counsel together, all descended to the street, and made their way through a narrow lane to a place beyond Hezekiah's Pool, which was near the house where Serenus lived with his mother. Though within the city walls, the locality was remote and lonely. Arming themselves with stones as they passed along, Saulus commanded that, when they arrived at the house, they should surround it and make some outcry. Serenus would then appear, when they could smite him, and flee in the darkness, with none to witness against them.

"He shall lick the dust like a serpent," said Saulus; "yea, as the Lord liveth, he shall fall and not rise again."

All then joined hands in a small circle, and made a solemn vow of secrecy and service.

"By the stones of the Holy City, we swear that the God of Israel shall accomplish his fury and pour out his fierce anger, through us, his chosen servants, for we do his bidding."

Unclasping hands, they again gathered up the stones which they had laid down during the ceremony, and made their way to the house.

The moon had gone down, and the first flush of dawn was faintly visible over the eastern mountains. A sullen chill pervaded the air, and the boundless Impalpable which surrounds the earth seemed filled with a life which needs not breath. Nature was in
[91] a mood of gloom and distemper. The very leaves of the trees, invisible in the darkness, rustled a chorus of Sibylline sighs and hisses; but the comrades heard and saw nothing.

At a given signal an outcry was made, and Serenus looked down from a window to make inquiry concerning it.

"What would ye? Doth a stranger need succor?"

Straightway a volley of stones were hurled at him; but as it was yet dark, Serenus suffered no harm, though they fell thick about him. But one glanced, and falling, struck Saulus full in the forehead, and he fell down as if he had yielded up the ghost. Those who were near lifted him up and quickly bore him away.

CHAPTER XI
IMPORTANT MESSAGES

Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current; no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by and another takes its place, and this too will be swept away. MARCUS AURELIUS.

Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. PROVERBS.

[CASSIA TO BENONI OF TARSUS.]

JERUSALEM, Sivan VI

Know, O father of my friend, that I have to acquaint thee with a terrible event. Last night, as Saulus and some fellow-disciples of Gamaliel were walking in one of the by-ways of the Holy City, he was badly wounded by a stone which was cast by some unknown hand. It struck him in the forehead, and, O father of an illustrious son, he yet lingereth between life and death. His companions could not well convince themselves whether an enemy or a robber committed the shameful deed. Among the disciples of the Rabban, there is one, Victor Serenus, a wicked apostate, and we wot not but he may be the malefactor. O venerated Benoni! I have pity in my heart for thee and thy renowned son. For many hours after he was borne back to our inn he lay as one dead; but, the God of Israel be praised, his life is still within him, and now [93] he hath opened his eyes. We shall tenderly minister to thy noble scion, who is held in such favor, and a physician hath faithfully bound up his wounds with a healing balm.

Thou art blessed among men to have a son who possesseth such goodness and power. The Rabban esteemeth him as the most wise among all his disciples. Of all who are soon to finish their course, I have much assurance that he would have won the final prize.

Most noble Tarsian! I see the sadness and tears that will come to the goodly mother and fair sister of Saulus, whom he hath made known to me.

Peace be with thee and thine!

My father tells me that the message-bearer who goes to Cæsarea will take this to be put on a ship for Tarsus, and may it surely reach thy hand.

CASSIA,
Daughter of Almon, of the Sheepmarket.inn

Seven days afterwards.

[CASSIA TO BENONI OF TARSUS.]

Sivan XIII.

O my respected Benoni! I send a greeting with hopeful tidings. The ears of him thou lovest hear our voices, and his tongue speaketh words of rejoicing. The favor of the God of our fathers, with our loving ministration, will restore him and make us glad.

I have contentment in thinking of the joy that will come to thee and thine when this letter reacheth thy hand. Saulus now has converse with us; and, O most worthy friend, we have long
[94] known him to be a young man of fair presence. My father made known his hurt to the Rabban, and he hath visited him. He sat by his bed, and took him by the hand, and bestowed his blessing.

We have had long talks of thee and all thy house, and of the childhood of Saulus on the banks of the Cydnus. Blessed be the day when he came to dwell with us.

A young man named Barnabas, who is a friend and yoke-fellow of Saulus, hath rendered much goodly service.

It will rejoice thy heart, noble Hebrew, to know in what high honor and esteem thy son is held in the Holy City. His hurt hath brought forth much testimony in his favor, as one called of God to do a great work for the Chosen People. Their enemies are his enemies, and he hath much reputation as the defender of all our sacred doctrines and traditions. All the members of the society of the Urim, which is a secret band of the most faithful among the disciples of Gamaliel, laud him as a valiant leader.

I am persuaded that Saulus is to be raised up to deliver our people from apostates within and foes without. The Roman despiseth our nation; but the time cometh, and may be at hand, when the God of our fathers will bring his proud rule to naught. The idolatry of the Roman and the Greek will also pass away, while the light and strength of Israel will increase under the everlasting covenant of Jehovah.

As to Victor Serenus, the betrayer, we have no further tidings concerning him.

Thy son sends salutations to thee, his mother, and the fair Rebecca, and hopes, God willing, soon to come and see thee, face to face.

All the house of Almon join in greetings.

Peace abide with thee and thine.

CASSIA.

[BENONI TO CASSIA.]

Sivan XVI.

O my young friend!

Thy letter which beareth grievous tidings hath just come to my hand from a Phœnician ship which hath arrived from Cæsarea.

We before have had good report from Saulus, and our hearts are bruised by this evil which hath befallen him.

O daughter of Israel! We are comforted that he is so tenderly ministered unto, and we beseech the God of our fathers that his life may be spared. His mother and Rebecca are sorely distressed and bowed down, for their love for him is exceeding great.

Saulus! my son! my son! How do the uncircumcised and heathen triumph! Our people are afflicted, and our groaning ascendeth to the ears of Jehovah!

O friend of my son! My soul is cast down within me! How long, O Lord, shall the wicked prevail? Shall he blaspheme thy name forever? The evil doers boast themselves, and the righteous are ill requited!

But, O my Cassia! I will cease lamentation. Peradventure the chosen of the Lord will live, and his horn be exalted, and his desire exercised upon his enemies.

Let them be confounded and perish that contemn the counsel
[96] of the Most High!

With his mighty arm will he yet set up the godly, and establish him forever!

Sing unto the Lord, and declare his glory among the nations!

Daughter of Almon!

Our hearts are stirred toward thee, and the Lord will abundantly reward the house of Almon for their loving favor to the son of Benoni.

Our salutation to the wise and good Rabban.

I pray thee for tidings of Saulus by the next ship from Cæsarea, and may we hear good concerning him.

Peace be with thee!

BENONI OF TARSUS.

(No. 2.)

[BENONI TO CASSIA.]

Sivan XXIV.

O daughter of Almon!

The Lord be praised for the glad tidings which the second letter from thy hand witnesseth for us. Our hearts have been heavy, and we have had wearisome nights appointed unto us, but now we shall walk in the light. The Most High hath delivered us from great tribulation, and made known his loving kindness: For his mercy endureth forever.

O maid of Jerusalem!

We are of good cheer concerning thy testimony of the fervent spirit of Saulus in the Holy City. We rejoice that he hath been instructed after the strict manner of the law of our fathers, and that he is zealous, and speaketh boldly in the synagogue. [97]

Peradventure before many days Saulus may write a letter with his own hand.

Salutations be unto Gamaliel, the household of Almon, Barnabas, and all who have ministered unto Saulus.

May thy joy be fulfilled!

BENONI.

About two months later.

[SAULUS TO BENONI.]

Ab. XX.

O my beloved!

Peace be unto you!

Salute one another with a kiss of love!

My little Cassia hath sent letters to you concerning my welfare, and now, behold, I am strengthened to write an epistle with mine own hand. The messengers have brought letters from thee, O my father, which testified that the affection of all my kinsfolk abounded toward me, which giveth me much joy.

Ye know well concerning my present tribulation, which hath been grievous; but the house of Almon hath given me much excellent ministration, whereby I now am refreshed in spirit, and mostly healed of my hurt.

I wot not if thou hast had report from the Rabban concerning the things which have befallen me. I was exceeding zealous in speech for the faith of our fathers, and was apprehended of the Romans, and taken to the Tower of Antonia. But, through the intercession of Gamaliel, I was released without condemnation.

I take occasion to write unto thee some report out of the [98] abundance of my experiences, and also of my instruction in the Gemara, Mishna, and other sacred writings. Gamaliel hath made known unto me that he judgeth with great favor the good understanding of the doctrines of the Talmud which hath come to the son of Benoni.

Touching the observance of the law in all things, it will rejoice thy heart to receive testimony that I hold myself blameless. By the favor of the God of Israel, I keep all the fasts of the week, and do not forget the three prayers of the day or the visits to the Holy Temple. Neither am I unmindful, O kinsfolk, of all careful ablutions, that I may be free from ceremonial uncleanness. As a

Pharisee of the Pharisees, I strive to keep the whole law, and not offend in one point. In good conscience I have respect unto all the commands of the law of Moses, and scrupulously observe all the decisions, Sabbatic rules, and prescriptions. To the Rabbinical principles of exegesis, and the whole code of legislation recorded in the Pentateuch, I have given much heed, and trust that I am not found wanting.

There hath appeared among the disciples of Gamaliel some who make a small matter of our holy rites in synagogues and in the Temple, and, though Jews after the flesh, they lightly observe our traditions. They set forth somewhat of the Greek and Alexandrian philosophies, affirming that God is the God of the Gentiles, the same as of the Hebrews. They vainly boast that his presence ministers to their life and health, and that his mercy is over all men, while they profanely say that the Circumcision is of no avail. So idolatrous are they that they profess to find their God everywhere. They would fain blaspheme the Holy of [99] Holies by proclaiming that he is as much in the groves and fields as in the Temple. These are sons of Jews of the Dispersion, who have been seduced by some of the heresies of the heathen with whom they have had concourse. They vaunt themselves of their wisdom, while they respect not the Law and Covenant.

O my father! Thou hast made known unto me from my early youth and the holy priest, Abdiel of Tarsus, hath confirmed it that our books of generations perfectly trace our family lineage back through the Captivity; beyond the Prophets and David, and the Wilderness, and the sojourn in Egypt, to the tribe of Benjamin and our father Abraham. Thou hast instructed me and my discipleship with the Rabban hath confirmed it that especial wisdom hath descended through all our generations; that we are the Lord s peculiar people, and this is our great glory. Our fathers have spoken with him face to face, and he hath made known his will to them.

Did not our God make a covenant with Abraham and with

his seed forever?

Did he not lead them through the Red Sea, and overwhelm their oppressors? Did he not hand down the Law to them from Sinai? Was he not a Pillar of Cloud and a Pillar of Fire to them in the Wilderness?

Was he not their Captain, who went before them, and drove their enemies from the Promised Land?

Hath he not sworn to destroy all our foes, and give us the earth for a heritage?

[100] Oh, the glory of the Judean story!

Oh, the valor of the mighty men of God, who have done his bidding and gained his victories!

Oh, the long genealogy of his servants, back, back, through the ancient line of prophets, judges, kings, and lawgivers to the patriarchs of golden promise!

Have we not Abraham to our father, and was he not the faithful friend of God?

What mighty captains were they who destroyed the armies of the unsanctified!

What singers, from Miriam, the prophetess, who led the women with sound of timbrels and dancing, down to the son of Jesse, a man after God's own heart, whose songs fill the mouths of all generations following!

Jehovah hath inspired the lips of his children, and they have uttered his judgments. He set up a tabernacle for his people, and dwelt therein, and established his ordinances. He commanded their sacrifices and their feasts! He builded their altars, and instituted the Ark of the Covenant!

Did not Moses call the Lord a man of war?

The God of the Hebrews cursed the enemies of Israel, and commanded their destruction, root and branch!

If we execute his commands do we not become valiant?

O my father Benoni! They of the faithful among the disciples of Gamaliel have been pleased to honor me as their leader in our

warfare against the cunning heresies which have crept in. It is the Hellenist Jews who have sought to corrupt our Pharisaical righteousness. There is one, Victor Serenus, a pestilent fellow who hath seduced some from the faith. Let him be anathema! [1st] May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I discomfit him not!

O beloved, my hurt yet maketh me somewhat weary of body, but I soon shall come to you for a while. Peradventure by the time of the Feast of Trumpets I shall be strengthened for the journey to Cæsarea, so that I may take ship for Tarsus.

Gamaliel hath instructed me to the fulness of his teaching, and but for my wound, the prize of excellency for learning in the Scriptures would have fallen to me.

My faithful Cassia and all the house of Almon send greeting.

May your joy be full!

SAULUS.

[102]

CHAPTER XII
SERENUS MAKES AN AVOWAL

> Truth, though often hidden, will never cease its gentle pressure until it finds its attuned instruments, and lips inspired to its articulation.

Late in the afternoon of a warm day in early autumn, the softened glow of the descending sun fell into the spacious court of one of the notable palaces of the Holy City. In the centre, the spray from a small fountain curved gracefully into a quadrangular marble basin; and ranged immediately around it were pots, partly hidden by moist mosses, which contained lilies, anemonies, irises of iridescent hue, violets, and jasmine, all freshened by the neighboring dampness. The surrounding pavement was of graceful mosaic design; and the prevailing air of coolness, cleanliness, and repose was in marked contrast with the dry, brassy atmosphere outside. Porches, supported by slim, lightly carved columns, extended entirely around both stories of the court; and these, in certain parts where the sun rays might penetrate, were shaded by hanging portières woven of fine goat hair in striped design. At either end, a stairway of marble steps led to the upper terrace, and still another flight to a valve which opened upon the roof. On one side was a broad portal which led into a great
[103] library, where shelves and drawers were filled with thousands of rolls of manuscripts and inscribed parchments, each neatly tied, labelled, and classified. The place seemed fragrant with all the subtile richness of Hebrew law, prophecy, and poetry, which had been stored up from the accumulated wisdom of a long line of ancient seers, sages, and poets. All the carvings, friezes, and

appurtenances of the court were also symbolically eloquent with the lore of Israel.

The tinkling of the fountain sounded pleasantly to the ears of two persons that were comfortably seated near it, who had sought the spacious openness of the court in preference to the library. An earnest conversation was in progress. The palace was that of Gamaliel; and the elder of the two, a tall, dignified man, with silvered hair and long, flowing beard, was the noted Rabban himself. Beneath the folds of his turban of snowy whiteness shone out his brilliant but kindly eyes; and his mien, while dignified, was warm and gracious. The other was Serenus, and it was evident that the two were upon terms of free and friendly familiarity.

Reverend and worthy master! I count myself happy to have this opportunity to open my heart to thee. Things have made themselves manifest to me which greatly concern our race and religion, and, peradventure, the Gentiles also. Dost thou not, noble teacher, discern in certain signs of the times the fulfilment of prophecy and a new dispensation of righteousness?

The Rabban turned his face toward his young disciple with an expression of curious but friendly interest.

My son! Many strange and notable things have come to pass in this generation, and it behooveth us to interpret them in a wise [150] and prudent manner. I wot not what thou hast in mind, but have pleasure in thy presence, and desire that thou shouldst acquaint me fully with that which is in thine heart.

Before speaking of certain matters of our religion, said Serenus, I would inquire if it be known unto thee that Saulus is again in the Holy City.

Dost thou make reference to the young Hebrew from Tarsus, of such fiery zeal, who was aforetime my disciple?

It is no other than he! Several passovers have passed since he went back to his native city to learn a trade, after the manner

of our custom, and he hath abated none of the vehemence of his former life.

It now cometh to my remembrance how he and a band of his comrades set upon thee in the Lyceum, for which he was taken to the Tower by a centurion, and at thy intercession I persuaded his release. Knowest thou, hath he still the same mind?

The events of a few years past coursed in quick succession through the memory of the young Hellenist, but he was not stirred by them.

Nay! It hath come to pass that his persecution is now turned toward the followers of the prophet of Nazareth. It is noised abroad that straightway upon his return to Jerusalem, and since, he hath ceased not night or day to vex them sorely. He hath almost persuaded the Sanhedrin to give him authority to destroy them.

Hath he, then, forgotten his enmity toward thee, my young disciple?

[105] I wot not fully, but am so persuaded. His exceeding wrath against the new sect of the Nazarene, peradventure, hath swallowed up his former enmity; and who knoweth, also, but it hath come to his ears that thou hast since made me thine helper, wherefore he might be more prudent.

He that waxeth wroth worketh out his own destruction, uttered the Rabban in a rather reserved and oracular manner. But what of the request of thine heart, which thou desirest to make known unto me?

Serenus paused for a moment before making answer, for something seemed to stir him from the depths of his soul. He looked gravely but tenderly into the face of his master. He felt that a great crisis in his own life had come, which could not longer be put off. The accumulated forces of years, long pent up, had gradually gathered momentum until they must find utterance.

Most worthy master! What thinkest thou of the prophet of Nazareth who was crucified?

The wise and venerable Gamaliel was astounded at the gravity and earnestness of his favorite assistant in making an inquiry which seemed of such trivial importance. He toyed with the long fringe of his robe for a moment, and cast an inquiring glance into the face of Serenus as if to divine his meaning. It hardly occurred to him that his most eminent follower, aforetime promoted to be his assistant, could have any sympathy, or even remote interest, in the feeble faction of the Galilean; but the question demanded an answer.

My young disciple! Thy question is of small concern to me, neither doth it matter to thee. Thou shouldst be aware that while I counted the Nazarene to be a deceiver, I would that he had not been evil entreated and put to death. Peradventure he was self-deceived; but however that may be, had he been let alone, his works would have come to an end, and his followers become scattered. But what have we to do with him? It is all of the past and concerneth us not.

I give honor unto thy wisdom, O learned master! but I am persuaded that the Nazarene was a righteous man and a great prophet; yea, such as the world hath not known. Thou knowest that I was born a Jew, and have respect unto the fulfilling of the law; but the doctrines of the Pharisees have become vain, and I can no longer bear their burden. The commandment of God hath given place to the traditions of men. The faith of our father Abraham, the testimonies of Moses, and the words of the holy prophets, have become of none effect; for this generation hath given itself over to washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels, to fastings and ceremonial oblations. Behold, the letter of the law hath altogether brought its life to destruction!

But, O Serenus! how doth these things concern the doctrine of the Nazarene? I am somewhat like-minded with thee concerning the traditions of this generation. The dead observances of the extreme sect of the Pharisees have become an occasion of vanity, and a stumbling-block, and must needs be purified. Let

us set about to reprove these things, and teach a restitution of the Law as handed down to Moses. But I beseech thee! go not after this new sect of strange faith, for its teaching will surely come to naught.

[107] I owe thee respect, O worthy Gamaliel! but am fully persuaded in this matter, and now declare unto thee that from this day henceforth I wash my hands of the traditions of the elders! It hath come more and more to me that our holy religion is corrupted and wormeaten, and that it altogether concerneth itself with polishing the outside of the platter. It is a valley of dry bones, like that spoken of by Ezekiel the prophet, and only an anointing of the Spirit, which hath been so perfectly manifested through Jesus of Nazareth, can awaken them to life, and clothe them with flesh.

I marvel and am sorrowful, O my young disciple! that thou hast been led away by this new heresy. I know thee to be upright in spirit; but, if thou art persuaded in this way, behold, thou wilt cut thyself off from thy people, and from thy place of honor in the school of the prophets. The Nazarene, of whom thou speakest, was reputed to be an unlearned man, the son of a carpenter! If he had knowledge, whence came it? If I have learned rightly, he even vaunted himself as the Lord's anointed, the fulfiller of prophecy, and the deliverer of Israel! What empty boasting! He, a Galilean of no reputation, whose followers were only ignorant fishermen and publicans! He to deliver Israel from her oppressors! He to build up the waste places of Jerusalem, and establish her dominion forever! Seest thou not, O Serenus! that this is altogether vanity? If he were to have been the Restorer of our people, thinkest thou that he would have suffered himself to be persecuted, condemned, and crucified? I say unto thee nay!

The young man looked searchingly into the face of the Rabban,

[108] but with unwonted calmness.

I beseech thee to listen to me yet farther, O teacher of Israel! for I am fully persuaded that the word of the Lord hath quickened my heart. Our fathers and this generation have greatly erred,

touching the Messias, in what hath been spoken by the ancient prophets. I call thee to witness! What saith Isaiah, the son of Amoz, than whom there hath not been a greater? Doth he not prophesy of humility, and reproach, and travail, and persecution? Nay! Saith he not that his righteous servant shall pour out his soul unto death? Hath it not now come to pass that he was despised and rejected of men, and that his report hath not been believed? Did not Daniel, of the royal family of Judah, prophesy of the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, which brake in pieces the mighty image whose brightness was excellent? Behold this when interpreted! Doth it not signify that the kingdoms of this world are to fall, and the eternal kingdom of righteousness be set up in their place, which shall grow and fill the whole earth?

An expression of astonishment and restlessness swept over the features of the venerable Rabban. Could the young disciple teach the famous head of the school of Hillel?

Thou hast waxed zealous, young man, in the defence of thy strange doctrines! I pray thee, who hath persuaded thee of these things, and that the Book of Prophecies hath aught concerning the Nazarene?

I have it not upon the authority of any man, but the Spirit within witnesseth with my spirit that these things are true. The kingdom of which the Nazarene hath laid the corner-stone is a dominion which is to increase and wax great, and pertaineth not [104] only to the Jews, but to all peoples. All are children of God, but no one save him hath yet perfected the fruit whose seed lieth within. His law is more complete than that of Moses; for he hath summed it up as love to God and all men, with the whole heart. Herein behold, as in a glass, all the law and the prophets! Moreover, he wrought many signs and wonders, and miracles of healing, such being a witness of his full possession by the Father, which is the Spirit of Truth. But he declared that all things that he made manifest are possible to his faithful followers, and even

that greater works may yet be shown forth.

Serenus! I marvel at the unwonted things thou believest! I bewail that thou art deceived! From whence hast thou these tidings of him?

I have had converse with some of his worthy but despised disciples, and know whereof I speak. Moreover, their works testify concerning them, and show forth the power of God working in and through man.

Thou hast indeed become altogether unmindful that the salvation of the God of Israel cometh only through the Covenant with the Chosen People. But what sayest thou? It hath come to my ears that the disciples of the Nazarene still walk in the ordinances, except, peradventure, one young zealot, named Stephanos, who disputeth in the synagogues, and stirreth up some contention. But be thou warned! Thy Galilean prophet proclaimed himself as Messias, and the deliverer of Israel! What sayest thou? Is not this blasphemy?

Nay. He claimeth not sole possession of sonship, but declared
[110] that the anointing is for all sons of God; but it appeareth that he only hath yet emptied himself of all else, and manifested the spiritual image in fulness.

O Serenus! thou hast been deceived by false witnesses, and therefore makest the doctrine of Jehovah common and unclean! Hast thou forgotten that the Gentiles and they that worship other gods are the enemies of the Most High?

The calm dignity of Serenus was unmoved, and his face almost shone with an inner light which seemed to fill him.

The God of all the earth hath no enemies, whether Jew or Gentile. He cannot know enmity; for it is not, save in the hearts of such as separate themselves from him. They dwell in the darkness which they only have made by their own vain and base imaginings.

It grieveth me, O my young disciple! to know that thou hast become faithless to the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Thou art altogether mistaken in the anointed one of Israel. When Messias cometh he will be King, Priest, and Prophet. First of all, he will deliver his people from their enemies, and set up a throne, and then reign righteously. The Gentiles will have no part in this dominion. They serve false gods; and the Most High will destroy them, root and branch. Then shall the seed of Abraham inherit the earth! Thou art pure in spirit, but no longer a son of Israel. Thy connection with the school of Hebrew prophets, after the order of Hillel, is ended.

[111]

CHAPTER XIII
THE WALLS HAVE EARS

> The world looks like a multiplication-table, or a mathematical equation, which, turn it how you will, balances itself. Take what figure you will, its exact value, not more, nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears.—EMERSON.

The sun was drinking up the morning dew which rested lightly upon the reeds, grasses, and climbing vines that thinly fringed the steeps and cliffs of the hill-country of Mount Ephraim, a little to the northwest of Jerusalem. Through this broken district, the road which led from the seaport of Cæsarea to the Holy City wound along near the bottom of a shallow wady, and ere long between scarred bluffs through a long, irregular valley, and then ascended, leading over a considerable elevation before passing through the Mount Ephraim gate into the city.

In these early morning hours, a small caravan might be seen, winding along the beaten track in slow, serpentine fashion. It was composed of a few well-laden camels and asses, accompanied by men, women, and children, who, having just struck their tents,
[112] were now nearing the end of their journey. An eager air of anticipation and unwonted interest was visible in the little company; and the brightness of the morning, and the near approach to the Capital, infused every one with new life, in view of what was soon to open to their vision.

What a tale this road might unfold of the various companies of pilgrims, princes, captains, and panoplied armies, which, before

and since, have trod its tortuous windings! What victories and defeats, what surprises and disappointments, what inspiration and suffering! What vain hopes destroyed and heroism rewarded! What eruptions of invaders, who at intervals have despoiled the ancient city, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Romans, and later the great armies of Rome under Titus; and long afterwards, Turks and crusaders, like great tidal waves, have surged through this and the other beaten highways that converge in the city of Mount Zion.

In the little procession were some who for the first time were to have a vision of the Temple, the city, its long, curving, battlemented walls, its proud palaces, its frowning towers, its graceful cenotaphs and pillared courts, and others to whose eyes all these were familiar. Within two or three furlongs of the city wall on the northwest, the road passes over a considerable elevation, from which Jerusalem lies spread out upon its native hills, with the bluish-purple slopes of the Mount of Olives in the background to the southeast. On this high ground the road skirted a large open garden, or park, that sloped toward the city, which contained seats, arbors, flowers, and shrubbery, the whole forming a place of public resort. Interspersed by small trees, and shaded by bushes and vines, were a series of graded terraces, each of which commanded a fine view of the city. It was a favorite resort in the milder seasons of the year.

The caravan passed on through the gateway into the city; but a young man, somewhat below medium size, with strongly marked Jewish features, left it, and turning to the right, entered the garden to enjoy the prospect, and call up a few reminiscences before the final completion of his journey.

It was no other than Saulus!

After an absence of a few years in his native city, he was again near the scene of his more youthful education and adventures. The sun was already warm; and, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, he sat down in a small arbor, which was covered

overhead, and partly sheltered before and behind by hedges and hanging vines. The fragrance of many blossoms loaded the morning air, and the cheery song of birds echoed from the trees far and near.

As Saulus looked out over the familiar landmarks of the city, his bosom heaved, his cheeks reddened, and his eyes dilated at the panorama that was again unrolled before him. His thoughts ran quickly back over the long history of the Chosen People, their many trials and conquests, their glory and their captivity. There was much to inspire, but more to sadden. What a history of numberless vicissitudes was written in stone, masonry, and marble! How many conflicts, successes, and disasters were wrapped up in
[114] the massive city wall built by good King Hezekiah! What a long line of events were cast into the haughty Towers of Hippicus, Phasælus, and Mariamne, whose proud heads lifted themselves high into the air directly to the southward! Still beyond, in the same direction, the royal hill of Mount Zion was crowned by the great Herodian palace. What a long line of fragrant memories of patriarchs and judges, of anointed kings, including David and Solomon, covering many bright days of Hebrew history, were there solidified into visible form! Upon the same historic site stood the house of Caiaphas, the Roman prætorium, and the great central synagogue.

Was the time coming when the proud Roman would be thrust out, and Jewish dominion again centre with undimmed lustre upon these consecrated heights? How long, oh, how long! before the God of Israel would rally and inspire the multitudes of his people, bring back his scattered captives, and lead them forth, a conquering host?

Farther to the east, and directly above the great massive Tower of Antonia, which Saulus recognized with a frown, the sacred Temple-crowned summit of Moriah caused a throb of rejoicing and patriotic pride. His eye rested with satisfaction upon the great pile of snowy whiteness, founded by Solomon, and rebuilt by

Herod, with its long lines of marble pillars, gates of Corinthian brass, and numerous towers and pinnacles overlaid with silver and gold. How many courts, each encircling others within, lifted themselves, tier above tier, to the Tabernacle and Holy of Holies, which formed the sacred centre from which Jehovah radiated his [his] glory in a special and peculiar manner.

The sun ascended higher, and the whole scene melted into a dream of shimmering whiteness and beauty. What an attraction and inspiration to every Jew in all ages! Fitting type to him of all that is patriotic, glorious, and heavenly! The soft green western slopes of Olivet formed a peaceful and refreshing background to the busy haunts of men.

Such were some of the thoughts that passed in a trooping procession through the mind of Saulus; and now, what of the present and future? What of his own duties, hopes, dreams, and ambitions? What of the new heretical sect, whose overthrow was to be his especial business and gratification? What of the Rabban, his former companions, Serenus, the people at the inn? Last, but far, oh, far from least, what of Cassia?

O Cassia! little one! Will thy heart beat quickly, thy cheeks flush, and thine eyes glisten at my coming? Hast thou dreams of my arrival, and hath absence endeared me to thee? Hast thou often thought of him to whom thou so faithfully and tenderly ministered? Thy messages seem not to have been so warm and frequent of late. Surely thou hast not lost the image of Saulus from thy heart?

The young man was suddenly aroused from his prolonged revery by the approach of a party of men, women, and children from the city. Some were laden with small baskets and wallets containing wheaten wafers, and others carried fruits, and skins of wine. It was a pleasure excursion of Hebrew families for relaxation and enjoyment. They distributed themselves promiscuously [ly] in groups among the shady and secluded seats and arbors, dispersing in little parties, often of two or three, in the most informal

manner.

Almost before Saulus was aware of it, a young man and woman had seated themselves immediately in front, their backs almost hidden by a light hedge which was covered by running vines. Their seats were very near. His first impulse was to retire, but that was impossible without observation; and during a moments hesitation he heard something of remarkable interest. A word distinctly uttered chained him to the spot. His position was such that he plainly saw the backs of the young pair, just in front and below him, through the interstices of the hedge, while he was entirely concealed. He was no eavesdropper, but fate transfixed him.

O my little Cassia! What a delightful place! What sayest thou? Shall we not sit down and enjoy the prospect? Our friends seem to have scattered, and left us to care for ourselves.

Which we are very well able to do, Barnabas. One might sit here and dream over the Holy City.

Thou speakest truly, Cassia! Dreams and visions pertain not alone to sleep and night. Thinkest thou not that a large part of life is unfolded through them?

My wakeful visions are very real to me.

Yea, Cassia, thou judgest rightly! Day-dreams are often true prophecies of the future. The Greek philosophy, of which I learned something while at the feet of Gamaliel, teacheth that
[117] our dreams of the future are like patterns, and that as we hold them before our gaze, day by day, the things we shape in our own minds really come about, and more, that we unconsciously grow into their image. In other words, they take such hold that we are slowly transformed by them.

Is such a doctrine peculiar to the Greeks? Do we not all have visions by day as well as night? And do they not prophesy, and even promise much? Nothing would tempt me to part with the pictures of the future that I carry with me.

Ah, little Cassia! Are they, then, so precious to thee? Wilt thou give me some hint of what they promise? I pray thee, canst thou not lend me a share in them?

Peradventure they cannot be divided.

But at least they may be sketched in outline, if not shared. Wilt thou not interpret for me the brightest vision that comes to thee?

How can I?

Peradventure I can divine it.

Peradventure thou canst not.

Knowest thou not, Cassia, that there are some who say they can read the thoughts of their neighbor, much as they would an unrolled parchment?

Claimest thou such power for thyself?

I answer thee not as to my claim. But wilt thou that I try to be thy interpreter?

Cassia cast a curious but shy glance at her companion, who seemed much absorbed in the distant mountain slopes.

Yea; if thou wilt essay to play the part of a seer, and prophesy [153] of my future, I will listen. I would try thy powers.

It is not so much thy future, as thy thought of thy future, that I would divine just now, said Barnabas, with a half-hidden smile. Wilt thou tell me if I interpret rightly?

She again turned a searching glance toward his face, but his gaze was still fastened upon the mountain landscape.

Peradventure yea, and peradventure nay, she replied, with a light flush; but please proceed.

Barnabas bade adieu to the distant mountain, and with some vigor of manner turned his face toward the maiden as if to read her thoughts.

Almon, thy father, hath told me that Saulus is soon to return for a season to the Holy City, and will sojourn at the inn of the Sheepmarket. Nay, more! that he may arrive at any hour. Behold thy bright vision!

The figure just beyond the hedge gave such a start that only the vital interest of the twain in the topic of their conversation prevented a discovery.

Little Cassia, who was not greatly disconcerted, pouted her lips a bit, toyed with her fan, and took her turn in gazing at the mountain.

O Barnabas! I would counsel thee, that thou set not up for an interpreter. Seership is not befitting to thee.

Thou dost say neither yea nor nay.

I say that thou hast altogether missed thy calling.

It seemeth strange; but verily, I find much contentment in
[119] my error, if my interpretation be not true.

It hath been told me by my father that Saulus is to return to Jerusalem, in order that he may vex the new pestilent sect of heretics, which is said to be gathering strength. I wot not more of his sojourn or plans.

I say unto thee again, that it rejoiceth me that my seership be at fault.

True prophets are not usually so fickle.

There was a slight tinge of cheery, though defiant, sarcasm in her tone, and the flush on her cheek had heightened. Then a little period of silence followed, during which Barnabas again gave himself to the mountain. On the other side of the thin hedge a heart was beating so loudly that its throbs were almost audible.

At length Barnabas turned, and gently picked up the little hand which was temptingly near, and raising it, touched it to his lips, and as reverently lowered it, after which it was slowly withdrawn.

O my little Cassia! I again take up my seership! I have a bright new dream of the future! our future share and share. I am inspired by a love, sweet, irresistible, and endless. The vision shows me that thine is the soul that responds, and thy heart the one that beats in unison. I love thee with every drop of my blood, and every thought that stirs my being. We shall know happiness,

peace, and devotion. Cassia, dear! I now proclaim seership for thee! Behold now this bright vision with me!

Gently his arm found its way around her slender form, and there was no actual resistance. She was so near that her warm breath fell upon his cheek.

The pent-up forces in the soul that had been forced to listen [120] burst forth in an involuntary groan; and this, with a sudden shaking of the hedge, startled the twain, when, at a glance, feeling the presence of a stranger near, they turned quickly down the nearest pathway, and rejoined their friends. The stranger, who was a stranger still to them, was left to his own devices.

[121]

CHAPTER XIV
LOVE VERSUS DUTY

O loving hearts with anguish rent;
No sacrifice was ever too great;
Deny thyself till life is spent,
Be purified through kindly fate.

The shadows deepened, and were fast chasing away the brightness which had streamed down from above, in the luxurious court of the palace of Gamaliel. The interview between the Rabban and his disciple was at an end, and their long-standing relation fully and finally severed. Neither evinced any disposition to reconsider the decision, or question its wisdom.

O most worthy Rabban! I have had much honor, and thank thee for thy manifold goodness in the days which are past. Though I go out from thy presence, my respect will abide. Peace be with thee and thine!

Serenus had arisen from his seat to take leave of his esteemed teacher and master. The young man's bearing, while calm and dignified, betokened a warmth of affection which was deep and sincere. Strong ties were being severed; but, in the nature of the case, there was no alternative. But the perfect serenity and uncomplaining spirit shown by the young man at their parting
[122] touched a tender chord in the heart of Gamaliel. His official sternness melted away; and the warm, native gentleness of his nature burst the barriers of his reserve.

Stay for a little time, Serenus, I pray thee! I cannot let thee depart without some farther assurance of my good-will. Forgive me for the stern decision which pertaineth to my office, for it grieveth me to make an end to the acceptable service which thou

hast rendered. My duty is heavy upon my heart, for I have much affection for thee. I will not farther persuade thee to forego thine earnest convictions, for I can but honor thy consistency and unselfishness. To thee, duty demands sacrifice, and thou dost cheerfully render it. Behold, thy friendship hath suffered no loss.

Thou dost honor me too much, O venerable Rabban! but I thank thee that, even though I lay down my service in the Assembly of the Wise, I have thy warm favor and esteem.

Serenus again moved to take his departure, but the Rabban seemed unwilling to let him go.

Behold the hour is at hand for the evening repast! Stay thou and break bread with us.

Gamaliel led the way to the apartment where the simple evening meal was served; and Serenus was greeted by Amabel and her mother, with whom he was on friendly and familiar terms. Mutual esteem and previous visits had inspired such confidence as might have been bestowed upon one of the family. Serenus and Amabel were warm friends, but up to the present time no word beyond the boundary of simple friendship had ever passed between them.

After the meal was ended, Gamaliel withdrew briefly, being [123] called to the library by a scribe. As the evening was sultry, the others repaired to the house-top, where the Rabban would erelong rejoin them. But soon the mother was also summoned away; and kind, or unkind, fate, through fortuitous combination, left Serenus and Amabel by themselves. An easy seat, sheltered by a light canopy, which was close by the parapet on the side overlooking the city, invited their occupancy.

The sun long before had hid himself behind the Mount Ephraim Range in the west; and darkness crept up from the valleys, and was fast blotting out the tinting and burnishing that had softly rested upon battlements and towers, and the neighboring slopes of Olivet. One by one the city lamps, like fire-flies, twinkled

in the growing gloom, and the starry heaven above solemnly marshalled its host, while the cheeks of the young pair were fanned by the balmy evening breeze.

Amabel had great respect for the courage and sincerity of Serenus; but far more than that, his image was deeply engraven upon her heart. But still, after this long time, she felt unready to make the confession, even to herself. As for Serenus, he long had lived among visions, and alternated between hopes and fears. There had steadily gleamed in his soul love for Amabel, and at times ecstasy beyond limit. Of her warm friendship he had no doubt, but of more he was not sure. Who shall interpret human hearts to each other?

But Serenus had long indulged the delightful dream which was constantly before him. The beauty and purity of Amabel made her seem almost like a divinity, worthy of any sacrifice and
[124] devotion, if not actual homage. But now, knowing her devoted loyalty to her church and race, what hope could remain for him? Deprived of his position by his own irrevocable choice, and soon to be misunderstood and counted as disloyal to the interests of the Chosen People, he had virtually dashed the cup of bliss from his own lips. Was he not mad in his devotion to a principle, which would not only cost place and reputation, but also wreck his long-nourished hopes regarding Amabel? Such were a few of the thoughts that rushed in a quick procession through his mind, as he was thrown for a brief period into the charmed presence. On her part there was an unwonted reserve. She seemed to feel the approach of a crisis in her life. The deepening shadows veiled her beautiful features, but the large lustrous eyes almost shone through the blackness in soulful radiation.

The darkness which from without falls upon us is a fitting symbol of that which steals about my heart, said Serenus.

Why art thou so cast down, O Serenus?

I would fain answer thy question and open my soul to thee, fair one; but a great trial is laid upon me.

Peradventure I might help thee to bear it.

The gloom hid the expression of intense interest which played upon her face as she had spoken. Serenus was also like a bow bent to the breaking-point.

Sweet Amabel! long have I loved thee! From the time when at the Lyceum thy speaking eyes thrilled me, thy charming soul hath been most dear. Thou art the purest and fairest blossom of Israel in all the Holy City! [125]

Again the friendly shades of evening veiled the rich flush which mantled the cheeks of the Jewish maiden. She was stirred to the depths of her being, but waited to hear more. Serenus continued,

Thou wouldst inquire concerning the trial? Can anything pertaining to love be a trial? I silence my beating heart to tell thee! Dear Amabel, do not think me mad! I accept as true the message of the prophet of Nazareth, whom our own Chosen People counted as a blasphemer, and have crucified! He was innocent, just, and holy! His life was pure, and his love went out to all even his persecutors. He lived the full divine pattern for both Jew and Gentile. His kingdom is an unseen kingdom, and cometh not with observation. He came not as an earthly conqueror, to throw off the Roman yoke by force, but to show men how to unloose the heavier yoke of spiritual bondage, carnality, and dead works. There is a light which is in every man, but only the Man Jesus hath perfected it in seen demonstration and expression. Through the power of the Father, to which he opened himself, he healed the sick, cleansed the leper, raised the fallen, and saved the sinful, and proclaimed that all these works are possible to all who are filled with the same spirit. He hath departed bodily; but the fulness of life which he showed forth is ever in the world, waiting for manifestation. The outer tumult of our lives may be so hushed that we can hear the voice of Truth in the stillness within. True religion is comprehended in oneness with the Father, and not in ceremonies and ordinances.

[126] Serenus poured out these thoughts as though they had been burning within him for utterance. After a moment's pause he continued,

This is a new faith, howbeit it hath long had some growth within me. Yea, before the advent of the Nazarene I felt somewhat of its spirit moving in my heart. I have made all these things known to thy worthy father. My reputation and honor among our people is gone, and my work in the Assembly of the Wise ended! When these things that I have spoken unto thee reach the ears of the scribes and elders, I shall be a reproach; yea, persecution may be meted out to me.

The soul of Amabel was wrung with agony as he continued,

Behold my trial! O fair daughter of Gamaliel, I am persuaded of thy loving and pure loyalty to thy father, thy religion, and thy people! I know my burden, and must bear it, even though it crush me! I go out from thy father's house, and will see thee no more.

O Serenus, I know well thy noble spirit! Must these things be?

Serenus sat with bowed head, and made no answer.

Amabel was a loving and dutiful daughter of a tender father. But with all his kindness, she well knew his firmness, and had no thought of putting it to the test, or raising any question. Her whole training and life had been devoted and consecrated to the religion of her people. While not bigoted or exclusive, she was thoroughly sincere in every service. She also fully divined both the firmness and sincerity of Serenus. She knew that his [127] impassioned utterances about the new religion welled up from the depths of his soul, and saw how dearly they cost him. A great rock had suddenly been rolled across her pathway, and there was no way around it. Silently holding herself, and shrouded by the prevailing obscurity, the great hot tears fell thick and fast.

Fate's shuttle weaves the web of life with pain;
But in the struggle, see that thou art brave:
When finished, loss may even be turned to gain,

And love, perchance, enriched with all it gave.

The moments flew swiftly by. Amabel must be loyal, and she would be brave. She must hide her love, even because of it. If Serenus knew of it, would it not double the bitterness of his own cup? Can love suppress itself in behalf of its own object? Yea, it will suffer all things.

O Serenus! think no more of me! Thou art a noble spirit, but pray let thy dreams of our future come to an end. There is a great gulf between us, which love, even if it possessed me, could not span. It will be for thy peace if our paths come no more together.

There was another silence of several moments, during which the heart-throbs of each were almost audible, but no other word could be added. The very palace beneath them was no more immovable than the fate which destiny decreed, both by and for them.

Serenus found the great question echoing through the recesses of his heart, as to the real feeling of Amabel toward him; but there was no solution, and he even recognized that it were better so. What mattered it, so long as the gulf that yawned between [128] them was impassable!

The silence was soon broken by the return of the Rabban, who resumed the conversation that had been interrupted. But he little dreamed what a tension was upon the two young souls.

Serenus soon took his leave, passed out of the palace, and started down the northerly descent of Mount Zion in the direction of his quiet home, which was some distance to the north-west, beyond Hezekiah's Pool. But before he had come to the end of the sloping palace gardens, he saw some deserted seats among the scattered shrubbery upon one of the terraces, and attracted by the balminess of the evening, sat down. The opportunity for silent meditation and composure after the trying ordeal through which he had passed was very welcome. He would take his bearings

anew, and sound the subtle recesses of his sorrows and experiences, and confirm and re-interpret his hopes and aspirations. At length he looked up into the starry canopy above, and entered into communion with the Universal, and his fevered pulse grew calm. He relaxed the soul-tension which had been upon him, and consciously opened his being to the eternal and all-prevailing Love and Goodness, and peace, like a river, flowed in. He was conscious of an universal reconciliation with all things, past, present, and future. The unbounded benediction which overwhelmed him submerged all that had been local, temporary, and disquieting. His soul expanded, and he was conscious of an at-one-ment with the whole order of Nature. It was all in, of, and
[129] for him. What, after all, was the sweetness of the purest and most beautiful personal affection but a rudimentary lesson, a detached gleam, from the wide radiance of the unbounded sunlight! His love for Amabel was like a little purling rill, finding its way to the ocean, not to be destroyed, but enfolded in an infinitely Greater. It must become multiplied, until Amabel is in all people, Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian. If her form be no more beheld, she shall be an universal interpreter. She is everywhere, even though unseen. Pierce through the rough outer coverings of all souls, and the divine germ of Love is there, only waiting for the light and moisture of consciousness so that it may swell and spring forth. Amabel is in the whispering of the breeze, the glow of the sunlight, the shimmer of the wave, the sighing of the forest, and the patter of the rain-drop. Divine Love at first can be interpreted only through its personified sample, which kindles the beginning of a flame in the human soul.

Serenus lingered long enough to make the world over for himself through the choice of an ideal standpoint. He had learned the secret of spiritual alchemy, so that the Universal was mirrored within him. His spirit enlarged to make room for a mighty influx of love, peace, and power which were borne in upon him. With soul calmed and filled with spiritual might he arose, and with

light heart and elastic step started toward his destination. Passing through a long, narrow street just to the north of the tall cenotaph of Mariamne, and leaving the square of the Sheepmarket a little to the east, he continued towards home. It was midnight, and the streets and lanes were lonely and nearly deserted. But as he came [130] near a small secluded open court by the side of a wine-shop, he heard a confusion of voices. He hurried his pace, and coming nearer discerned a prostrate form surrounded by four or five turbulent fellows, who were searching the garments of their victim for valuables. He sprang into their midst; and the onslaught was so sudden that the men, thinking that one of the Roman guard was at hand, scattered and ran in different directions. They already had secured all the booty they could find, and had no disposition to return.

Serenus gently moved the body to a more secure spot not far away, and removing his own tunic, folded it, and placed it under the head of the wounded man. Espying a legionary guard in the distance, who carried a torch, he called to him, and reported the robbery. They carefully examined the man, but found no wound. He was a Jew of small stature, delicate and deathly pale, and, except a hurried gasping for breath, entirely motionless. Everything indicated that he had fainted in the street, and that the young barbarians, finding him in that helpless condition, had taken occasion to rob him. His eyes were closed, but soon there was a little more evidence of animation. At length he began to mutter incoherently, as if dreaming. Serenus loosened his neck-cloth, chafed his limbs, and stroked back his dishevelled locks, and behold, the face had a familiar look. The muttering continued, and became more audible.

O Cassia! Cassia! O Cassia! Oh! Oh!

Serenus knew nothing of Cassia; but a quick vision of the past flashed before him, and he beheld a face to which the [131] colorless features bore a striking resemblance.

Saulus! Yea, it is Saulus! My old comrade of the Assembly

and the Lyceum!

It was known to Serenus that Saulus had lodged aforetime at the inn of the Sheepmarket; and as it was not far away, he and the legionary tenderly bore him thither. They knocked at the outer portal; but as it was far into the night, all were sleeping. But continuing, Almon at length made his appearance, and after explanation admitted them. Saulus had become more quiet, but was still unconscious. When he had been carefully placed upon a soft couch, the Roman departed.

O my dear friend Saulus!said Almon sorrowfully; thou hast nearly perished! O Saulus! Saulus!

He started to arouse his wife and Cassia; but Serenus advised that they be not disturbed, but that he himself be permitted to minister to the unconscious Saulus for a little time before taking his departure.

There was something so reassuring and commanding in the mien of Serenus that the innkeeper consented without a question.

With the rising of the sun, behold thou shalt see him entirely whole! exclaimed Serenus.

Almon was then beckoned to stillness; and he seated himself at a little distance, and looked on with astonishment. Serenus gently took the hands of Saulus in his own, and seating himself, rested his calm gaze upon the pale face before him.

The room was filled with a mysterious stillness, and there was
[132] a feeling as of a Presence To Almon there seemed to be an added surrounding brightness, and he was filled with a holy awe which he could not understand. Then he thought he heard the stranger whisper a benediction. Soon Saulus wearily opened his eyes and looked about him, but failed to recognize his surroundings. There was another profound silence, and another benediction in soft but now audible tones.

Then the sick man gaped twice, turned upon his side, and sank into a sweet, natural slumber. Soon his deep, regular breathing

indicated sound and refreshing sleep. Almon marvelled. Serenus arose to take his departure, only saying,

He is well.

What a wonderful work! Who art thou, kind stranger?

He only replied, A friend of Saulus, and softly passing through the portal went out into the darkness.

[133]

CHAPTER XV
THE RESCUE OF REBECCA

> Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance.
> Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
>
> PSALM cxlix.

It was but two days to the great Jewish festival of Pentecost, and Jerusalem was already thronged with pilgrims. They came pouring in through all the great thoroughfares, from Damascus to the northward, which entered near Golgotha; from the seaports to the west and northwest, through the defiles of the hill-country of Mount Ephraim, and from the south, approaching through the valley of Kedron; also along the lesser byways a great host. They journeyed in families, parties, and festal bands, singing songs and praises, and bringing offerings. The air was stirred with a thrill of national pride and exaltation. Even the great overshadowing cloud of the Roman dominion could not dampen the ardor nor repress the spirit of the harvest festival commonly known as the Feast of Weeks.

The Hebrew had an unbounded faith in the future and permanent redemption of the Lord's people, and his ideal of restoration and final triumph was ever before him. However galling the
[134] shackles, their loosening had been decreed, and was expected. Even the pilgrims of the more distant countries of the Dispersion were in no wise behind in their ardor as they gathered at the sacred city, whither the tribes go up. Each loyal heart swelled with pride as the great Temple came into view, where the God

of Israel found his special dwelling-place in the Holy of Holies, from which he radiated his glory.

During the great Hebrew festivals every son of Israel who lived in the Holy City hospitably opened his house to the pilgrims; and as the climate was warm during the month Sivan, thousands slept upon roofs, and also encamped in and around the city. Many pitched tents within the limits of a Sabbath day's journey outside the walls.

Among the great throng was a little party of four from the distant seaport of Tarsus. The aged priest Abdiel, with Benoni and his wife and Rebecca, came not only to attend the festival, but for a longer sojourn. Their arrival was a few days later than that of Saulus, he having been charged to make provision for their necessities. They were to abide at the Sheepmarket.

The little Tarsian group approached by the road from Cæsarea, and coming upon the elevation beyond the walls to the northwest, beheld the City of David spread out before them. The roof of the Temple, which crowned Moriah, overlaid with beaten gold, glittered in the warm Judean sunshine; and as the eyes of Abdiel rested upon it, he fell on his knees, and stretched out his hands toward heaven.

"The God of Israel be praised! Long aforetime the eyes of thy servant rested upon thy Holy Hill, and now, once more, behold [115] the Glory of the Whole Earth is spread before me."

He then arose, and looking up to heaven, repeated from the Psalms of David,

"In Salem also is his tabernacle,
And his dwelling-place in Zion.
My covenant will I not break,
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
Once have I sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie unto David;
His seed shall endure forever,
And his throne as the sun before me.

He ceased, and again fastened his gaze upon the Holy Hill. But anon a tremor shook his frame, his eyes became fixed, and he was as one in a deep trance. His countenance changed, his lips seemed moved by some mysterious power, and a message which was like a prophecy came out of his mouth. Even the voice was not that of Abdiel.

Behold, little ones are born already whose eyes shall see Jerusalem as a heap of ruins. Sons of Israel will arise against each other, and strife and famine among thy people ravage thee within, while Roman cohorts invest thee from without. Battering rams will cause thy bulwarks to crumble; thy palaces shall be sacked, thy towers crushed, and thy Temple destroyed by fire. Pestilence, famine, and war shall bring thee to utter desolation, until thou lie in heaps. Thy glory shall vanish, thy name become a reproach and a hissing, and the Gentiles shall level thy ruins and dwell upon them.

[136] Again the frame of Abdiel was shaken, and he came to himself.

Behold, O Benoni, I have seen an exceeding calamitous vision!

O Rabbi Abdiel! we have heard thee prophesy evil concerning the Holy City!

I wot not that I had spoken; but oh, the vision! Here where Jerusalem lieth stretched out before me, lo! I beheld a mighty battle. Famine, sword, and fire prevailed, and then anon I saw but an ash-heap!

Behold, O Rabbi Abdiel, peradventure a lying spirit hath possessed thee, and used thy lips!

The venerable priest marvelled.

The day of the great and most joyous of the Jewish festivals opened bright but sultry. The early morning sun was pouring his warm beams over Mount Olivet, and gilding tower and roof, as Serenus wended his way toward a large upper chamber which was just below the westerly slope of the Holy Hill. This was

where the disciples of the prophet of Nazareth were wont to gather, day by day, before the third hour. It was his first visit, and he was unknown to the followers of the Nazarene. From his youth in Alexandria, where he had been instructed by the great teacher Philo, he had been free in spirit from the traditions of the elders. He had learned somewhat of the Greek philosophy, and also dwelt for a season among the devoted Jewish sects of the Essenes and Therapeutæ. Being of a singularly pure and religious nature, he found the best in each, and attained to much wisdom and discernment, even before he came to Jerusalem. While a Jew by birth, and yet an observer of the more simple forms of the Hebrew worship, he had gradually found them burdensome, [107] until his free declarations concerning the Spirit of Truth made it expedient even for the tolerant Gamaliel to part with him. He had long accounted the kingdom of God as a spiritual kingdom, having no connection with the government of the Jewish nation. He felt that its seat was within, and that its coming would be without observation.

Serenus had lived the Sermon on the Mount before its audible delivery. During the public life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, he had continued with Gamaliel, but had watched intently the spirit and teaching of the newly arisen prophet. While not aforetime casting in his lot with his immediate followers, he was in perfect accord with his work and mission. Day by day he had lived in the hope that the sonship which had expression in the great prophet might find knowledge and favor of the Rabbis and all the people. His own life and teaching with Gamaliel were to the end of the hastening of peace and righteousness, and the reign on earth of love and good will. Before the Nazarene had appeared, he felt within himself the eternal Christly spirit, or that divine mind and will which was so soon to have new and perfected incarnation. But when the scribes and elders persecuted and slew the Man in whom the Word was articulated, he must needs forego all conformity to them, avow the Truth, and peradventure

suffer persecution himself.

Serenus found the large upper chamber well filled, and those who had gathered were speaking words of gladness and praise. Their faces shone with the spirit of love, and there was perfect
[138] accord and unity. Men and women prophesied, each one as moved by inspiration; and there were also times of silence, when all were possessed with a spiritual ecstasy which no tongue could interpret. All were stirred to open themselves to the Holy Spirit, and it filled and overflowed them. Love was so eloquent in every countenance that all, whatever their native language, heard and understood its voice in their own souls. Each one praised and magnified God for his heavenly vision, and all felt that these were the first fruits of a new spiritual dominion. Every one offered his unbounded service to his neighbor, and mighty works of ministry and healing attested the power of the spirit which was in them. Their joy knew no measure. Those who had been slow of speech waxed eloquent, the weak grew strong, the fearful became bold, and the unlearned spoke words of wisdom. Serenus marvelled and rejoiced as he heard their utterances.

Glory to God for he is our strength!

Peace and good will to all on earth!

We give free course to the same spirit which filled Jesus of Nazareth!

The goodness of the Lord enlargeth our heart!

The chains of captives fall off and they go free!

Our eyes behold thy salvation!

The way of life is made plain before us!

Our countenances shine with the glory of thy presence!

The day of the Lord hath dawned!

Signs and wonders are multiplied!

Behold our sons and daughters shall prophesy!

[139] A great light hath been kindled in our souls!

The Spirit of Truth is in our midst!

Our love aboundeth toward all men!

Such were a few of the manifold testimonies.

The soul of Serenus was aflame with praise and gladness. Looking about him, he perceived that nearly all who had gathered were unlearned, and of no reputation; such as had contempt of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law. Whence this wonderful wisdom! Oh, joyful demonstration! Behold the tabernacle of God is now within the hearts of men!

O breath of God! breathed by his children now,
Free course his spirit hath; their souls aspire.
With life and love their hearts thou dost endow,
Baptized een now with warmth of heavenly fire.

Serenus was inspired to mingle his wisdom with that of this spiritual love-feast, and he addressed the assembly:

Brethren, it is good to be here; for lo, the power of God filleth this place. But peradventure ye persuade yourselves that God hath become more willing than he was wont, and therefore hath repented him of the past, and now poureth out his Spirit more abundantly. Nay! His Spirit hath always been poured out, for it filleth all things; but now, with one accord, ye have opened yourselves to it. Behold God hath not changed, for he hath everlasting perfection, and abideth everywhere. He is not like unto men, giving or withholding his favor by times and seasons, but is everlasting fulness, now and through all time, to all who discover him and find his kingdom within. Behold the same mind which filled the Nazarene to the uttermost dwelleth unmanifested in all; [114] but they wot not of its presence, for they look without, expecting it to come with observation. While Jesus was with you after the flesh, behold your eyes were holden by his bodily presence, but now ye see how the Spirit of the Messiah aboundeth unto all. God dwelleth not in oblations and circumcisions and ordinances, nay, even not in yonder Temple more than in all the earth, for his presence is everywhere. Behold, whether Jew or Gentile, Parthian, Mede, or Elamite, be ye renewed in the inner man, for

there is where God speaketh. As ye put on the Christly mind, which was incarnated in Jesus, ye have salvation within you. His blood, being interpreted, betokens his inmost eternal quality; and this is Spirit, and this is life. Till now ye knew not that ye had Christ in you, waiting for your outworking. But now ye have opened your vision, and therefore abound in faith, and show forth God s power as it becometh his children. I salute every one of you in love.

As Serenus concluded, many gathered about him, and grasped him by the hand, and blessed and saluted him.

The news of the unwonted fervor of the assembly soon became noised abroad; and many who were curious hastily gathered, and marvelled at what they saw. Many false reports went out concerning it, until one Peter, a disciple, formerly weak, but now of great boldness, lifted up his voice and made explanation, showing that according to prophecy all these things should come to pass.

After Serenus went out, he joined the great throng, and went up to the Jewish Pentecost at the Temple. He desired once more [141] to behold the great national festival of his own people, to which the pilgrims from all the scattered tribes had come up.

The tramp of a multitude of feet resounded through the outer courts. The strange costumes of Jews and proselytes from Mesopotamia and Cappadocia, from Pontus, Egypt, and Arabia, mingled in picturesque color and design with the less conspicuous habiliments of the denizens of the Holy City. There was a great confusion of tongues and dialects, and the tables of the money-changers were loaded with piles of strange coins from many countries. The dues of the Temple, and the price of lambs, goats, and bullocks, must needs be paid for in the sacred money of Judea. There were great pens containing lambs of the first year, selected by the priests as being without blemish, and rams and he-goats, approved as sound, to be sold for sacrifices, the large profit going to the priests, as pertaining to their office.

The bleating and lowing of the herds that were crowded into the great Temple market soon to suffer religious martyrdomwas mingled with the vast babel of other sounds and voices. The marble pavement was littered with refuse, and would soon be stained with blood, poured out by the priests in conformity to the ceremonial law. The blare of silver trumpets, and the reverberation of patriotic and religious anthems, which were sung as ordained by the Levites, also formed a part of the great chorus. All the broad spaces on Mount Moriah swarmed with humanity, and the sweltering, brassy air vibrated with clamor and motion. The Gate Beautiful, which led from the court of the Gentiles to that of the Women, was flung wide open, and its fair proportions awakened the pride of every Hebrew. Farther on, and leading into [142] the court of Israel, was the still more celebrated Gate of Nicanor, made of polished Corinthian brass, which was so brilliant in the bright sunshine as to dazzle every beholder.

At length the ceremonies began. The priests, dressed in long white robes, moved with unsandalled feet to and fro in long processions with military precision, and finally ranged themselves in a great semicircle, each with two leavened loaves and a peace offering, and waved them before the Lord. The animals were slain in great numbers, and placed upon the altars for the appointed sacrifices, the fires were lighted, and the smoke of incense ascended toward heaven, until the fierce rays of the sun were almost shut out by the great cloud that hung over the Holy Hill. At length the silver trumpets blew a great blast as a signal for silence. The High Priest, flanked by his subordinates, advanced upon an elevated gallery in the sight of the vast multitude, stretched forth his hands toward heaven with fingers mystically dispread, and blessed the people in the name of the God of Israel. The heart of every Hebrew swelled with pride as the great festal service was celebrated, and even Roman centurions looked on with interest.

Serenus was deeply moved as he silently viewed the mighty

concourse, and witnessed the elaborate ritual which in the past concerned him, and had been wrapped about his whole life. He then thanked God that the fetters which had held him even lightly were now broken, and that the light of truth had shone into his soul, and destroyed a yoke of bondage which long had been
[143] galling.

Serenus secured a position somewhat elevated above the heads of the people, just inside of the Beautiful Gate; and from it he made a wide survey of the imposing ceremonies of the Feast of Weeks. He marvelled how this favored people, the descendants of Abraham and possessors of a rich spiritual heritage, had disregarded the warnings of old, and permitted their worship to degenerate into outward legality and form. The simple ordinances, which once were only the tokens of a pure inner faith, had become an unceasing round of cumbersome and dead observances. The life of the Jewish system had withered, and the cup of bitterness of the Chosen People was fast filling up. But what could he or the little band of the upper chamber do, to clothe with flesh and life the dry bones of the dead religious faith of a dispersed race? Such were a few of his musings when he beheld the great throng, as they surged in and out before him.

But suddenly the air grew thick, and a heavier cloud than that of the sacrificial smoke overshadowed the temple courts. It was growing late in the afternoon, and a sudden tempest was at hand, following the great heat. Anon a blinding flash of lightning and peal of thunder that shook the very foundations of the Temple. A darkness fell like that of night, which was made thicker by contrast with the flashes which now seemed like fiery serpents, shooting through and around the Temple, and leaping athwart the heavens. A panic seized the great throng, and there was a mad rush to escape. Cries of anguish rent the air, as many were
[144] trampled down by the affrighted mass. Many were crushed by the pressure of the crowd behind, and all semblance of order was lost in the great struggle for life. Men, women, and children were

pressed against the platform upon which Serenus was seated, and even those who were able to keep upright were borne helplessly along. There was a chorus of groans almost below his feet. He fell upon his breast, and found that by reaching down to the utmost, he was able to grasp the hands of some who were borne upon the shoulders of others. In this way he was able to rescue not a few, by lifting them to the level of the platform where he was. By the light of a vivid flash, he saw in the drifting current an elderly man, upon whose shoulders there was a young woman, whose drooping form and pale face showed that she had swooned. The man who carried her aloft had a glimpse of Serenus above him, and cried out as he was swept along,

Take her! Oh, save her! save her!

By a supreme effort, Serenus was able to grasp her arm, and lift her to his own level, while he who had made the entreaty was quickly lost to sight in the irresistible moving tide and thick darkness. Serenus laid her tenderly down; and another woman, whom he before had lifted by his strong grasp, assisted in ministration. The face of the prostrate form was of the Jewish type, but her features were regular and beautiful. Her long black hair hung in wild confusion, as if to symbolize the disorderly scene through which she had passed. Her costume betokened refinement and social standing. Around her white neck there was a network of delicate gold chains interspersed with small precious stones. The folds of her white loose-fitting robe, of soft texture, were [p45] gathered by a girdle woven of golden threads, from which hung pendants of small pearls.

After a vigorous fanning and a little interval of rest, she gasped, opened her eyes, and slowly came to herself.

O my father! where art thou? O Saulus!

Serenus marvelled.

Is Saulus thy friend? Pray, who art thou?

I am Rebecca, the daughter of Benoni of Tarsus.

[146]

CHAPTER XVI
AFTER THE STORM

The fury of the storm rapidly diminished. The great rushing tide of men, women, and children soon thinned out and grew sluggish. The darkness lifted, and the lightning-flashes and peals of thunder died away, but the great worshipful throng was demoralized and scattered.

The panic began when some marble columns in the tier beyond the court of Israel had been struck by lightning, and shattered and thrown down, wounding several priests, who were washing their hands in the great brazen Laver. Such was the starting-point of the stampede which had been so disastrous and widespread.

Rebecca was uninjured, and rapidly recovered from the prevailing fright and excitement. Except for the anxiety regarding the fate of her father, she was soon quite herself. She turned to her unknown deliverer to render him thanks.

The God of Israel reward thee, O son of Judah! Thy gracious ministry was my salvation. Receive the thanks of the daughter of Benoni. My father will joyfully bless thee, and also reward thy goodness if thou wilt accept some favor.

[147] Fair maid of the house of Benoni! the Lord hath already rewarded me abundantly, for I have much joy in thy deliverance.

The pallor and weakness which marked her face gradually passed away, and gave place to a look of interest and curiosity.

It all seems like a confused dream. I remember that my father lifted me to his shoulders to bear me out of the mad throng, and I knew nothing further until I found myself here.

He delivered thee into my hands, by his own words, and now, behold we will seek him.

Rebecca was now able to walk, and they passed out through the Beautiful Gate in quest of Benoni. There were groups of people everywhere; many drenched by the great storm, some faint or wounded, and a few of the more helpless were being borne away by friends, or keepers of the Temple courts. But the father of Rebecca was nowhere to be found.

Peradventure he hath been bruised or faint, and taken to the inn of Almon where we abide. I will return thither. But I am a stranger in the Holy City. May I still presume upon thy favor in that thou wouldst show me the way?

The sky had already cleared, the air was sweet and fresh, and the sun dispensing his parting beams before sinking below the western horizon.

Behold what a great calm follows the tempest, said Rebecca. The Holy City seems purified.

A fitting symbol of the storms and waves that rage in the soul of man, said Serenus.They chasten, and then in due time bring forth a harvest of peace. [148]

Must peace of soul come only as the result of tempest?

I say not that; but yet life is like the ebb and flow of the tides. If stillness were never broken up, peradventure there would be stagnation. It is the fury of the storm that gives tranquillity its charm.

Should we, then, seek for waves to buffet us?

Nay; but when they come unsought, we should be lifted by them rather than submerged.

Peradventure one be not able?

That must not be conceded even to ourselves.

What is the secret of overcoming?

Keep a well-ordered mind, for our life is what our thoughts make it. Look beneath the surface of things. When the billows of the sea are angry, and foam and dash themselves, there is serenity in their unseen deeps.

Thou must account thyself a philosopher as well as a son of Israel.

Daughter of Benoni! I am a Jew; but the Chosen People are not the sole possessors of wisdom. It aboundeth through all the earth, but only they who seek it for its own sake taste of its fulness.

They passed out through the west Temple gate of the outer court, and down the long flight of steps along the slope of Mount Moriah. The steep descent caused Rebecca again to grow dizzy from faintness, and she leaned upon Serenus for support. He put his arm about her to save her from falling, and thus they made their way as rapidly as possible toward the Sheepmarket. As they entered a narrow street, they met, face to face, a young woman [149] moving with a rapid step in the opposite direction. She gave Serenus a slight salutation, and quickly passed by. He was still supporting Rebecca, and was startled at the recognition. It was Amabel.

Arriving at the inn, Rebecca invited Serenus to enter, and receive the thanks of her friends. But he made some plea of haste, and turned to depart, only saying,

Peace abide with thee!

She returned the salutation, and then, remembering that he had not made himself known, except as a son of Israel, inquired,

Who art thou, that we may send thee greeting for thy great favor?

I am a friend of Saulus;and before her knock was answered, he was out of sight.

A few days after, late in the afternoon, a little group were holding earnest converse in the court of the Sheepmarket inn. Abdiel, the venerable Rabbi of Tarsus, bewailed the changes which had come to pass in the Holy City since his long sojourn there many years before.

Behold, he exclaimed bitterly, false prophets and teachers have arisen, and boldly proclaim their blasphemous doctrines in the synagogues, yea, in the very courts of the Temple on the Holy Hill. The streams which should flow out in pure volume to refresh and confirm the children of the Dispersion are becoming poisoned at the fountain-head.

It is even as thou sayest, O venerable Abdiel, replied Almon. We may almost perceive heresy and false doctrine in the very air about us! It cometh mainly from the followers of [150] an impostor named Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified not long ago between two thieves. His disciples have waxed yet more bold in their teachings; and some of them set at naught the Holy Place itself, while others continue in the ordinances of the Chosen People, but lightly esteem them.

What manner of people are they? and what is their doctrine?

Saulus is more learned in these matters, and can more perfectly inform thee.

I have heard from common report, since coming from Tarsus, somewhat of the Galilean and his doings. He was without reputation or learning, but by certain charms and magical works and healings was able to deceive many. He even made pretence to the Messiahship, boasted that he could destroy the Temple in three days, and called himself the King of the Jews.

As he was no king, and did nothing to restore the kingdom and drive out the Roman, peradventure he was mad, or possessed of an evil spirit, said Abdiel.

That matters not, O venerable Rabbi! so long as his followers are multiplied and have waxed bold. They must be driven out or destroyed, otherwise great harm will befall the church of our fathers. It hath come to my ears, O Almon! that my former enemy, the false teacher Serenus, hath joined himself to these blasphemers, and that the Rabban hath put him away from the Assembly. It behooveth us to be vigilant, else this heresy may spread even to the overthrow of our nation and people. I shall

counsel with the High Priest on the morrow, and take measures
[151] to rid the Holy City of these deceivers who are persuading the common people with their vain pretensions.

Thou speakest with wisdom and boldness, said Almon; yet it behooveth thee to proceed with caution and secrecy, for this new doctrine hath taken a strong hold upon the ignorant and unlearned. I have heard of one Stephanos, who is vehement for the strange heresy. He is young and learned, and speaketh both in the Hebrew and Greek tongues.

It hath been told me, O Almon! how he stirreth up the people by his eloquence, and of his disputations, whereby he may gain a great following. Peradventure on the morrow he may be at the synagogue of the Cyrenians, as hath been wont. I will go and confront this calumniator of our Holy Law.

The God of Israel be with thee! said Abdiel. Thou art strong and courageous in the defence of our doctrine.

Since the return of Saulus he had been earnestly occupied in the formation of plans for the uprooting of false doctrine, and the punishment of the violators of the ceremonial law. His zeal in this cause was only alternated and tempered by his periods of depression and uncertainty as to the affection of Cassia. His strength as a champion of the traditions of the elders was only equalled by the power of his love for her, but the former inspired strength and the latter weakness. He could face unnumbered heretics without a fear, but was vanquished by the sight of the innkeeper's daughter. Day after day had swiftly passed since his return from Tarsus, but still he was utterly in the dark as to her
[152] real feelings. She was friendly, and took a deep interest in all his plans for crushing the traitors in the camp of Israel, but more he could not clearly divine. He was holden from making any allusion to the involuntary eavesdropping upon the occasion of his arrival; and what he had heard on the part of little Cassia had been so indefinite that he lived in a condition of mingled hope, fear, and uncertainty. Barnabas was still at the Sheepmarket,

but there was nothing in his actions to aid in the solution of the riddle. Saulus loved with all the intensity of his fiery nature; and he even persuaded himself that if Cassia loved Barnabas, he could do nothing but flee the Holy City, and so drifted along, not daring to find out the truth. The suspense could not much longer be borne.

As he retired to his chamber after the conversation, he sat down to commune with himself, and decide upon some course of action. His was no ordinary affection. The world without little Cassia would be a desert.

Was I born for this strange, unfathomable emotion? O Eros! why hast thou so enslaved me? I am hopelessly bound by thy fetters. But stay! unmindful of the God of Israel, I have called upon the name of the strange deity of the Greek. I crave forgiveness, O Jehovah! I would not blaspheme. Perchance she hath crowded thee out of my heart, but my love is not born of the senses. It is my spirit and life, O Cassia! that I would mingle with thine.

Wherever I look I behold thee! Thou art sunshine in the midst of darkness! I dare not gaze upon thy features, or look into thine eyes; for thy soul shines out and dazzles me. O little [123] Cassia! I was here with thee even while I was absent. As I neared Jerusalem, I dreamed of Paradise, but was plunged into the valley of Gehenna! O Future, speak! and make known my fate!

* * * * * * * * * * *

Love e en through absence waxeth strong,
Doth souls when parted fast enchain:
Fruition, hasten! wait not long,
O heavenly Queen! begin thy reign.

The synagogue of the Cyrenians was in the valley of the Cheesemongers, a little to the northeast of the Pool of Siloam. It was a simple, square building, severely plain in the interior, with Scripture-texts printed on the whitewashed walls. The platform was enclosed by a rail, and occupied at times by any male member of the synagogue who could read and expound the Law. The seats were divided into two sections by a lattice-work partition, the men occupying one side, and the women the other. The services were not confined to the Sabbath, but often held on other days of the week, and sometimes in the evening.

It was a bright morning, and the synagogue was thronged with worshippers, part being Sadducees; and there were also many Jews who were pilgrims from the countries beyond Judea, having remained after the Feast of Pentecost. It had been noised abroad that Stephanos, the eloquent young apostle of the New Faith, would speak touching the interpretation of the Law and prophets. Many knew of him; for he had healed some sick folk, and done
[154] signs and wonders among the common people. Abdiel, Benoni, Saulus, and Cassia convened with the congregation. The rulers of the synagogue had consented that Stephanos should lead in the exposition of Scripture for that day. Comely and youthful in appearance, he stepped upon the platform, and searching among the rolls of the Law, brought out many passages, which he read and briefly expounded as he passed along. He then re-rolled them carefully, and putting them away, addressed the assembly.

Ye men of Israel! I count myself happy to proclaim to you the Dispensation now beginning, which betokens the fulfilment of great promises, not to the Jews only, but to all the nations of the earth. Ye are the inheritors of the promise made to Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And again, Moses indeed saith, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things, whatsoever he shall speak unto you. Daniel prophesieth of the setting up of an everlasting

kingdom, and this kingdom is at hand. David asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. But the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands, as saith the prophet,

The heaven is my throne,
And the earth the footstool of my feet.

And now, behold Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, was he in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Him have ye slain, and taken his blood upon you and your children. He was the Son of God; and his kingdom, being a spiritual kingdom, will know no end. Ye look for a king who will restore your nation; [155] but I warn you that no such sign may be given. The kingdom of God filleth the whole earth. The Holy Spirit hath been poured out, and dwelleth with all who seek its guidance. Jesus, after the flesh, we know no more; but the same spirit that was in him aboundeth unto all who will receive it. It yieldeth fruits of faith, hope, love, courage, and patience, and is peaceful, longsuffering, and kind. It is an awakening of a higher life and mind in men, be they Jew or Gentile. Behold it maketh all things new, for its faith is fruitful and multiplieth all good. God requireth not sacrifices, burnt-offerings, and ceremonial oblations, but would have a pure worship. Neither doth circumcision avail anything except it be of the heart. Ye turn your backs upon the commandment of God while holding fast to the tradition of men.

Behold the reviler of the Chosen People and our holy Law, cried a voice, interrupting. It was that of Saulus. Men of Israel! I call ye to witness the blasphemy which cometh out of his mouth. He hath spoken against the Temple, and contemned the Holy of Holies which is the dwelling-place of the God of our fathers. He hath extolled the impostor, whom our people, with righteous indignation, crucified in the company of thieves. He profaneth and setteth at naught the circumcision. He revileth all the holy ordinances which were commanded of our fathers, and would turn the Hebrew worship upside down. I adjure ye, O men of

Israel! that ye have account of his words, and he shall answer
[156] before the Sanhedrin.

There was great confusion in the assembly; and some were minded to bear Stephanos away by force, and others that he be permitted to speak. He raised his hand as a signal for silence, but the uproar continued. Finding that the tumult could not be quelled, he left the synagogue under the protection of a few apostles of the New Faith, declaring that he would speak further of the coming Dispensation on the morrow.

On the evening of the same day, Saulus received the hearty greetings of his friends at the Sheepmarket. Besides the families of Benoni and the innkeeper, many of the former friends of Saulus, members of the Sanhedrim, came to encourage, and if necessary support, their valiant leader in the warfare he had in view. There was a secret gathering of the order the same evening; and it was finally agreed that all would be at the Cyrenian synagogue at the next meeting, and that Stephanos should not be allowed to speak.

After parting with his comrades for the night, Saulus returned to the inn. The evening was sultry; and he went to the house-top to breathe the fresh air, and cool the feverish emotions which stirred him. The moon was full; and the City of David, with the mountains which encompass it, lay spread out in clear outline and dreamy repose. Other persons were scattered in different parts of the commodious resort upon the roof; but as Saulus was in a troubled mood, he sought a retired corner where he could be alone. Absorbing as had been the interest in his people, their religion, and the impending conflict with Stephanos, his thoughts
[157] of these things were speedily crowded out by the ever-present image of little Cassia. She had been enshrined in his thoughts so long that she had gained a rightful residence, and he could not dismiss her if he would. She was the unanswered question that stirred his heart, ever pressing for solution, so that it kept his

soul in a constant agitation. His ruling aspiration, learning, and leadership in the church of his fathers, nay, his whole character and life, seemed to be merged and transformed into a great passionate longing for the ever-present Ideal which was mirrored in his soul. It was the charming but uncertain centre about which everything else revolved.

The stillness of the starry heavens rebuked the madness of his wild passion, and pleaded eloquently for serenity among the disorderly elements of human attachment; but the appeal was unheeded. The pinions of his soul beat and were wounded against the bars of the cage which hemmed him in. A love so supreme was tyrannical, so that he almost wished to be freed, and that it might all vanish from his breast. He felt oppressed, fevered, and thoroughly enslaved. He leaned forward, bowed his head, and tightly pressed his throbbing brow. A misty, strange vision possessed him. Everything he beheld was being rent in twain. Some Force took hold of him, and he felt as if his own soul were severed and divided. At length he saw Cassia borne away through the air by some implacable Power, but her hands were stretched out imploringly towards him. He unconsciously uttered a deep groan, and the intensity of his agony aroused him. A quick, light step, and some one was at his side. He lifted his head, and saw Cassia. [158]

Art thou ill, Saulus? Behold, I heard thee speak loudly as if in anguish, and thou calledst my name.

O Cassia! I had fallen asleep, and dreamed of evil. Regard it not, I pray thee!

But, Saulus, thou art pale and trembling. I will bring wine to refresh thee.

Nay, I want for nothing but peace and rest, and they can come only of the Future.

I would give thee comfort, Saulus. Behold thou didst call my name! Wast thou dreaming of me?

Little Cassia! I had a vision that some fateful Power was bearing thee away, and as we were separated thou didst stretch out thy hands imploringly toward me. What meaneth the vision? Is it that we must part?

O Saulus! Knowest thou not that it was but an idle dream?

But thou only canst interpret it. Behold, O little Cassia, thy image abideth in my soul. I love thee! Wouldst thou be parted from me? Does another possess thy heart? Heaven grant that my fears have been idle concerning thee!

Cassia, with her pale face full in the moonlight, and her large eyes bedewed like morning flowers, listened as he poured out his heart. At length her lips moved.

O Saulus! I love no one else! Throughout all thy absence thou hast been dear to me! Thy image hath been enshrined in my soul! My dear Saulus but her emotion was too powerful for further words.

She bent her bright young face upon his shoulder, and the [159] feeling that her love was now free to show itself was like the breaking of a great barrier. Her voice was choked, and her heart beat wildly.

Saulus put his arm gently around her light form, and looking up, said,

Heaven bless the day when first I saw thee!

The orb of night hath looked down upon many such scenes among the children of men.

* * * * * * * * * *

There was a few moments of silence, for the overcharged souls were too full for utterance. Happiness, sweet and irresistible, unchangeable and forever, was assured. The shining firmament above their heads was now echoing a great benediction, and the dread vision of an hour before had dissolved and was forgotten. Nothing henceforth could rend such a cementing of affection. They were one in love, motive, and religion; and there was but

a single dream of the future. At length the agitation with which their souls had been surcharged was calmed, and a mystical and indescribable repose was borne in upon them. Not merely their own hearts, but the silvery sheen of the moonlight upon them, the still night air around them, yea, the whole universe, spoke of love; and there was no other language.

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Not until they were about to part did their thoughts descend to things mundane, or even to the stirring religious events of the day, or those which the morrow might bring forth.

I had delight in thy valiant defence of our holy religion in the synagogue,said Cassia.I watched thee through the lattice, and [160] rejoiced in every word thou didst utter. I am exalted to possess the love of one who is so loyal to our people. Thou art strong to bring the false teachers and all our enemies to naught.

I am doubly rewarded by thy favor in my chosen work.

Changed was the world, religion, life, and the future to both at the close of that evening upon the house-top.

[161]

CHAPTER XVII
A ROMAN PARADE

Roomy Eternity
Casts her schemes rarely,
And an æon allows
For each quality and part
Of the multitudinous
And many-chambered heart.

The spread of the New Faith, and the hold that it took upon increasing numbers of the common people of the Holy City, furnishes a wonderful illustration of the inner power of a simple, spiritual religion. Its purity and depth were outwardly manifested by the general subordination among its followers of the strongest of all human passions, selfishness. They were so filled with the spirit of brotherhood that they counted it a privilege to put their possessions into the common stock, in order to give to each one as he had need. There was no forced or legal communism, but a voluntary local and temporary dominance of the great future human Ideal. The law of the inherent blessedness of giving out whether of spiritual or material treasure was practically realized, and the harmonizing and uplifting power of a true reciprocity proven. The exercise of a helpful ministry marked a real nobility and greatness, and its activities of relief and healing
[162] make up a unique epoch in human history.

Wherever religion has dropped from simplicity and spirituality, and become scholastic, dogmatic, ceremonial, or a matter of the State, it has lost its power to mould life, and heal the weaknesses and disorders of mind and body. With almost no

organization, system, or theology, there was a dynamic quality among the primitive believers, the phenomena of which are worthy of the study of every one who would fathom the divine economy of man. A gospel, orGodspel, was manifested. The joy and gladness which came from a demonstration of the practical working of the divine spirit in humanity was the natural fruit of a release from the shackles of a dead ceremonialism. It was a spontaneous outburst of what before had been within, but latent.

The divine, unchangeable Perfection had not changed or improved in the pouring out of the Spirit, but human receptivity was newly and voluntarily opened. Religion, as a spiritual life, introduces a practical oneness with, and re-enforcement of, divinity in man, which fruits in wonderful works as a natural and orderly articulation. The bestowment of spiritual favor on the Godward side can never be less than full and perfect, else would there be variableness and uncertainty. Law, which is divine method, is as reliable in the spiritual as the material realm; and the same compliance with its orderly activity and employment will forever bring like results. Thesigns that follow them who believe will never fail, but belief in this sense signifies a spiritual understanding deeper than mere intellectual assent. A renewal of the marvellous works of the Primitive Church will come [163] whenever a like spiritual dominance over external conditions is gained. Chronology changes no law of Being. The divine economy, being eternally perfect, is not subject to the wavering moods of human vacillation. They must conform to it, and not it to them. Then, as man comes into at-one-ment with divine laws and forces, he is backed by their energy, and commands their accomplishments. The New Dispensation was new only to the awareness of man. The variation of personal standpoint makes a seeming movement of the whole divine Order.

Serenus had been long ripening for the conditions which came into outward exercise so spontaneously among the primitive be-

lievers. In the earlier part of his life, while among the Essenes and Therapeutæ, he had witnessed much of the power which is linked to spiritual devotion, and participated measurably in it. His transparent character and inner development, with the active exercise of a healing ministry, had marked him as rare in attainment while young in years. But during his connection with the school of Gamaliel, these qualities were somewhat quiescent, while a more distinctive intellectual development was taking place. But under the influence of the new movement his spiritual forces came to the front in full measure. He was everywhere active in healing the sick, strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, and sowing the seed for a spiritual harvest. His miracles of healing came from an intelligent wielding of the divine potencies, which, unrecognized and latent, dwell in the
[164] inmost of every humanimage of God.

In the early morning of the day after the meeting in the Cyrenian synagogue, there was a street parade of Roman legionaries, as was usual at short intervals, that the people of Jerusalem might have constantly before their eyes the tokens of imperial dominion. The imposing military column started from the Tower of Antonia, and after marching around a long circuit, passed through the Square of the Sheepmarket on its return. Most of the Jews, especially the better classes, resolutely kept out of sight, with every portal and window closed, as the hated Romans passed by. But to the rabble, music and pageantry were attractive. The blare of trumpets signalled their approach. In advance was a vanguard of spearmen, with gilded helmets, mailed breastplates, and shields upon the left arm, marching with a rhythm so perfect that they seemed like a huge machine, working with automatic regularity and perfection. The bronzed faces, brown, muscular limbs, and mailed armor, with their exact mechanical swing, made them seem more like men of iron than of flesh. Then came the ensigns, with banners and pennants floating in air, and in their midst, upon a tall rod, an emblematic gilded eagle with

outstretched wings. Next were bowmen and slingers in close column of ranks and files, stretching out far in the distance. Then a group of mounted officers, commanders of cohorts, and centurions with a guard, and long array of cavalry, all speaking eloquently of the heavy mailed hand of Cæsar. The huzzas of the soldiers were often answered by the hisses and sneers of the onlookers, but outbreaks were not frequent. But as they passed the inn of the Sheepmarket, Rabbi Abdiel looked down upon [135] them from the roof, and with a sudden impulse raised his arms toward heaven, and in a loud voice called down upon the moving mass the curses of Jehovah. At first the soldiers gave no attention to his maledictions except to send up a few jeers and shouts of derision; but as he continued, a centurion below gave an order to a rank of soldiers,

Enter and seize the Jewish dog! To the Tower with him!

This was done, and the location of the offending inn noted. But there was no halt of the long, glittering column, which continued its winding march until it passed over the great drawbridge, and was lost to sight as it entered the broad frowning portal of Antonia.

Upon his return, the Commandant of the Tower found a little deputation awaiting him with a petition. They were members of the congregation of the New Faith, who having heard that a tumult was probable at the Cyrenian synagogue, and that the young deacon Stephanos was in danger, asked for the protection of the Roman authorities. The request was heard, but refused, and they were flippantly dismissed.

By Bacchus! said the Commandant We are not here to take account of all your hair-splitting religious quarrels and tumults. We understand them not, and have no care for them so long as Cæsar's prerogatives are unquestioned. Fight out your own differences! Your petition doth not concern us!

At a later hour the meeting at the synagogue was to take place.

[166] Long before the time, the room was crowded to the utmost, and a dense throng gathered in the streets outside. There was an air of unwonted excitement and expectation. Wild rumors had flown thick and fast, that Stephanos would boldly attack the whole ceremonial system, and that there was a strong faction organized for resistance. It was said that if he offended they might forcibly bring him before the Sanhedrin, which would be in special session.

The meeting opened. Stephanos arose calmly, and, after reading a few passages from the prophets, began his address,

Brethren and friends! Again with joy I proclaim unto you the first fruits of the New Dispensation of the Spirit of Truth. The Word of the Lord is increased; and mighty works, signs, and ministries are being wrought in our midst. From out of the dead works of your ordinances and traditions there has sprung a New Faith, even that proclaimed by the Nazarene, who rebuked your hypocrisy, and laid the foundation of an unseen and universal spiritual kingdom. Lo! as he hath prophesied, the Spirit is poured out, and many not of the Levitical order are inspired to teach and preach.

As Stephanos continued, he waxed eloquent, and spake with great vigor. It seemed not to be the young man himself who was speaking, but some mighty power which was manifested through him. A Spirit was within which was so intense that it shone through his face, and his words were so powerful that his hearers were spellbound.

But the spell was broken by a signal which was at once followed by a fierce rush upon the platform. The bustling form of
[167] Saulus, with fiery face, flashing eyes, and clinched fists, was in the midst; and above the noise of the uproar his loud voice echoed through the synagogue,

Seize the traitor! Down with the blasphemer! Drag him out! To the Sanhedrin! To the Sanhedrin!

The members of the Society of the Libertines were in the forefront;

and besides, there had gathered a rabble from the streets who were eager to join the mob. A little band of the disciples of the New Faith clustered about Stephanos with devoted and loving faithfulness, but acted only as a defensive shield, and were soon borne down by the force and ferocity of greatly superior numbers. Amid wild shouts and confusion the little band was scattered, and Stephanos seized and taken out of the synagogue.

Ha! Where is the great kingdom? Hath it been set up? Where is its throne? said Saulus. We shall make short work of thee and all thy kind! Come on, witnesses! To the Sanhedrin! To the Sanhedrin!

Stephanos was dragged up the steep road to the Hall of Squares, where the august court was in session. On the way he made no resistance, and amid jeers, savage yells, and curses, was led along. With loud commands, Saulus headed the throng.

The seventy-one members of the Sanhedrin were seated at the farther end of the spacious hall, in tiers of seats rising from the centre, and sweeping around in an imposing semicircle. Annas was High Priest and presiding officer on this occasion. They had been apprised of the fact that Stephanos would be brought before them, and were ready to receive him. He was led in by Saulus and the witnesses; as many of the throng following as could find room in the public part of the hall. Everything was [168] ready, and pointed to a foregone conclusion. The charges were made; and the witnesses stood up, one by one, to confront and make testimony against their victim.

I heard him speak against the Holy Place, and blaspheme the Law.

I heard him declare that the doctrine of the Nazarene would destroy the Temple service, and do away with the Law of Moses.

I heard him say that he despised our sacred traditions and ordinances.

I heard him call our chief priests and Rabbis hypocrites, and speak of a new kingdom not of the Chosen People.

I heard him proclaim the Messiahship of the Galilean pretender, and blaspheme Jehovah.

I heard him speak against the Circumcision, and call the Nazarene the Son of God.

Then the High Priest, clothed in the imposing robes of his office, arose, and waving his hand, asked Stephanos to plead by answering the formal and customary question, Are these things so?

Stephanos arose to make answer. Young, handsome, and tall, with dignified manner, he wore an unwonted grandeur in looks, words, and action. He began an eloquent oration. As he proceeded, he seemed transfigured by an inner consciousness which fairly illumined his countenance. He looked his accusers in the face, and they quailed before him. Even the fevered and
[169] fierce glance of Saulus was cast down when the penetrating look of the saint was turned upon him. A marvellous inner light shone out through his face, which entirely transformed its expression. It was heavenly, rather than defiant, but to the onlookers it was awful. While it radiated love and spiritual exaltation, to them it was threatening and terrible. Overshadowed by the Shekinah, there was an intangible halo about him, in which they saw mirrored their own guilt and condemnation. As he continued, a raging passion boiled in their hearts, even though for a time they were spellbound. His amazing courage and stinging truthfulness were paralyzing, and they could no longer look upon that terrible face.

At length Stephanos stopped short in his unanswerable argument, and there was a moment of silence. Then he gathered up the full measure of his righteous wrath, and hurled it in their indignant but shrinking faces. He denounced them as betrayers and murderers, and lashed them with invective, terrible but true. Then the awful spell was broken, and their pent-up hatred burst all bonds. The wonted sedate and dignified Sanhedrin exploded with anger. Unable longer to maintain any semblance of judicial procedure, they waxed hot, gnashed their teeth, clinched their

fists, and hissed and howled like wild beasts.

Traitor! Blasphemer! Slanderer! Reprobate! Heretic! were some of the names that were hurled at Stephanos from all directions. He was not abashed, but the burst of holy indignation which had gone forth from him was ended. It was aimed at their actions and customs rather than themselves. Though severe, it was not vindictive or intended for insult, but awakening. But [170] reason was unavailing. Righteousness is a standing menace and rebuke to guilt. Nothing can be more hateful.

Stephanos lifted his eyes from the malignant faces, rendered demoniacal by surging passion, and looked up as if in a trance. The Sanhedrin, with all its bitterness, faded from his sight, and became to him as though it were not. An ecstasy was upon him, and he saw a beatific vision. While the human wild beasts around him growled and thirsted for his blood, his eyes were fastened upon a realm of eternal peace, harmony, and glory. His sublime and all-powerful faith ushered him into the kingdom of the Real, while the temporary and incidental shrank to their relative nothingness.

The Sanhedrin regarded itself as eminent, respectable, and humane, but its members were utterly unable to cognize the truth that was clear and open to Stephanos. To them their anger was a righteous anger, which exercised itself in the service of Jehovah. The psychological wave of rage swept every member of the Jewish High Court off his feet, and bore him on. But were they sinners above other men? History before and since teems with like transactions, among all nations, and in the name of all religions.

Stephanos had spoken against things which were sacred and infallible. It was not alone his burning eloquence, but its terrible truth, that cut them to the heart and made their blood boil. But now his animate body was yet in their midst, but he was no longer there. He was listening to a heavenly harmony, and not to a deafening clamor. Expecting him to continue, they had

[171] stopped their ears to shut out his polluting blasphemy. Then, with one impulse, they arose in a mass, and rushed upon him. Their decision was spontaneous, and without any legal formality or deliberation. They dragged him away to be stoned outside the city gate. The spirit of persecution transformed the dignified Sanhedrin into a revengeful mob.

Saulus prompted the witnesses when they gave testimony, and when the explosion occurred was among the foremost. In the rush that was made from the hall to the street his diminutive form was at the front, and with glowing face and violent gestures he urged on their impetuous movement. As they passed along the streets toward the Damascus Gate, they were joined by great masses of excited men, women, and children. Stephanos made no resistance. Shouts and imprecations filled the air. The members of the New Faith, being few in number and non-resistant in their philosophy of living, made no opposition. No herald preceded him to proclaim his name and crime as was usual in regular cases of legal condemnation. No bitter draft containing frankincense to stupefy the senses, and take away the edge of pain and terror, was administered, and none was needed. Stephanos could not suffer; for he was already in the midst of spiritual liberty, joy, and peace. The seething mob hurried his animate form along, and passed out to the north of the city to a piece of open ground on the border of the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Stephanos calmly kneeled down without being bound or fastened, still looking up and beholding a vision of glory. His upper
[172] garments were stripped off; and then, for the first time, a regular proceeding was observed, in that the witnesses were to cast the first stones. At length all was ready, and for a moment there was a silence which was oppressive. Stretching out his hands toward his murderers, he besought from above their forgiveness, and gave them his benediction. The stillness continued, the witnesses were spellbound, and the throng awed and immovable. The supreme grandeur and spiritual beauty that shone through his

face dazzled and benumbed them, and almost deterred them from their purpose. There was a visible shrinking, and each waited for the other to make the first move. But Saulus sprang forth and broke the spell. With frantic manner and loud voice, he cried,

To your work, O witnesses! Finish the Blasphemer! Heresy must be crushed! Hand me your garments that nothing may encumber, and cursed be he who holds back.

The tragedy was soon ended.

The body sank to earth, its resting-place;
Not so the man. He lives to truth and right.
He flung behind all strife, and in the race
Mounts on and up, though lost to mortal sight.

The crowd soon melted away; and many seemed fearful, oppressed, and ashamed of their part in the transaction. Even those members of the Sanhedrin who had accompanied the throng were troubled in spirit, and made haste to get away. But Saulus was undaunted, and returned exultant and proud. He made his way back to the Sheepmarket; but the news had preceded him, and as [173] he entered the inn he received the congratulations of all except Rebecca.

In the evening of the same day the little group met in the court as was wont. Rabbi Abdiel was of the number, having been released from the Tower.

Thy days work hath been well done, said the venerable Jew. We would that such things need not be, but heresy must be destroyed. Mercy to our people and their precious traditions demands that false doctrine be uprooted, and that without remedy. Such is the will of the Lord.

I am persuaded that this pestilent delusion must be put down at once, replied Saulus, or peradventure it will spread beyond all bounds. I shall take up the work with power, and the High Priest and the whole Sanhedrin will give me all authority. I glory

in the effectual door that is open unto me whereby I may do such service.

These are tumultuous days, said Benoni. I had not believed that my eyes would behold such things in the Holy City, but anon they wax worse and worse. But it is expedient that thou continue as thou hast begun.

Behold, O son of Benoni! thou art chosen from among our people to lead in this great service, said Almon.

It behooveth me to bring this conspiracy to naught, and I shall lose no time in its discomfiture.

Rebecca drew her brother aside, and putting her arm about him, softly said,

O my Saulus! I am persuaded that the young son of Israel [174] who saved me from the throng on the day of Pentecost would condemn this day's proceeding! Remember he called himself the friend of Saulus.

Did he belong to the sect of the Nazarene, or speak well of it?

Behold I wot not how that may be, but he was so kind and noble that I feel he would have none of persecution! O Saulus! must you continue this business?

Thou deceivest thyself, said Saulus, with an impatient gesture. The man is no friend of mine, and if he be a follower of the Nazarene he will suffer with the rest.

O Saulus! I pray that he may be spared. Behold the favor which he showed me!

I say unto thee I know him not; and if he be a heretic, woe be to him!

I shall try to find him out and warn him!

It would be well for thee, Rebecca, to leave the Holy City, and seek thy home in Tarsus!

Saulus petulantly turned away, and passed out of the court-yard.

Cassia was waiting in the passage, and sped to give him congratulation.

O Saulus! thou art noble and brave, she exclaimed, embracing him. I glory in thy courage and service. Behold I love thee even more than I was wont!

Saulus returned the warm greeting.

Cassia, love, I have great joy in thy favor. I live for thee! Then grasping her small hand he gave it a warm kiss, and hastened to his chamber.

In the solitude of his room and stillness of the night, he sat down to review the events of the day. His exhilaration, and [115] even the indorsement and congratulation of his friends, gradually seemed to vanish, and he was almost forced to look within and become more familiar with himself. He was surprised at the clearness and depth of the picture of the scene of the day which seemed to be burnt into his very soul. The tragedy beyond the city wall stood out before him in every detail. The throng, the shouts, his own share, the murderous act of the witnesses, the kneeling victim, his entreaty of pardon for his slayers, all riveted his attention as keenly as when they were taking place. It was as though his mind had been a tablet of stone, with the whole scene deeply chiselled in characters which could never be erased or hidden.

The duty of the day is done, and well done, he said to himself; and now I will have rest. I bid farewell to this event, that I may be well prepared to continue the warfare to-morrow.

But it would not depart.

Nay, begone! I would not live it over more to-night.

But it became more obtrusive than ever.

Thinking to divert his mind, he took a roll containing a copy of the Mishna, with its six hundred and thirteen precepts, and began to read them slowly in order. But even upon the roll, in the midst of the clearly inscribed lines which recited the Jewish

code, there was the scene, the tragedy! He impatiently threw down the roll, and in the stillness seemed to hear a voice within.

Thou art guilty! Thy peace hath forsaken thee! Thou art [176] condemned! condemned! condemned!

He was startled, for the voice was so distinct that it seemed to come to the outer hearing. He stopped his ears to find if it were still audible.

Condemned! condemned! condemned! still echoed as before.

He arose and walked to and fro, and made audible answer.

Cease thy railing! I am the defender of my people! I will fight blasphemy and heresy, and nothing shall hinder! The Chosen People will honor me! Away, and be thou choked, thou false and lying spirit! I crush thee, and will increase my deeds manifold!

He then extinguished his lamp, and retired to his couch for the night. But his sleep was broken, and he could not rest. He heard angry voices, groans, and noises, and saw horrible shapes. But at length, in the midst of a troubled sleep, he was suddenly awakened. Something seemed to have shaken him. With a shiver through every nerve, he sat upright, and saw a bright object in the blackness before him. His gaze was fastened, and he could not turn it aside.

Away! Away! Trouble me not!

But the brightness remained, and soon began to transform itself. Feature after feature came into distinct outline. It was a shining face. Calm, luminous, and grand, it gazed steadily upon him. His blood froze in his veins as he recognized the glorified face of STEPHANOS.

CHAPTER XVIII
AMABEL S REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE

Amabel returned to her father's palace in a state of great disquietude. The unexpected meeting with Serenus, but vastly more its unwonted circumstances, gave her a great shock. What could it mean? Serenus walking the streets of the Holy City in the company of a young woman, a stranger, in a manner which betokened great familiarity! Such an event, witnessed by her own eyes, shook and threatened to disenthrone her Ideal, and to dissolve everything which she had counted solid and sacred.

Since Amabel's last interview with Serenus, she had striven loyally to banish his image from her mind, but with variable success. At times she almost seemed to feel his presence, and in other moods persuaded herself that she was quite resigned to the inevitable and final separation which had been wisely accepted by both.

Amabel was an idolized favorite in the Holy City. Her grace and beauty, with the eminent position of the Rabban, gave her the highest social distinction. Who so happy as Amabel? The centre of an admiring circle, the petted daughter of tender parents, surrounded by luxury, active in kindly deeds, and loyal to her religion, what more could be desired? But a heaviness was in her heart, and the world about her was prosaic and mechanical. Her social and religious duties were faithfully performed, and she enjoyed the favor and love of all; but, alas, a worm was gnawing at the root of a comely flower. There was a subtle unrest and secret blight that made life barren and joyless. She became

introspective, and often tried to weigh her motives, obstacles, and aspirations, as in a pair of balances.

The Is and the Might Be are always coming up for comparison and contrast in the human foreground. On one side, Amabel had home, friends, social position, and the accepted religion of her own people, and on the other, Serenus, his love, and a New Faith which seemed strange to her. Although Serenus had assured her of his devoted and undying affection, he had not asked or expected that she would renounce all for him. He had taken it for granted that she would not and could not. He had gracefully accepted the stern logic of the situation, and cheerfully made the great sacrifice. On her part, she had even withheld the confession of her own love, for the sole purpose of making his burden lighter, and his renunciation possible. As they must separate, it would be easier so.

Since the evening of the earnest avowal of love by Serenus, and the mutual acquiescence in the imperative separation, life had drifted along; but the whole world was changed. Her cheeks had lost their color, and there were many evidences of wearing preoccupation. But she made a heroic effort to fall into the current of what was expected of her, and firmly resolved to cease [179] all iridescent dreaming, and be resigned.

After the chance meeting, Amabel arrived at home almost breathless, and avoiding the family, hastened to her favorite nook upon the house-top. Her heart was fluttering, her senses swimming, and she must have a little time. It was all important that she rally her forces, and lift herself above the sudden rush of waves which threatened to ingulf her. She began to reason with herself, and to cast about for some solid ground upon which she might stand. She could not interpret her own soul. There were two voices within, and each claimed her. Admitting her love for Serenus, had not all forever been settled between them?

But was there another?

What have I to do with another? Have we not parted forever!

Ought not I to rejoice even in his happiness with another? Oh, my heart! I cannot understand thee! Thou seemest not to reason, but to feel!

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I could bear parting, did I but know that I was thy sole possession! Nay, were I never more to behold thy face, I could rest content as thine! thine in the unseen! thine forever! But another! Be still, heart! I will not doubt him! I am divided in myself! I doubt him, and cannot doubt him! Now, I am decided! I thrust out that image of another! I see only thee! Often when all was still, I have heard the tones of thy sweet voice! The sunrise and the sunset have been laden with the brightness of thy lofty soul! In my dreams I wander with thee, not upon the hard and dusty paths of earth, but in the ambient air, and beyond the clouds! I need not see thee with mortal eyes in order to mount by thy side, and command the range of created things! [150]

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Away! That cruel vision again forces itself upon me! Not that I wish her ill! But there can be but one! Down, hateful thoughts! I will not doubt him! But is it anything, now that we are separated? Everything! We are together, though apart! Even beyond the grave will we commune with each other! Ah! then it were sweet, even to die!

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The ebb and flow of my heart is unto thee! Crowds that flatter and would serve me pass by, but only thou art near me! O Future! art thou ours together? Back! that dark vision haunts me again! I would not, I will not behold it!

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The thick curtains of night had been drawn, and Amabel was missing. The household of Gamaliel began to be apprehensive; but bethinking themselves of her favorite resort, ascended to look

for her, believing she might have fallen asleep. Her prostrate form was found in a state of feverish unconsciousness. Kind hands bore her tenderly below, and loving hearts exercised themselves in every form of devoted ministration. Her body was motionless, except that her lips were moved in an incoherent muttering. The skill of the physicians was exerted to the utmost to arouse her, but hour after hour passed without any visible change. Her illness
[181] was found to be a violent fever in the head, and it was whispered that peradventure it was beyond the reach of the healing art. But however it might end, it would be long and desperate.

By the next morning Amabel's condition was somewhat changed. She moved restlessly upon her couch, and had recurring intervals of consciousness, but the burning fever was continuous. She begged for water and fresh air, both of which were denied her except in very sparing quantities, for fear of harm. Strong medicaments, of a quality which produced disgust and loathing, were faithfully administered, but no healing effect was manifest.

How futile and superficial the devices of the healing art, in any and all ages, in its attempts to deal with maladies of the soul! And who will declare that the deep and obscure fountain of all ailments is not located in the unseen and immaterial part! Verily the springs of man's nature are hidden, while seen and secondary manifestation is upon the surface, being resultant.

Weary days and nights dragged their slow course along. At length the violence of the fever abated, but the pale face and wasted form spoke eloquently of the vanity of human effort in her behalf. Her glassy eyes and sunken cheeks proclaimed an impending collapse of the mortal tenement. The pure white soul was nearing the portal of the earthly tabernacle, apparently soon to step out.

The physicians solemnly announced that the end was not far away, and that it could not be averted. As a weary toiler at
[182] the close of day lays down the instrument he has wielded, so

the daughter of the Rabban must put aside that seen counterpart which no longer could serve her.

Gamaliel was bowed with grief. When not at the bedside of his daughter, he seemed dazed, and was barely able to bear the mechanical round of his daily duties. Was the sweet flower of his family to be uprooted? the light of his household to go out?

Embowered awhile so tenderly in hearts of love,
Like some pure gem, enclosed so safe in setting rare,
The tenement outgrown, and now the soul would move,
And mount to larger life within a realm more fair.

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These were days of sombre stillness in the palace of Gamaliel. The birth-pains of a soul, as it passes into the higher life, are more outside than within. Everything around is smitten and takes up a plaint, even when the soul that goes is quickened, and its own path smoothed and lighted.

Intervals of calmness and delirium alternated in their possession of Amabel. Her frame became so thin and transparent that the flashes of the pulsating self seemed to shine through, and reveal its vital dominance. But her incoherent utterances during periods of aberration, though very weak, gradually became more distinct.

Serenus! Serenus was plainly upon her lips. It was repeated again and again. This was made known to Gamaliel. He was a wise father and a prudent interpreter. He thought deeply upon the matter; and after a brief but sharp conflict in his own mind between parental love and official dignity, the former prevailed, [183] and he sat down and wrote a hasty letter.

[RABBAN GAMALIEL TO VICTOR SERENUS]

PALACE OF GAMALIEL , Tammuz XXV.

O Serenus! my friend and former helper! Peace be unto thee! Knowing well thy noble spirit and wise prudence, I pray for thy kind favor in my affliction. Touching a request that I make unto thee, my heart is rent with sorrow, in that my dear Amabel is soon to depart from our midst. She hath a deadly disorder, so that her days with us are nearly ended. And now I have to inform thee that, in her moments of sleep or wandering, she speaketh of thee and calleth thy name. Peradventure thy presence might soothe her, and bring peace to her troubled soul. While we mourn her as already dead, we pray that her closing hours may be serene. I am persuaded that past events have not clouded thy friendly spirit, and therefore beseech thy presence with us. The God of Israel bless thee! In sore affliction,

GAMALIEL .

The breast of Serenus was rent with conflicting emotions as he laid down the letter. Mingled with his sorrow at the sad tidings about Amabel, there was even a note of gladness. She loves me! was the thought that echoed and re-echoed through his heart. If her seen form is to vanish, she is not the visible, but the invisible, and love is eternal. The grave can rear no wall nor make no gulf between us. Behold we dwell here for a season in tents, and then quietly fold them and move forward. Poor Amabel! She loveth me, but hid her love that she might not increase my burden.

[184] But the sad tidings of the letter hath made me unmindful of my faith! Why should I consent to the declaration that Amabel must pass from sight? What have I to do with the faithlessness of the world? nay, even of the ceremonial religionist? What do the physicians, who are persuaded that her life must go out, understand of the vital powers of the spirit? Their nauseous

medicaments touch but the utmost surface of life's visible expression. They wot not of its hidden springs, and how to take hold upon them! Even the eyes of Gamaliel, master in Israel though he be, are not opened to the Father's helpfulness! Did not the prophet of Nazareth declare, "These signs shall follow them that believe"? Behold neither the world nor the church doth believe! Have I not witnessed wonderful works among the Essenes and Therapeutæ? nay, are they not now common in the household of the New Faith? Is not the life of God in all things? and hath not every one that measure of it which he will open his soul to receive? Behold the Father withholdeth not, for all things are freely given to his children. His abounding spirit of wholeness is waiting to fill every place which is made meet!

Such were some of the thoughts that flashed through the mind of Serenus. While at first taken unawares, and cast down by the tidings of Amabel's condition, he soon felt a mighty influx of faith and strength that filled him with spiritual energy. Nothing was impossible!

Can Amabel be inspired with such a faith? And behold her friends live not in the spirit, but in doctrines and traditions! The eyes of them of the outer kingdom are holden! Who can persuade them to come to themselves? [185]

O Amabel! innocent but weak! untaught, and a stranger to truth! is there time to bring inspiration into thy life so that thy belief of a speedy departure may be uprooted? As thou thinkest, so will it come to pass.

Serenus lost no time in making his way to the palace, and was softly ushered into Amabel's presence. His face betokened peace, yea, even commanding power. Knew he not that infinite forces were back of him? Yea, they were familiar, and by orderly method he would wield them!

Undaunted by the paleness and wasted proportions of the fair form, so changed since he last beheld it, his face almost shone at the thought of the privilege of spiritual ministration. Shrunken,

weak, and motionless, to the outer eyes the life of Amabel, like a fitful flame, was just ready to expire. Serenus seated himself near by. Perchance she was dreaming, for soon there was a movement of the lips.

Serenus! Serenus! was uttered in a distinct whisper, but she had not yet opened her eyes. He heeded not the sound of his name, but sat with bowed head in perfect silence.

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A full half-hour passed, during which not a word was spoken. The place seemed hallowed with an invisible Presence. The gloom fled away before a brightness which might almost be felt. The life of Amabel is a part of the One Life, and knoweth neither limitation nor death! Depart thou belief of mortality! Child of God! thou art unseen spirit! It is thine to rule the outer form, [186] therefore, assert thy right, and it shall be subject to thy behest! Thou art divine in thy being, and all good is thy free heritage.

Silence still prevailed.

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At length Amabel opened her eyes, and beheld the face of Serenus.

O Serenus! art thou here? I was dreaming of thy presence. I have prayed to see thee once more before my departure.

These words were spoken in a low, sweet voice; the first above a whisper for three days. She continued,

My hours are numbered! I now can tell thee of my love. While I had life before me it was expedient that I should refrain. Blessed be these eyes which once more behold thee! Abiding peace be thine!

Serenus lightly took her thin and almost transparent hand, and bending his head, touched it softly to his lips.

Amabel! there is an abundance of life, and to spare. Behold the very breath of God is within you! His strength is freely and lovingly thine own.

How sayest thou so, Serenus? Behold it hath been told me that I must die. The physicians have so declared, and my parents mourn me as though already departed. Thinkest thou that there is life beyond the grave, and is it that of which thou speakest? And does love continue there?

O Amabel! there is no grave, save for worn-out dust. Thy fair form is yet youthful, and thou mayst command it as thou wilt, and enjoy its sweet ministry. [187]

What is that thou sayest? Behold many of fewer years than mine are gathered unto their fathers!

Yea, thebelief in the power of the grave hath passed upon the children of men. But they know not the power of God, and how it is given to his children to wield it if they will. As we open our souls, and confidently take hold of the Present Help, strength is ours. Be filled with the spirit of the Father, for he is thy dwelling-place.

O glorious tidings! I feel thrilled in soul and body!

Thou hast new life already! Hail with joy the Universal Good, and feel and affirm its presence now!

A tiny flame had been lighted in the darkness which surrounds the tomb. May it increase! As Serenus took his leave, Amabel showed unwonted calmness and brightness.

The day following witnessed a marvellous gain. The change was so great as to cause rejoicing and wonder in the palace. Amabel had remained free from unconscious intervals, and though yet weak, was calm and cheerful. Serenus came, and was warmly greeted.

O Serenus! I am filled with new hope and joy that I cannot understand. A voice within me seems to speak words of life and strength. I have unwonted peace, yea, even joy! Whence cometh it?

Dear Amabel! the belief in the power of death hath been vanquished. Life is thine, and an overcoming faith hath quickened and filled thee.

Cometh it from the God of Israel, Serenus? Behold, I saw
[188] thee bowed in silence yesterday, though I heard no words. Didst thou call upon him, and he send down an answer?

Thou speakest of the God of Israel; but behold God is the God of all peoples, and the whole earth. I made no request that he should become more willing, for nothing is lacking on his part. But I realized for thee, that he, being perfect Goodness, hath already answered every desire for help. All change and conformity must be within ourselves. They who are unbelieving, ignorantly pray for that which is around them as free as the air of heaven. The Father's table is loaded for his children, while they turn their backs upon it, and beseech him for bread.

But, O Serenus! while I feel new life, I cannot understand how it can come unless it be sent.

God is Spirit, and his tabernacle is not far away, but within his children. He is their Life, Love, and Strength, and is in them, and they in him. When thou dost understand the laws of thy being, behold these things are multiplied, and thy soul and body have nourishment.

What a mystery that I had new strength yesterday, before thou madst known these things to me!

Behold the truth and faith which inspire may be received by silent ministry from another. The Spirit speaketh through one to another without words.

I marvel at what thou sayest!

When one feeleth the image of God within him, its still small voice of love and at-one-ment may go out to his brother, and be
[189] heard by the inner ear, and anon its fruits appear outwardly.

I would know this mighty truth more perfectly!

Thou hast always been Godlike in thine inner being, but hast not known thy true self. Thine eyes have been turned toward outward things, while the fountain of life is within. All power is given unto thee in the measure that thou dost claim and use it.

Behold thou sayest that it is not I, but something else that is within?

Thy question indeed toucheth a great mystery. Verily I interpret to thee, that the inner voice, Son or Spirit, it is thy true self, while it is thine outer thoughts which seemeth to be, and claimeth thee.

A mystery indeed! behold, how can I understand it?

As we seek the truth and strive to feel it, it unveileth itself. Man judgeth by appearances. Counting things that are seen as the Real, we thereby deceive ourselves, and our thoughts lead us astray. Behold our weaknesses and sicknesses are the outworkings of our darkened and troubled minds. If we dwell in the restless billows of the outer and deceitful self, they submerge us. Righteousness is right thinking, of which outward wholeness, as well as good works, is the natural harvest.

Light shone in upon the soul of Amabel.

Before Serenus departed, there was a long interval of silent communion with the Universal Spirit. The two pure souls unbarred the portals of their higher natures, and the divine sunshine illumined every apartment. Each was consciously enfolded by the Presence. There was no trance or other unwonted manifestation, but simple realization of what is. The children of men felt the loving embrace of God. [190]

Serenus continued his daily visits.

A week passed, and there was great joy in the household over Amabel s recovery. Her strength rapidly returned, and all feebleness disappeared. Her cheeks regained their wonted freshness; and the outshining of her soul, through the large, speaking eyes, told of inner peace and exuberant life. Her recovery astounded the physicians, and her father was both puzzled and delighted. He was persuaded that his own prayers to Jehovah must have had efficacy, but his faith in the physicians as divinely appointed means was sorely shaken. But he was wise enough to perceive

that his daughter loved Serenus, and that peradventure his presence was so pleasing to her that it had been helpful, but beyond that he saw nothing. It was impossible for him to think other than highly of the character of Serenus; but now, beholding the devoted affection of Amabel, he bewailed his heresy sorely. How could he, the eminent Rabban, with the eyes of all Judea upon him, ever sanction his deposed assistant? and as for making him his son, his soul was distressed at the thought. If Serenus was dear to him in person, his doctrines and associates were most hateful. He groaned in spirit, for Amabel was the idol of his heart.

On the tenth day after his first visit, Serenus found Amabel in her favorite nook upon the roof. It was a balmy afternoon. The delicious atmosphere, not too warm, was barely stirred by a gentle breeze, and the Holy City never was more glorious and serene. The great Temple seemed almost transparent in its dazzling whiteness, and the clear air gave an unwonted nearness to the more distant mountains. Amabel was the ideal of health, and there was an exquisite grace and purity in her looks not equalled before her illness. Could those rosy cheeks be the same that were so deathly pale and sunken a few short days ago? Verily a new spirit maketh all things new[6]!

[191]

Amabel had been a willing learner, and her progress was rapid. The inspiration of the higher life and the New Faith fully possessed her. The world was a different world. Hand in hand with Serenus she had ascended the Mount of Transfiguration and gained a true perspective. Things that before were solid and real had become transparent, so that she could look through them, and behold the spiritual verities of which they were the cruder shadows. Her experience was not strange or abnormal, but she felt the natural unfoldment of an additional sense. It

[6] It may seem that healing as depicted in this case was very sudden; but the recorded works of Peter, John, and many others, which took place during this era of great spiritual uplift and exuberant faith, should not be overlooked.

was orderly inner illumination. God in present manifestation was everywhere, in terms of love, purity, beauty, and goodness. Former discordant thoughts had fled away, and the development of her own powers amazed her.

Up to this time no word since her improvement had passed between Serenus and herself touching their personal affection. But she found all anxiety, the very intensity of which had caused her illness, entirely gone. Thrice happy Amabel! Her love had not lessened, but it was now refined and spiritualized. She had not become peculiar or preoccupied, for there was nothing [179] sombre in the New Faith. Her light-hearted joyousness produced a bright ripple upon the whole surface of the life of the palace.

The afternoon was wearing away, and Serenus must soon take his leave. It was all too short for the lovers.

O Amabel! I rejoice with thee in thy freedom and happiness. Behold thou art like a bird released from a cage. All things smile upon thee, and the very air whispers its benediction.

It is thou who hast guided my feet in the delightful path that I knew not of! Oh, the joyousness of living!

I have but showed thee the way to find thyself. To interpret our own divinity is to discover our real birth-right.

Blessed be the day which opened to me the spirit of the New Faith. Behold the religion of the Temple, with its smoking sacrifices and priestly ordinances, now seemeth like a hollow form. Its life is withered. I pray thee, why were the ceremonial observances handed down to us?

In the days of the ignorance and childhood of the Chosen People, they could not interpret the mind of Jehovah save through signs and symbols. Their understanding was not open to the life of the Spirit, so they must needs receive it veiled and softened by types. With a childlike trust they could get glimpses of God and his teaching through the ordained forms. The full light of Truth would have blinded their eyes, and been counted as foolishness. But now, learning of the head and a puffed-up knowledge hath

[193] hidden the simple faith of the patriarchs and prophets, and the symbols have become all in all, and therefore are vain and empty. A proud scholastic philosophy hath made the hearts of the people cold and barren.

I live now and henceforth in the New Faith, said Amabel earnestly. Pray, is the Nazarene of whom thou hast spoken its founder?

Nay, all truth is eternal! He was not its founder, but its expresser and embodiment. Only as the spirit is manifested through the flesh doth it come to the understanding of those whose concern is only with things that are seen. The Son, or likeness of God, dwelleth in all men, but he is almost unknown and unmanifest. Jesus, knowing his internal oneness with the Father, embodied the Christ-mind or life in its fulness, and performed the outward works after its kind. But, O Amabel! hast thou well considered that thou dost separate thyself from the faith of thy father and all thy house?

Yea, I am fully persuaded concerning the same. I will sacrifice all things that may hinder my devotion to the New Faith, and my efforts for its spread. I will be a witness for its truth, and will show forth its power.

Serenus drew nearer, and taking her hand in his, gave a gentle glance into the fair face at his side.

O Amabel! Behold the wall which separated us hath crumbled. We knew not how it were possible, but it hath come to pass. Once more I tell thee that thou art dearer to me than my life. Dost thy heart respond? and wilt thou be mine?

O Serenus! I am persuaded of thy pure love, and am thine
[194] own. Life with thee will be an abounding spring of gladness. I will share thy lot, even though persecution surround me. Behold my spirit knoweth no more a shadow.

The ever-abiding Father's love encloseth and sanctifieth the human affection of our hearts. Amabel! I will be faithful to thee even unto death!

And I to thee! In the love of God and thy love I forsake all else!

Two hearts, when truly one, no power can sever!
Pure souls in deep affection dwell forever:
The flame of love, œn evermore will brighten,
And every sacrificial burden lighten!

[195]

CHAPTER XIX
SURROUNDED BY PRISON WALLS

Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies among his worshippers.

On the second evening after the stoning of Stephanos, the members of the Inner Circle of the Urim gathered in their room near the inn of the Sheepmarket. As they passed one by one through the long passage into the anteroom, and thence, as approved by the doorkeeper, through the narrow portal into their secret rendezvous, an unwonted interest was manifest in every face and feature. It was known that Saulus had been in consultation with Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, his kindred, and that plans for stirring events had been made, the particulars of which were to be made known to them. The venerable Rabbi Abdiel was present, as the special and honored guest of Saulus. It was an unwonted occasion when any from without were admitted to a gathering of the Inner Circle; but the desire of Saulus was sufficient, and besides, the Rabbi was already known to many, not only as faithful, but as intensely zealous for their contention.

[196] When all were gathered, and the preliminary ritual had been performed, two members escorted Saulus to the seat of the grand Dictator, and the Rabbi, as his guest of honor, was seated upon his right. At a given signal all arose, and with their peculiar mystic symbolism took anew the oath of secrecy, in which the Rabbi joined. All then were seated, and Saulus arose to give his report.

Comrades of the Inner Circle! Warders of the mysteries of Israel! Chosen of the Chosen People! A serpent hath crawled into our midst, and made his nest in the Holy City. We are to crush his head. Behold this day I have counselled with the chief priests and elders, and have received authority to bind all blasphemers, put them in prison, and scourge or stone them, as seemeth expedient unto me. The Roman Procurator hath given the Sanhedrin full power to deal with all matters pertaining to our religion, and will in no wise hinder the punishment that may be meted out to the followers of the Nazarene. We therefore bind ourselves to make havoc of all who are of the Way, and to uproot this vile heresy, and the blasphemy of the Temple and the Circumcision. Rise, comrades! defenders of our holy ordinances! and swear by the sword of the Lord and of Gideon that we will scatter our enemies and destroy them.

All arose, and forming in line, marched slowly around the large circle, each carrying a flagon containing a remnant of wine, the larger part having before been drank at a given signal. Holding it aloft with the right hand, and moving with a slow rhythm, they all joined in a weird chant. [197]

The Urim will conquer!
With valor well known,
The apostate will punish
With scourge, and by stone.

Saulus our captain
Shall lead in the fray,
We ll follow his standard
By night and by day!

Ho! comrades, we swear
To crush every foe,
Not one will we spare,
To Gehenna they go!

Finally coming to a halt, and swinging their arms above their heads, they repeated their oath with a shout, and again took their seats.

Saulus arose to speak further; but as he was about to open his lips, he stared into vacancy above and before him, and was speechless. His gaze was transfixed, his jaws parted, his cheeks blanched, and he forgot his surroundings.

Away! There it is again! ...

Gasping for breath, he sank into his seat, overcome by a spasm of fear. A cold perspiration covered him, and he trembled in every limb.

Our leader has fainted.

There was a hurrying to relieve him, and to apply restoratives. But soon he recovered, and again stood up.

It was nothing, comrades! Of late I have had disquieting visions. Some haunting demon would drive me from my chosen duty; but I hurl defiance at him, and at all the demons and
[198] powers of darkness! Behold they but drive me to more jealous and powerful action. I glory in persecution; for slaughter of the enemies of the God of Israel is service to the Chosen People.

As he continued, his face grew dark, his jaws and fists were clinched, and his gestures violent. He seemed to be fighting some unseen enemy which was present and before him.

Long live our worthy Dictator!

Woe to the enemies of the Temple!

The fate of Stephanos awaiteth them!

We will follow Saulus to the death!

Such were some of the shouts that rent the air.

At length comparative quiet was restored, and plans were formed for an attack upon the disciples of the New Faith on the morrow. It was known that they assembled in the Upper Chamber every morning at the third hour. It would be easy to gather a rabble to do their bidding if they needed aid. They were just about to separate, when a sudden tremor passed over

the frame of Rabbi Abdiel. His features grew rigid, his muscles tense, and he began muttering incoherent words.

"He hath a trance, as he is sometimes wont," exclaimed Saulus. "Peradventure a lying spirit possesseth his lips, for his prophecy is always evil concerning us."

All had gathered about the Rabbi, who now began to speak more clearly, and in a loud voice.

"Members of the Urim! Deceivers and deceived! Hypocrites and vipers! Ye are fighting against the God of all the earth and his devoted servants! The cup of your iniquity is overflowing! Your elders and co-workers have slain the Chosen One, the [199] most righteous of all the sons of men! His kingdom will increase forever, while yours will soon be shattered! Your Dictator will be his chief apostle, and ye will persecute him from city to city!"

The tumult became so great that nothing more could be heard. Some were almost ready to smite him, but it was plainly evident that he knew not what he had been saying. Another tremor; then his frame relaxed. He was again himself, and astonished to see that all were gathered about him.

"Down with our enemies of the New Faith!" he cried, showing that when himself he was in earnest accord with the spirit of the Inner Circle.

The Rabban Gamaliel was astounded at the action of the Sanhedrin in the case of Stephanos. As the head of the most noted training school in Jerusalem, where Hebrew youth were transformed into teachers and Rabbis, his influence with the chief priests and elders was ordinarily undoubted. But against the wave of fanaticism and persecution which was now surging through the Holy City, he felt himself utterly powerless. While thoroughly loyal to the Chosen People, he, with a few of the more liberal Pharisees, had faithfully striven to stem the tide, calm the fierce and turbulent spirit, and prevent any physical

violence toward the members of the New Faith. While he detested their doctrines, believed them to be the victims of delusion, and ridiculed the claims of the Nazarene as put forth by his disciples, he also counselled forbearance, and believed that such
[200] superstition would soon wear itself out, and come to naught if let alone. His advice was entirely unheeded. The worst passions of the Sanhedrin, their followers, and the rabble were aflame, and logic and lore availed nothing. The stoning of Stephanos had been like the scent of fresh blood to a wolf.

The study of great psychological waves which sometimes roll over a community, and even a nation, is most interesting and instructive. A vast pent-up mass of human passion, perhaps long in accumulating, like the lava of a volcano, will occasionally find some outlet, and all pour out in that particular direction. It is thus that riots, mobs, revolutions, and wars originate. Like some strange epidemic they steal in, and gather momentum until they sweep everything before them. War between nations, which often comes from religious prejudice, is simply brute force and animal ferocity exercised on a colossal scale. There is no tiger more cruel than intolerant fanaticism, and the murder of Stephanos was like the unchaining of such a beast. It was the starting-point of a contagion of insanity, and Saulus was the fittest leader in which it found embodiment. Under the general support and sanction of the Sanhedrin, he became for the time commander, and directed its forces.

Early on the second morning after the notable tragedy, the Rabban Gamaliel sat in his private library in a meditative mood. The piles of inscribed parchments, and numerous shelves loaded with rolls of manuscripts rich with Hebrew lore, were undisturbed. The law, psalms, and prophets, the Mishna, Gemra,
[201] Hagada, and Halacha, which contained the treasures of Jewish scholasticism, and the archives of ancient polity and literature, had no attraction. It was the problems of the present which were

pressing upon the Rabban. Never had he felt so powerless and so unreconciled to events. Not only the Holy City, but his own household, seemed rent in twain. His former impetuous young student and disciple had suddenly blossomed into the Hebrew leader of affairs in Jerusalem, while his own influence had gone into a total eclipse. His beautiful and idolized daughter had bestowed the wealth of her warm youthful affection upon an avowed apostate. Even the thought subtly intruded itself, that it would have been more tolerable if her recent illness had been unto death; and he pictured to himself the possible resignation which would now possess him if her fair form were already sleeping in the quiet sepulchre. He bowed his head in agony as a chaos of conflicting emotions agitated his soul, and groaned aloud, and wept as a child might weep. All the fame, success, and usefulness of his past life was a hollow dream. His vaunted wisdom in the eyes of the Holy City had turned to ashes. Worse than all, it even had become foolishness to his own flesh and blood.

At length he aroused himself as if he had arrived at some important and final decision. Honor, reputation, position, and religion must be maintained, even at the expense of family ties and affection. Shall not a man rule his own house? Putting his emotion under foot, and stifling the softened feeling which had possessed him, his features became hard and unyielding, and his lips tightly closed. He signalled a waiting-maid. [202]

Find Amabel, and say that I would see her.

The young woman entered with a light though dignified step, and seated herself by her father's side. She at once divined something unusual in his manner, and instinctively felt that an ordeal was impending.

Dear father, thou didst send for me. How can I serve thee?

Amabel! always hast thou been a dutiful and loving child, and it now lies in thy power to relieve me of a load which is too heavy to be borne. When I bring the whole matter before thee, I

am persuaded that thou wilt have respect unto my wishes.

Thou knowest well, O my father! that mine affection for thee is great, and if thy request be not against my duty and freedom, I will gladly render obedience.

Just for a moment the Rabban wavered in the resolution which he had declared should be inflexible; for he had a distinct foreboding of a great trial, and of the magnitude of the sacrifice that he was about to ask of his well-beloved daughter. Be still, heart! The issue must be met!

O my daughter! I beseech thee to be soberly mindful of the thing whereof I shall speak unto thee. I pray that thou wilt make a sacrifice for the sake of thy father. My honor, reputation, office, and religion are in the balance. Amabel! I ask thee to renounce all thought of a future alliance with Victor Serenus, and that thou promise to see him no more.

The cheeks of Amabel visibly faded and her heart-beat quickened, but she maintained a good degree of calmness and self-
[203] command. She looked inquiringly into her father's face, and read the stern purpose of an inflexible will. She instinctively felt that the crisis of her life had come. There passed a few moments of silence, though they were not required for her to make her decision.

O my father! I love thee, and it is like plucking out the right eye to say thee nay; but nevertheless, I cannot comply with thy request.

Amabel! mark well the issue! The Holy City is aroused. My plea for the toleration of the new heresy hath already cost me my honor and reputation. My wisdom is scoffed at; and the leader of the time is no other than my former young disciple, Saulus of Tarsus. A wild and cruel spirit hath possessed the people, and the Sanhedrin is in full agreement. While I bewail the zeal of our people, which is not according to knowledge, and believe that its madness will soon pass by, I must bow before a storm which I cannot withstand. Even before this commotion an alliance of the

family of the Rabban Gamaliel with the deluded Serenus would have been intolerable, now it would be fatal!

O my father! I am mindful of all thou sayest; but I have promised to be the wife of Serenus, and nothing but death can separate us. His religion is my religion, and his God my God. There is no other young man among the Chosen People that is worthy to be compared with him in honor and virtue.

Even though he hath a goodly spirit in himself, he hath cast in his lot among the despised and deluded followers of the false prophet, and will peradventure share their fate. Persecution, scourging, imprisonment, and perhaps stoning, await this fanatical sect; and this I cannot prevent if I would. Now, hearken! Will [204] thou foolishly hold on to this base alliance with an outlaw and heretic, disgraced, and peradventure to be put to death, or remain in thy fathers house, with esteem and affection, and the respect of all the most honorable and learned people of the Holy City?

Nay, I will suffer dishonor, persecution, and even death if need be, for truth, righteousness, and Victor Serenus. Worldly honor doth not tempt me. The prophet of Nazareth, whom our people cruelly slew, was filled with the spirit of the true God. His followers have the same mind, as manifested by their works; and nothing can quench their spiritual fervor, their kindly ministrations, and their abounding love toward all, even their enemies.

Daughter of Gamaliel! thou art altogether mad! Choose thou this day, yea, this hour, between thy father s house, with thy high station and all that therewith belongeth, and the reproach of being an outcast, and sharing the ignominious lot of the sect of the Nazarene. The honor of Gamaliel shall not be entirely lost, and his word is law! I have finished!

There was no alternative.

Amabel arose from her seat, threw her arms around her father s neck, and kissed him warmly upon the forehead, and then quietly turned and left him. Hastily putting on a light outside

garment and hat, she left the palace, passed down the hill of Zion, and made her way to the Upper Chamber. It was a little after the third hour, and the disciples had just gathered.

[205] There was a goodly company of men and women, as was wont, and words of gladness and praise abounded. Even the fate of Stephanos, and the prospect of a general persecution, did not seem to disquiet them. But they were unaware of the intensity of the storm that was just ready to burst, and that they were like sheep in the midst of wolves. The spirit of love shone through their faces, and many in the Holy City had been blessed by their ministry and service, healed of divers diseases, and released from bonds which had vexed them for years. Serenus was there, and had just arisen to address them. Barnabas and Peter and John were also among them. Barnabas had been drawn to the New Faith through the preaching of Peter, and was already one of the most devoted among the disciples. He had ended his sojourn at the Sheepmarket, and now made his abode with Serenus.

Amabel quietly entered. No one present knew her except Serenus, who marvelled at her sudden appearance. While aware that the new light had been kindled within her, and that she greatly rejoiced, he had entertained no expectation that she would openly identify herself with the despised people. Her exquisite grace and beauty, with the fact that she was an unwonted visitor, turned the attention of many towards her; but after a quick, tender glance at Serenus, she cast her large lustrous eyes downward, and closed them with a calm devotion, as she sank into her seat among the women of the assembly. The soul of Serenus was stirred within him as he began speaking to the little flock.

Brethren and sisters of the New Faith! It doth appear unto all
[206] of you that troublous times are at hand, and that we are encompassed by those who falsely think that we are their enemies. Even the power of God which hath been bestowed upon us, and the wonderful works and ministry which have been made manifest through us, are turned against our people and made an offence.

The Sadducean enmity of the Sanhedrin is bitter toward us; and the voice of Saulus, the leader of the persecution, is hot for our destruction. Behold ye have become a rock of stumbling unto both the Pharisees and Sadducees. But I say unto you, be ye not dismayed, even though all things seem against you. The Man of Gallilee hath said,

Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; and again, Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Again he declared, Behold the kingdom of heaven is within you. It is here. If persecution rage without, and ye have harmony, peace, and love within, behold it abideth in you. As the spirit of Christ was manifested through Jesus of Nazareth, so may it fill us to overflowing. The things which he did ye may do also. We have the Truth, and the Truth maketh free; yea, though prison-walls surround us, and revilings, and even scourgings, be visited upon us, freedom abideth. Behold liberty is of the soul, and pertaineth not to the body. We are not in bondage to the flesh, for it profiteth not. Not that we have aught against it in itself, for in subjection it may render honorable service. We love all men, and resist not evil. The triumph of violence is but for a moment, while truth and righteousness are as eternal as the reign of God. The world knoweth not the mystery of evil, nor how resistance maketh it to increase. Love is finally victorious, because it thinketh no evil. God worketh not with observation, but in you, to will and to do. Thence cometh the victory! A man's real foes must be they of his own household, for nothing can truly harm him but his own base and mistaken thoughts.

The address of Serenus was followed by spontaneous testimonies, prophecies, and spiritual affirmations, as each was inspired to give utterance, and all opened their souls to the Spirit of Truth. Then followed a period of stillness, during which each one lifted his mind to Christly ideals, and sent out loving and

healing thoughts to all, not forgetting even those who were plotting against them. The silence continued until spiritual ecstasy prevailed, and aspiration and soul-communion lifted them to a state of consciousness where things of the seen and outward life seemed distant, and rested but lightly upon them. The calumnies and revilings concerning them which filled the Holy City were as nothing; for they were now in a heavenly frame made up of love, good-will, spiritual vigor, and harmony.

At length the profound stillness was broken by a discordant hum in the distance. The cruel persecutors were upon their track.

The noise gradually came nearer, and soon resolved itself into chaotic vibrations of yells, commands, shrieks, and imprecations. Then a single stone was followed by a volley, which crashed [208] upon the roof, sides, and windows of the Upper Chamber.

Fear not the wrath of man, said Serenus.

Then the little band chanted selections from the Psalms of David:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence shall my help come?
The Lord is thy keeper:
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall keep thee from all evil;
He shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in,
From this time forth and for evermore.
O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
For his mercy endureth forever.

The mob rapidly approached. A small man with a strong rod in his hand was slightly in advance, making violent gestures, and giving loud commands. It was Saulus. Clustered about him were about two score of the members of the Inner Circle, and these were followed by a great rabble from the worst streets and lanes of the city.

The moments dragged slowly to the little band, for they instinctively took in the whole situation. After finishing the chants, the assembly was dismissed. No one tried to escape. Even if attempted it would have been impossible, for the house was entirely surrounded. They gathered in little groups, and friend encouraged friend.

Serenus was already by Amabel's side.

Beloved! How camest thou here in such a time as this? [209]

O Serenus! my father hath commanded me to renounce thee and the New Faith, or leave his house. Behold my choice!

Amabel! thou hast given up all for me!

Nay! say rather for my soul's freedom!

Daughter of Gamaliel, and Light of my soul! I am powerless to protect thee from the persecutors that are at the door. But have faith in God! All things will work together for good. Doubt not!

I have no fear! Peace, love, and courage possess my soul.

The tramp of the fierce host as it burst up the stairways was like the noise of thunder.

With glaring eyes and panting breath Saulus bounded into the room, closely followed by his comrades, with the mob at their heels. Not one of the assembly raised a hand in defence.

The utter peacefulness and non-resistance of the little band was so strange that for a moment Saulus was astounded. He had expected a strong fight, or at least a desperate attempt to escape, but found neither. But in a moment he regained command of himself, and there was no wavering in his purpose.

Heretics and blasphemers! he cried. We have caught you in the very exercise of your seditious and profane worship, and

ye yourselves are witnesses to your own criminality. I have full authority, as a loyal Hebrew, to mete out punishment to every one of you, men and women, and to crush this mockery of our holy religion. Ha! a little trial by scourging, and some acquaintance
[210] with stocks and prisons, will restore your minds. And if these fail, I wot that the treatment administered to Stephanos will be found effectual.

Up to this time he had not noticed that Serenus was among them, but as he beheld his old opponent he had special delight.

Ha! Serenus! thou hast found thy true belonging. I have thee in my power, and thy traitorous apostasy shall reap its full reward.

Then, turning to his prisoners in general, he continued,

If any of you will blaspheme Jesus, and abjure and curse the New Faith, peradventure we may release such with the warning of a few stripes.

No one responded.

Forward, comrades, and escort them to prison!

Before the sixth hour of the day, every one, including Serenus and Amabel, were surrounded by prison walls.

CHAPTER XX
SOWING AND REAPING

Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

The persecution of the disciples of the New Faith formed a notable epoch in the history both of Judaism and Christianity. It was the first stage of an agitation, which, though subsequently losing some of its local intensity, widened and deepened until it changed the religious complexion of nations and the world. It marked the decadence of the existing ceremonial system, and at the same time dispersed widely the seeds of a vital faith which no opposition has since been able to stamp out.

History confirms the apparent paradox, that living truth has thriven through repression; and even persecution. Stagnation and formalism have been its greater hindrances. It has such an inherent vitality that agitation and antagonism may justly be regarded as important factors in the evolutionary process which brings it into manifestation. It develops true vigor through the exercise of overcoming. Sometimes the Spirit seems to slumber beneath the crust of stagnation, until active hostility quickens its dormant energy and enables it to break forth. Good, therefore, is often nourished from seeming evil. [212]

The intent of the chief priests and elders was to slay the young child; but instead they multiplied him. The New Faith was like a fire, and the desperate effort to beat it out only scattered its brands among the endless combustible material of human hearts. Even at this early period in Jerusalem, the little flock that was apprehended and imprisoned formed but a small fraction of the three thousand souls which already had been possessed by the Spirit of Truth.

Before the ninth hour of the day upon which the assembly were thrown into prison, Gamaliel was informed of the wholesale arrest and persecution. Believing that the flight of Amabel would naturally be to the Upper Chamber, it occurred to him that peradventure she might be among the women who had been put in ward. The situation was intolerable. The thought that his own beautiful child, well beloved and delicately reared, was probably imprisoned with the offscouring of the Holy City, almost drove him beside himself. As he looked in upon the recesses of his own soul, there was a violent tempest, in which pride, disgrace, love, and anger were each striving for mastery, and boiling in wild confusion.

The self-poised, reputable, and wise Educator of Jerusalem could hardly persuade himself of his own identity. How the events of a few hours had changed the whole world! He, to whom thousands had come from far and near to learn wisdom, not able to rule his own house and teach his own offspring! Oh, how much better if Amabel had quietly passed into the Beyond, as the physicians had predicted during her late illness! Then the [213] better self made itself heard,

Oh, how I love her! I cannot give up my child!

Bringing his thoughts to immediate events, the question again thrust itself upon him, Is she in prison? He was minded to seek an audience with Caiaphas, and lay the whole matter before him privately, but upon further thought, his pride and dignity revolted.

At length, realizing the strange fact that Saulus had suddenly mounted to the virtual leadership and control of the persecution, the Rabban resolved to send for him. He felt that, notwithstanding his fiery spirit, the influence of their former relation would make such a conference more tolerable than any communication with the chief priests. It was humiliating, but what better could be done? He therefore despatched a faithful messenger to the inn of the Sheepmarket, begging Saulus to come to the palace,

upon a pressing matter, without delay. The intervening moments seemed all too long; but at length the former disciple, whose will had now become so imperious in the Holy City, was ushered into his presence. After the usual greetings, Gamaliel introduced the subject which lay so heavy upon his heart.

O my young friend and former disciple! I am in sore distress, and have sought audience with thee to ask thy favor in a matter of deep concern to myself and my office.

I have much respect unto thy wishes, O worthy Rabban! and will listen to thy request.

I am minded of the great influence which hath come to thee, O son of Benoni! both with the chief priests and all the people, by reason of thy zeal for the established ordinances. Before making known unto thee my special desire, I would inquire regarding thy [24] purposes, and those of the Sanhedrin, concerning the members of the new sect which hath appeared in our midst?

We purpose to uproot and bring to naught the heresy as quickly as possible, for the good of our religion and nation. If peradventure there should be delay, and it become scattered abroad, behold great harm will come to our people and their traditions. Surely, as a teacher in Israel, thou must be mindful of this peril.

I have always felt persuaded, O Saulus, that every false philosophy would soon come to an end. I am mindful of the foolishness of the doctrines of the new sect as thou art, and agree that they are harmful; but I am persuaded that, having no root, they will soon wither away. Dost thou not feel that persecution is unduly bitter, and that many who have been deluded will soon come back to the religion of their fathers if left alone for a little time?

Nay, worthy Rabban, thine age and much learning hath holden thine eyes to the urgency of the peril which hangeth over our people. There can be no better service to God and Israel than to kill this seditious conspiracy. If our righteous persecution

be sharp and quick, behold it will save much trouble. It will prevent the spread of the blasphemy, and confine the severity to a small number. It were therefore merciful to persecute even to the death the betrayers of the Circumcision, before they multiply their proselytes. Of this the Sanhedrin is fully persuaded, and hath given me full authority to make an end of the matter.

[215] Gamaliel recognized the hopelessness of further argument, and keenly felt how powerless he was to bring about any moderation of the spirit and purpose of the persecution. His opinion of the quality of the New Faith differed little from that of Saulus; but they were utterly unlike in their philosophy of its cure, and in their views of toleration.

One who persecutes or murders for God s sake, or for the interest of some religion, as universal history demonstrates, is of all cruel men the most cruel. Inquisitors have thought that they had a heavy duty laid upon them of saving souls.

It is unseemly to continue the argument, said Gamaliel; and now I will make known unto thee the special favor which I crave at thy hands. I beseech thee, for my sake, as thy former teacher and friend, that thou make no mention of what I am about to ask, lest it bring dishonor upon me.

I freely grant thy request, replied Saulus.

The young zealot was greatly surprised at the unwonted earnestness of the Rabban, and wondered what his petition might be.

Brushing away a few tears that he vainly tried to suppress, the distressed father took Saulus by the hand, and looked urgently into his face as if to make a plea.

O my young friend! behold my loved and dutiful daughter hath been beguiled of the heresy. To-day, before the third hour, she left me that she might join these deluded people, thus giving up my favor, affection, home, and honor. Peradventure she went directly to the Upper Chamber, and hath gone to prison with the

[216] other women. Behold my sorrow!

She hath chosen her own portion, said Saulus unconcernedly.

O Saulus! said the Rabban pleadingly, She is young, and knoweth little of the heresy, being deceived.

I will visit the prison, and find if she be among the women. What is her name?

Amabel.

If she be with them, I will command her release, and direct that she return to her father's house.

I thank thee for thy great favor! After being cast into prison, I am persuaded that when released she will show her former wisdom in this matter.

Gamaliel brightened at the renewal of his own hope, and added,

Peradventure it is well! I perceive that nothing less than some such experience would have turned her. Now I soon shall see my daughter!

Saulus took his leave, and proceeded directly to the prison.

Hast thou among the heretics a young woman called Amabel? asked Saulus of the keeper.

Looking over the roll, he replied in the affirmative.

Release her, and command her to go to her father's house!

Saulus disdained to make any explanation, and left at once, without waiting to see her. Gamaliel had requested that his name be not mentioned, and it was therefore impossible that she should be conducted to the palace. It would lead to recognition.

The jailer went to the cell where Amabel was incarcerated, and unbarring the heavy door, proclaimed, [217]

By order of Saulus, deputy of the Sanhedrin, behold thou art released, and commanded to go to thy father's house!

She passed out of the dark damp interior into the sunshine, and disappeared in the crowded street.

Whither would she go? Her father's house had been closed against her. Hesitating but a moment, she turned her back toward Mount Zion, and passing northward, continued along the narrow street that led beyond Hezekiah's Pool, at length coming to the home of Serenus. She knocked at the humble door, and was warmly received and ministered unto by his mother, who welcomed her as her own daughter.

Saulus returned to the Sheepmarket near the close of the eventful day, feeling that his work was well begun.

The more prominent leaders in the sedition had been gathered in, and were to await his persuasive tactics to force their sworn renunciation of the New Faith, and blasphemy of its prophet. Failing in this, adequate punishment would be meted out under his direction, and at his convenience. He felt a peculiar pride that he had the honor of being the chief instrument in the hands of the God of Israel to correct, not only religious, but political transgression. Among the circle at the inn, he was received as a hero and public benefactor. Cassia bestowed her congratulation, and was delighted with his campaign of persecution.

O my devoted Saulus! thou art a brave leader, chosen of the [218] Lord to defend our people and punish their enemies.

Thy words are sweet unto me, replied Saulus, as they seated themselves in a secluded recess of the court, while the twilight fell upon them. He put his arm around her light form, and drew her close by his side. She was very happy. During a few moments of silence, her heart was so full of golden dreams of the future, that she wished she might look in and behold it, as in a mirror. The music of fancy, unheard without, filled her soul with melody; and amid stirring scenes, her lover was before her day and night. The embrace of his arm tightened, and she nestled her head upon his shoulder. Saulus was transported to a new world as he felt her silken locks and warm breath upon his cheek, and for a little time he forgot persecutions and prisons. Following

the swift flight of his imagination, he saw before him, not only his complete triumph in the contest he was waging, but a heaven upon earth, soon to begin, with the full fruition of his love, and the possession of the idol which for years had ruled his heart.

That wonderful intensity of nature which made Saulus a fiery persecutor rendered him a most ardent lover. There was nothing commonplace or mediocre within him. The whole fabric of his character was woven of extremes, all of which were in unceasing vibration.

Would the love of Saulus, now so exclusively centred upon one personality with the intensity of a white heat, ever become broadened, purified, disciplined, and diffused? Could this stream of soul-force, now so narrow and vehement, ever spread out, and in gentle volume nourish barren brown fields, clothe them with living green, and make them bud and blossom? No! says the world. Impossible! replies sensuous logic and intellectual [pa] acumen. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

The persecution, now so thoroughly inaugurated, raged with unabated ferocity. Dark and cruel weeks dragged their weary course into months, and the cry of martyrs was unceasing. But the heroism of the disciples of the New Faith was a marvel. Under the inquisition of Saulus, men and women were scourged, buffeted, put in confinement, and stoned; and though a few recanted, nearly all were faithful. The courage and spiritual inspiration which had possessed Stephanos continued, and in many cases even stoning to death produced only painless transition. The prisoners healed each others distresses, and often the persecutors themselves received from their victims some of the outward fruits of the power of the New Faith. But the bigoted inquisitors seemed possessed of a collective insanity or demoniacal obsession, outbreaking waves of which abound in history.

It would be discordant to the purpose and philosophy which these pages aim to express through depicted events to enlarge

upon this period. A tragic story of terrible things that abounded during this spell of unloosed animal passion might be dramatized, which would be well within the limits of the admitted facts of
[220] history.[7] The theory that a realism which plunges into the depths of harrowing circumstance is either wholesome or artistic will not here be followed. It is true that every tale built upon the principles of idealism, and the portrayal of idealistic character, cannot do without a setting and background of contrasts which will bring truth into high relief, but the dark shades should be kept in subordination.

At length the time came when the New Faith, like a smothered
[221] and beaten conflagration, appeared to be thoroughly stamped out in Jerusalem. Every suspected house had been visited, and every implicated man or woman tortured or imprisoned, except such as had fled to remote provinces, which were not a few. But Saulus was not content with the complete conquest of the

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notorious far and wide.

A few passages from the New Testament (Revised Edition) are noted:

Acts viii. 3. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts ix. 1, 2. But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts xxii. 4. And I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Acts xxvi. 10, 11. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities.

Galatians i. 13. For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havock of it.

1. Timothy i. 13. Though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

[7] Canon Farrar, in hisLife and Work of St. Paul, says, The part which

Jewish capital. Finding that some had slipped from his grasp, he began, like Alexander, to look about for other worlds to conquer. Being informed that a few had fled to Damascus, and were there promulgating the heresy, he made ready for an expedition to that city, and received from the Sanhedrin the necessary authority and equipment.

The terrible strain of conflicting emotion and surging passion which had rent the soul of Saulus, fearfully told upon him. His haggard face, nervous unrest, sleepless nights, and hellish visions, produced an epileptic condition which appeared in the form of occasional paroxysms, and its scars were never afterwards fully removed. They were ever a stake in the flesh.

At times, during these feverish months of delirium, the scourgings of conscience were terrible. But the more desperate his torment, the more he hardened himself. Nightly visions of strange horror disquieted him. Often during the darkness, the sighs and groans of his victims echoed and re-echoed in his ears. He refused to be alone at night, and under plea of illness arranged for one of his comrades of the Inner Circle to share his apartment. His brief periods of strange relenting were not mentioned to his friends, and on no account would he have had Cassia suspect them. Each short interval of moral upheaval was followed by a more desperate determination to push the persecution. To have every nerve tense with a hot pursuit for his prey had peculiar

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he [Saul] played at this time in the horrid work of persecution has, I fear, been always underrated.... So thorough was his search, and so deadly were its effects, that, in referring to it, the Christians of Damascus can only speak of Saul as he that devastated in Jerusalem them that call on this name, using the strong word which is strictly applicable to an invading army which scathes a conquered country with fire and sword.

Conybeare and Howson, in their Life and Epistles of St. Paul, say, That temporary protection which had been extended to the rising sect by such men as Gamaliel was now at an end. Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and people, alike indulged the most violent and ungovernable fury.... The eminent and active agent in this persecution was Saul.... His fame as an inquisitor was

charm, and yielded a thrill of delight to that part of his nature which he thought to be himself.

Toward the last of the persecution, the flashes of goodness and moral sanity increased in frequency. Seeming to come up from within, they staggered his understanding. He reproached himself for such occasional weaknesses. Each time as they passed off he braced himself anew, and hastened to his appointed work.

The last evening of the sojourn of Saulus in the Holy City was drawing to a close, and his preparations for an early departure the next morning were complete. The day had been sultry, and the family group at the inn were upon the house-top. The full moon, which silvered the broad expanse of towers and battlements, seemed to wear a sinister and ghastly aspect; and there was a redness in its sheen which gave Saulus a slight inward shudder. The shadows cast by surrounding objects were unwontedly sharp and black, and he felt preternaturally sensitive and expectant. The stirring events of his life in the Judean capital surged in a quick torrent through his mind, as if painted upon a swiftly revolving canvas. Love, hate, joy, despair, and ambition, sprinkled with the ashes of an inner and strange remorse, danced in chaotic confusion before him. Unwelcome and forbidding enemies seemed to be prodding him from within. Had he not done his duty well?

Cassia interrupted his revery, and together they sought a retired corner as they were wont. A long converse followed.
[223] Mutual vows were exchanged and renewed, and plans made for the consummation of their union upon the return of Saulus from his campaign in Damascus. After a long-continued rehearsal of mutual visions of present and future bliss, the moment for parting was at hand. Saulus was about to arise from his seat; but with eyes suddenly fixed upon vacancy, he gave a quick gasp and sank back.

What is it, Saulus? thou tremblest and art pale! Art thou ill? O Saulus!

Cassia threw her fair white arms around his neck to reassure

him. After a brief conflict with the unknown, but with no effort to disengage himself from her soft embrace, he replied,

Nay, little one! I am well! Twas but a passing shudder! Some disquieting fancies seize me at unwonted and inconvenient seasons.

O Saulus! thou art so brave and good! But thou hast not seemed well of late! O my hero! What can it be?

I wot not. I am persuaded that I perform every duty to which I am called in no uncertain manner. But at times, peradventure I am under a spell. My heart stands still, and my limbs shiver. I see something near at hand which is not of earth, and the darkness seems full of terrible shapes. But I spurn and defy them! It is but a passing weakness, and soon will fade out. Between my little one and the punishment of heretics my mind will be so full that no more idle fancies can steal in. See! I am well now! I am strong! Peace be with thee! 'Twill be but for a short season, little one, when behold, thou art mine, and I am thine forever! [224]

A final embrace, and a whispering of eternal love, and they parted.

Saulus reached his chamber in a very uncertain mood. Despite the brave words just uttered, and with his comrade soundly sleeping near by, the very silence seemed oppressive and retributive. The atmosphere was charged with malignity, and every breath feverish and bitter. He tried desperately to fasten his thoughts upon Cassia, so as to shut out dire fancies. Thus for a few moments he would perch upon empyrean heights, only to be quickly cast down into horrible chasms.

A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

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A thick mist of delirium seemed to gather in the darkness, and nameless Horrors danced around and leered at him.

Oh, for sleep! Come, oh, come, oblivion, and blot me out! Why was I ever born? Have I a demon within me? Am I myself or It? No! Away! I dare and defy thee! O God of Israel! I serve thee, and nothing shall shake me!

Finally, from sheer exhaustion, and in a cold sweat, he fell into a troubled sleep. But phantoms in kaleidoscopic array peopled his dreams. At length three loud raps at the door aroused him, and froze the blood in his veins. There It stood!

[225] O heaven! mercy! There! there! It points its bony finger at me! Guilty?No! no! I am righteous righteous!

He leaped from his couch, and ran to his comrade and shook him.

Look! look! dost thou not see It?

I see nothing! Saulus, quiet thyself! behold all is well!

Saulus crept back to his couch, more uncertain who and what he was than ever.

A hellish torment was within and without!

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As the first faint flush of dawn entered through the casement of his chamber, turning the blackness into gray, Saulus awoke from a half-conscious despair, and, wonder of wonders, a feeling of heavenly harmony possessed his soul! Peace, like a broad, glassy river, was borne in upon him.

Am I Saulus?

Calm on the listening ear of night
Come Heaven's melodious strains.

Iridescent tints of beauty filled the room. His soul floated through, and was bathed in a symphony of harmonious sound-waves, sweeter than a thousand harps of Æolia. The atmosphere seemed charged with an impersonal and universal love, and its message was written in letters of light upon the walls of his chamber. The fragrance of roses was wafted in upon his bewildered senses. A heavenly chorus of benedictions, distant, but enchanting in quality, reached him, as though echoed and re-echoed through long corridors. He felt his soul expanding and [212] responding, as he seemed to inhale a spirit of inspiration. An angelic visitor in white robes stood before him, and whispered, I am Prophecy, and with a winning smile pointed upward. What a vision! What brightness! What beauty!

Have I died, and is this paradise? But see! It begins to fade! Stay, Oh, stay! Leave me not! No! no! no!

It had gone, but the room was still — so still! The silence might almost be felt. What a strange calmness! The soul of Saulus was as placid as the mirror-like surface of a pool untouched by a zephyr. He heard a voice, distinct, but so low and sweet that he could not tell whether it were audible or in his soul.

Saulus! I am the divine image within thee, thy real self! I am spirit, and possess the deeps of thy Being. I am the quickened but unmanifest Saulus. In thy consciousness thou dost mistake a false and perverted self for me. I am yet entombed! Bid me come forth!

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The morning dawned brightly, and found Saulus as he was wont. Oh, how vivid the visions! It seemed as if he had wandered for a whole night in the infernal regions, and anon been transported for a brief morning hour to heaven. How utterly indescribable!

What meaneth this? Oh, that I might grasp that heavenly condition! But it is gone, utterly gone!

[227] Time lingers not, and the appointed hour for departure was close at hand. He hastily arose, and made his final preparations for the long journey. His comrades, who were to accompany him, were already waiting, and impatient for the start. Waving Cassia a final adieu, as she looked down from her casement, Saulus and his retinue wound rapidly northward through the narrow streets, and passed out through the Damascus Gate. Before the sun had climbed far above the horizon they had left the Holy City well behind.

CHAPTER XXI
THE GREAT HARVEST

The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

It is expedient that we return, and gather up a few threads that were dropped at the close of the chapter preceding the last. On the eventful morning when the comrades gathered at the Sheep-market, and departed for the Upper Chamber to apprehend the assembly, there was a small party left behind which demands further notice. A controversy took place, and the little circle was rent by the decided and outspoken condemnation of Rebecca of the proposed movement.

Saulus seems beside himself in this mad persecution! she exclaimed with a deep flush. I think the new sect has a right to live peaceably, and be free from molestation. God speed their escape!

Daughter! thou speakest wildly! said Benoni reprovingly. I bid thee hold thy peace! It would have been well for us had we left thee in Tarsus. [229]

Rebecca said no more, but held her own thoughts firmly. Since the stampede from the Temple, when her life was saved by the young stranger, she had made many apologies for, if not an actual defence of, the disciples of the New Faith. Her unknown

rescuer had not told her that he was one of them, but she had an indefinable feeling that he might be of their number. His words and spirit were unlike those of any one she knew who was subject to the ceremonial system. How opposite in temper from her own brother, whom she began to fear was possessed by an evil spirit! It was not so much what Serenus had said, when he conveyed her to her home in her faint and exhausted condition, for their conversation had been brief and general; but his dignified mien, lofty spirit, and utter unselfishness greatly impressed her. His very presence had seemed an inspiration. How strange, that in answer to her question he should have announced himself merely as the friend of Saulus! Knowing nothing of his name or dwelling-place, she often wondered whether she might ever see him again. While naturally retiring, and rarely looking into the faces of strangers, it must be confessed that, as opportunity offered, she had some dim expectation that she would again behold the face of her kind benefactor.

Who is able to unravel the mysteries of a maiden's heart? Who can untwist the delicate strands which, when combined, are able to guide and draw a gentle soul, and give it the force and direction of a new orbit?

In the case of Rebecca, the vital service rendered would, of
[230] itself, make gratitude strong and lasting. The lofty principles expressed, though in a brief and unstudied way, would also strike a unison in such a pure and intuitional nature as that of Rebecca. For a long time she had been quietly growing away from the heartless formalism of her people. She was ready for something better. Without knowing anything of the letter of the New Faith, peradventure its invisible vibrations were beating gently upon the strings of her higher nature, even though unrecognized.

Was there a mingled element of unconscious love subtly growing out of so brief an episode? What more natural? and yet what prophet can say either yea or nay?

As Saulus and his concourse moved away toward the Upper

Chamber, an intense interest and curiosity possessed those who were left behind as to the outcome of the day proceedings. All felt that an important crisis had arrived. Cassia was exultant, while Rebecca was cast down. But despite their unlikeness, they preserved friendly relations for the sake of Saulus. Prospective sisterhood rendered each forbearing. Rebecca was sorely tried, but must needs not rebel against her surroundings.

Almon, the keeper of the hostelry, who had followed the concourse in the distance, soon returned, and announced to the family that the blasphemers were securely under arrest.

I bear you good tidings, said he, as with manifest glee he entered the court of the inn. Saulus and his friends have the whole band under arrest, and they are soon to be taken in a procession to prison.

Cassia clapped her little white hands with delight. Rabbi Abdiel and Benoni were exultant in their approval, while Rebecca was silent. [231]

Behold, continued Almon, the direct way from the Upper Chamber to the prison leads by the inn, so that captors and captives will soon move past our very doors.

To the house-top! exclaimed Cassia excitedly. Let us all go up and see the procession when it passes.

She bounded up two stairways in hot haste, and the others soon followed. Rebecca would fain have been spared the sight, but something seemed to draw her.

There is frequently an indescribable fascination in beholding just that which one does not wish to behold.

It is a proud day for thy son, O Benoni, quoth the Rabbi.

Yea, my brother; Saulus directs all this matter as seemeth him good.

They had not long to wait.

From the distance, fierce cries, cheers, and curses echoed above the general hum of voices; and soon a black mass of moving figures surged slowly along one of the narrow streets that led

into the square. Near the front was the untiring figure of Saulus, directing the movement of the throng. His eyes flashed, his step was firm, and his air that of a military conqueror returning from a victorious campaign.

When the motley crowd came near, the little group ranged themselves along the parapet that they might observe every feature of the procession. From their vantage-ground, it was easy to study every face, as it passed directly in front.

[232] The venerable Abdiel waved his hands with satisfaction, and blessed the God of Israel; and Saulus, looking up, proudly returned the salutation.

Near the head of the line of prisoners was a tall, dignified young man of noble presence and calm features, whose bearing and costume marked him as one of the most notable among them. Rebecca saw him, and instinctively exclaimed,

It is he!

At the same moment, the young man turned his eyes upward, and their glances met. A slight nod of recognition passed between them, which was noticed by the others, so that Rebecca was forced to explain.

Behold it is he who saved me on the day of the great stampede at the Temple! I know not his name, but he called himself the friend of Saulus.

Almon also gave an exclamation of great surprise.

As I live, that is the man!

Who is this man, O Almon?said Benoni, astounded at the double recognition of the prisoner.

It is he who saved Saulus from the thieves, and brought him to the inn at midnight, and ministered unto him. I wot not his name, but oh, wonder of wonders! as to Rebecca, he also proclaimed himself to me as the friend of Saulus.

Surely, there must be some mistake,said Benoni. Such a man among the prisoners!

Shame on the persecution! exclaimed Rebecca. Is Saulus to imprison the young hero who saved not only my life, but his own also?

On the evening of the same day, Saulus despatched the following letter: [233]

OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE PRISONERS

Sir, Circumstances have conspired to cause me to change the special order which I gave thee concerning the heretic, Victor Serenus. I was then minded to reserve him for unwonted punishment, and that speedily; but behold I now order that thou at once release him, upon the condition that he leave the Holy City before the rising of to-morrow's sun, never to return.

SAULUS,
Deputy of the Sanhedrin.

Before the hours of evening were far advanced, the hearts of Amabel and the mother of Serenus were made glad by his arrival. Their surprise could hardly have been greater had he dropped from the skies.

O children of the New Faith! exclaimed the mother; God is good! All is good! Even out of seeming evil springeth good! The law of the Lord is perfect!

What a day of fulfilment! said Serenus. Prison doors are opened through the power of the Truth. Bonds are stricken off, not by an interposition which suspends divine law, but through its perfect and orderly working.

Yea, said Amabel; the loving thought which thou hast held towards Saulus, even though unknown by him, hath borne its fruit.

The condition of my freedom, said Serenus, is that I leave the Holy City before the rising of to-morrow's sun, never to return; but this in no wise disquiets me.

Amabel's cheeks grew pale, but she was silent.

In time past, continued Serenus, it often seemed expedient that I depart from here, that peradventure I might kindle the flame
[234] of the New Faith in strange cities. But that concerning which I was formerly in doubt hath now been made clear to me. While in the prison cell, the Inner Guide prompted me that I should depart, but I wot not how it would come to pass. I must go, even to Rome, that from the heart of the world I may witness for the truth.

He cast an inquiring look at Amabel.

O Amabel! With thy devotion to the higher life, thou hast also given me a place in thine heart. Art thou willing to sacrifice worldly preferment, and share my lot, that we may go hand in hand to plant the standard of a pure spiritual religion? Canst thou with me bear hardship and seeming dishonor, yea, and peradventure further persecution, for the love of God, the sake of truth, and the good of thy kind?

Yea, Serenus! I fear nothing! I am willing, nay, glad, to go with thee to the ends of the earth, that I may help thee to succor the distressed, strengthen the weak, raise the fallen, and awake those who sleep, whether in the flesh, or in dead works and ceremonies. The Voice within me says so!

The mother of Serenus placed her hands upon the heads of her children, and gave them a loving dedication and benediction.

Everything was speedily arranged for an early departure on the morrow. An ordained disciple of the New Faith, who lived hard by, would come in at early dawn and unite Serenus and Amabel in marriage, according to the simple rites of the Upper Chamber. Before the midnight hour every preparation was completed for
[235] the new life so soon to begin.

During the silent hours, Peace, like a river, flowed in upon the souls in the quiet home.

Before the early dawn had fairly chased away the deep shadows of night, Serenus and Amabel were wedded.

They spoke of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away, no strife to heal,
The past unsighed for, and the future sure.

As the morning mists were being dissipated, and the Temple roof gilded by the first rays of the rising sun, Serenus and Amabel, well mounted on small but hardy steeds, passed out through the gate leading toward the seaport of Cæsarea. The mother was to follow in a few days in the company of a convenient caravan.

Passing forward at a single bound, over the months of hot persecution noted in the preceding chapter, during which Serenus and Amabel were far away, we rejoin Saulus and his band on the way to Damascus. The first stage of the journey was over the Roman road which led from Jerusalem to Cæsarea.

As the Judean sun climbed higher in the heavens, and poured out his fiery rays, they rode rapidly along the hill-country which forms the divide between the valley of the Jordan and the Mediterranean. At intervals from some elevated spot over which the route led, they would halt for a few moments, and cast a lingering look backward upon the now distant golden Temple roof, and the white towers and battlements which they had left far behind. Anon a far-searching glance to the westward would [236] faintly disclose the deep blue of the Great Sea. Every foot of the way was rich in historic association to the Israelite, and every town and village consecrated by some event which formed a part of the national folk-lore.

The companions of Saulus proposed a rest of a few hours during the intense heat of the midday; but he refused to make

more than a brief stop, barely permitting space to feed the animals and satisfy their own hunger. He was even impatient at the ordinary rate of progress, and was minded to hurry forward. The next morning they saw Mount Gerizim, the Mount of Blessing, towering up in the distance before them. Upon that bald, brown summit Moses had stationed the priests and Levites, to bless the Children of Israel when they passed over Jordan.

The route wound through the soft green fields which lie around the base of the mountain, and midday brought them to Shechem in Samaria, where they stopped for refreshment. On this hallowed ground Jacob had encamped and erected an altar, and here Joseph had been sent to seek his brethren. On this spot Joshua had gathered all the elders and judges of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

Saulus was familiar with all this rich heritage of national history, so full of meaning to the Chosen People; but now it palled upon him, and seemed dim and distant.

Leaving the Roman road at this point, they took the Damascus route to the northeast, which was much more rough and difficult. Passing Mount Ebal and Mount Tabor, and skirting the beautiful
[237] Sea of Galilee, set like a gem amid the surrounding hills, they pressed on, until on the morning of the sixth day they found themselves not far from their journey's end.

To the west, and parallel with the last stage of their journey, the lofty chain of the Antilibanus stretched itself, like a huge wall, northward and southward as far as the eye could reach. Crowning all, with serene dignity and cool and dazzling whiteness, snow-capped Hermon formed a strange contrast with the torrid Syrian wilderness which immediately surrounded them.

Two hours more, and now, in the far distance, there was dimly visible the Eye of the East, beautiful Damascus. On they pressed, and it gradually enlarged. Now its white terraced roofs and cupolas began to resolve themselves, and assume shape and character. In what a mass of living green was the city em-

bowered! Behold a great wide-stretching emerald oasis was in front, in striking contrast with the bare brown desert, within the confines of which they still lingered.

Soon they passed for a short distance over one of the spurs of the Antilibanus, and could look down and follow with the eye the courses of the long winding Pharpar and the golden Abana, as they transform the wilderness, and cause it to bud and blossom like the rose. What wonderful beauty!

By Eastern metaphor Damascus was a handful of pearls in its goblet of emerald. The perennial streams from Lebanon spread into rivulets, and gurgle and disport themselves, forming the bases for blooming gardens of flowers and fruits terrestrial paradise.

Again they descended to the brown, scorched plain, and the [136] torrid noonday was at hand. But before the flight of another hour they would be in Damascus, encircled and refreshed by its clear cool streams their journey ended.

The time since they had left Jerusalem seemed well-nigh age-long to the young zealot. Deprived of the hot hunt, which for months had hardly afforded space for a quiet thought, he was forced to think. In vain he essayed to still the confused hum of the mechanism of his soul. To a mind under less intense pressure, and free from a stored-up mass of vivid tragic pictures, the changing scenery and stirring events of the journey would have afforded occupation. But to Saulus every hour was an hour of agony, its slowness interminable.

The outward world of variety and beauty meant nothing to Saulus now, for he was dwelling in a thought-world of his own contriving. He had walled himself around with abnormal and inhuman elements, and look which way he might, they must stare at him, face to face.

Nearer, vastly nearer than his surrounding comrades, were the living, barbed thoughts, which like imps of darkness peopled his mind.

On the walls and corridors of his soul were hung, high and low, moving, burning panoramas, and gaze upon them he must. The hellish art, which he had unwittingly moulded and upreared, thickly curtained the picturesque hills and valleys, the grand mountains, blue seas, and flowing rivers, which were incidental to the journey. The prods of an ox-goad to his outer flesh [239] would have seemed tolerable could they have been received in exchange for those unseen goadings which punctured his guilty consciousness.

What subtle and often warring forces make up the mind of man! How it may kindle, unwittingly and even conscientiously, at its own centre, hellish flames; while the same energies, used after the divine order, will create heavenly harmonies and immortal loves!

How prolific are thought-activities, and how blind the world to the related sequences which are bound to them by hooks of steel! How untiringly the false self, in the ignorance of its own deeper nature, forges bonds for its own inthralment!

But though unheeded, the Inner Guide is ever awaiting an opportunity to blaze the path to freedom.

It matters not that the intangible scorpions which sting the human consciousness have been invoked in the name and guise of religion. Their retributive venom is not thereby lessened.

Each soul rears its own dwelling-place, and puts in furnishings which correspond. The objective divine order is good, and only good. Those spectres and distortions which are called wrong, evil, and even hell, which shrivel and blast human lives, are the creations of disorderly and unregulated thought-forces. The beautiful stuff from which both an inner and outer paradise may be builded is strewn around in endless profusion. It is mis-direction which makes it evil.

Before demonstrating beauty and perfection, men make educational mistakes, but the mockery and hollowness of failure finally drive them to the Real.

Hell is corrective rather than vindictive, a condition of mind [240] and not a place. It is as possible in this realm as the next, and Saulus was there. He was a realist, and had lived entirely from the outside. No lighter measure of flames would have sufficed to bring him to himself, and lead him to discover true being.

Punishment is kindly in its mission to the world. Man would fain sever cause and effect, but God has bound them together. Had not a flame in the soul of Saulus broken in upon his persecutions, they would not have been arrested.

Purifying fires reduce the Counterfeit to ashes, and then man is revealed to himself in his inmost and divine image. If evil were an objective Reality, when would be its end? Thanks to the Universal Order, it is but a subjective disciplinary experience, and carries within the seeds of its own limitation and final dissolution.

Mingled with the agony which made up the weary days and nights of the journey, Saulus had brief ecstatic upliftments and visions. Often they would pass into short trances, when he would lose all sense of time and surrounding, and dwell in the realm of the unseen. His violent transitions, often accompanied by some physical epileptic symptoms, were a source of great wonder to his companions, who were exceedingly superstitious concerning such weird phenomena. Was he possessed at times of good and evil spirits, or was he on the verge of lunacy?

The strange and ungovernable moods of Saulus, with their sharp contradictions, greatly undermined his leadership, and the ardor of his attendants was visibly dampened. A few secretly [241] cursed the day upon which they joined the crusade. That aforetime unfaltering hero, who with iron will had inspired them in former days, was broken, and almost feeble. Courage alternated with violent and foolish fears. He heard pursuers upon his track, and saw faces and Shapes that were unshared in the experience of his comrades. Fierce outbursts of the spirit of persecution were followed by fits of moaning and weeping. When he came

out of his trances, he was at a loss to know whether he had been out of the body or in the body.

It seemed as though Titanic forces within the soul of Saulus were battling for its possession, with varying victory and defeat. What direction will this tremendous soul-force finally take? An Inner Spirit was expanding which threatened to burst the bonds and standards of the outer world. Education, religion, custom, and ceremonial obligation quivered in the balance.

The beautiful city of the East was now in the immediate foreground. But with all its loveliness, it stood forth as the embodiment of continued persecution and death. That shaft pierced between the joints of the soul-armor and went home. Saulus was struck through and through by a shock of spiritual electricity. The overstrained tension of the bond which held him
[242] to the Old snapped under the stress of the terrible vision.[8]

The flame of the Inner Spirit which so long had smouldered, burst forth, consuming the outer shell of wood, hay, and stubble!

The Voice which so often had struggled in vain for a hearing, echoed and re-echoed in tones of thunder!

There was an overshadowing Presence!

The Inner Christ in all his beauty was photographed by flashlight upon the soul of Saulus!

The manger was here, and the Christ-consciousness came to birth!

Like the pure in heart, Saulus saw God!

The stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre of self, and the Resurrection took place.

[8] As to the historic literalism of the external phenomena said to be connected with this notable inner transition, the author has no desire to dogmatize either pro or con. It is the privilege and right of every one to make his own interpretation. But however exact in outward detail the somewhat variable records may be supposed to be, we think that all will agree that the external setting does not transcend the realm of incidental unimportance.

The tribunal of God was set up at the soul-centre, and the divine image and likeness unveiled.

The altar of Love, upon which stick after stick of fuel had been added, even though soaked by the sweat and blood of persecution, was lighted from heaven, and burst into brightness!

The Divine found another channel for manifestation in the Human, making plain their intrinsic and ideal Oneness.

The sudden enlargement of the soul of Saulus almost rent the tenement of clay.

Sense, time, and place were obliterated!

The PERSECUTOR was dead!

The APOSTLE had been born!

[243]

PART SECOND

THE LIGHT SPREADS TO THE WESTWARD.

[244]

CHAPTER XXII
SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

As down in the sunless retreats of the ocean
Sweet flowers are springing no mortal can see,
So deep in my soul the still prayer of devotion,
Unheard by the world, rises silent to Thee.

What a vision of beauty!

Such was the exclamation of Amabel, as for the first time she looked upon the deep blue Mediterranean.

The sun was just about to hide himself below the rim of the boundless mirror-like expanse of water, as the newly wedded pair seated themselves upon one of the house-tops of Cæsarea.

Their journey from Jerusalem had been taken by easy stages, and two hours before they had arrived at the new seaport which had been built by Herod the Great, and named for his imperial master at Rome.

Here, where threescore years before there had been but an insignificant fishing-town with no harbor, now stood the imposing capital of Judea, with a commerce of no mean proportions. Besides the spacious and pretentious Herodian palace, there was a temple dedicated to the divine Cæsar, a theatre, amphitheatre, and other public buildings, which gave it the aspect of a metropolis. The harbor had been artificially constructed at enormous expense by Roman skill and enterprise under Herod's [246] direction. He caused immense blocks of stone to be brought from a long distance, and sunk to the depth of twenty fathoms, forming a semi-circular mole, protected from the south and west, with a narrow entrance on the north, within which ships could find secure anchorage and refuge.

The strong hand of Rome reached out in every direction during the days of her imperial greatness, and her works, marvellous in their extent and solidity, reached almost to the ends of the earth. Far outlasting the conquests of her panoplied legions and the sweep of her civil authority, her massive bridges, roads, harbors, palaces, and towers formed enduring monuments of a material greatness, unique in human history. What might she not have accomplished had not corruption, sensuality, and cruelty, like gnawing worms, eaten out her very heart and life, leaving her a gilded sepulchre?

Absorbed by the picturesque charm and unwonted variety of the scenery about them, Serenus and Amabel sat for some time silent, while feasting their souls upon its richness. Behind them, to the north and east, were the green, wide-stretching slopes of Mount Carmel, with vineyards and olive-groves, softened by a purple haze which seemed like a mystical benediction, the parting gift of day.

The endless expanse of the great sea before them was so calm in its unruffled peacefulness that it seemed to be sleeping upon the bosom of the Infinite. The warm and dreamy atmosphere was laden with the perfume of gardens, which skirted the shore
[247] and climbed the hill-sides, while their dark green foliage, with blossoms of many hues, was reflected with a gentle quiver in the neighboring deeps. The inspiration of the scene justified the feeling that God dwells with and in men, and that his Spirit and Life shine through all material things, even though unrecognized, save by those whose eyes have been opened to the higher and deeper vision of the Real.

A few fishermen were lazily rowing their light craft homeward, while others, who had already landed, were hanging their nets upon the cliffs to dry. In the distance the shrill tones of the shepherd's pipe calling his flock, the varying vibrations of bird-notes, and the hum of insects, rounded out the delicious harmony of sound and sight. At length the sun disappeared, and

the radiant afterglow seemed to transform the sea into a great pearl, whose ever-changing opalescence gradually deepened as evening drew on.

How beautiful is night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures; nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of heaven:
In full-orbed glory, yonder moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths;
Beneath her steady ray
The desert circle spreads
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
How beautiful is night!

Serenus aroused himself from deep contemplation.

Behold, O Amabel! what we see is but an unrolled parchment inscribed with living characters for our translation. The voice of God through his works is even more direct than that which [248] cometh through the mouths of patriarchs and prophets. Saith the sweet singer of Israel,

Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.

But, O Serenus! who is wise enough to give it interpretation? What sayest thou of the Greeks, who worship Nature, and vainly imagine that they hear her many voices? Are they not corrupt and deluded?

The Grecian pantheism is not a communion with and aspiration after God, who is beneficent and universal, but rather an homage paid to blind, discordant, and warring forces, which are but the reflection of the lower and sensuous thoughts of the worshipper. The love of the beautiful in the Greek is a wholesome element in itself, but it is concerned mainly with appearances, rather than with the divine love which is articulated through

them. Outward forms are but shadows, and he who doth not look through and beyond them is unable to translate their low, sweet language.

Canst thou teach thy willing disciple why the same Nature exalteth some, while others find no pleasure even in scenes like this?

Dear Amabel! it may be likened unto a great mirror, in which one seeth the qualities of his own thought and soul reflected. To the cruel, Nature is pitiless, and even malignant; to the sorrowing, she is sad; and to the joyful, a delight. Even though the base may see some comeliness in her graceful forms, yet in spirit and character she is to every one whatsoever he maketh her.

[249] How can that be?

Behold, every man giveth color to things without, by the manner of his thought concerning them. To the good, all things are good, and to the pure, all things are pure. We gradually transform them by a transformation in ourselves, and such an inward growth may be compassed in an orderly manner with assurance.

But worldly wisdom hath not discerned this hidden path.

Verily it hath not! But it will be our delight to help in spreading this truth, and to enlighten darkened minds, as effectual doors are opened unto us. As you have learned also, the bodily tabernacle may be lifted from vexatious conditions so that it may render reasonable and pleasing service through the renewing of the mind.

Light of my life! truly the understanding of these things is above the price of rubies!

Thou speakest wisely, dear Amabel! Its very nearness causeth it to be veiled from the logic and learning of the schools. They look only with the eyes of outward observation and are moved by lo here, and lo there, having no light within. The creative power of high thoughts and divine ideals hath not been discov-

ered by them. God in Nature is the Universal Life, and in man, the Son and Brother, the Christ!

How beautiful! Did the prophet of Nazareth teach these things?

Yea, verily; to him Nature was transparent. The lilies of the field and the fowls of the air furnished him with lessons to men, and the childlike spirit of little ones was interpreted and likened to the kingdom of heaven. His judgment had to [250] do with the thoughts and intents of the heart rather than with outward appearances and observances. He saw God in himself. Other men have it in the inmost, but ignorantly cover it with vain and delusive imaginings. They will continue to be self-deceived so long as they behold their bodies as themselves. They who dwell in appearances cannot discern the Spirit. Some of the ancient prophets and poets saw God everywhere; but of this generation, both Jew and Gentile only feel him in special temples and synagogues, and at set times and seasons.

But, O Serenus! if all forces and lives are a part of the one and universal life of God, whence cometh tempests and lightnings and floods?

The lack of a spiritual self-consciousness, and the mistaken feeling that our seen forms are our real selves, make such things seem evil. They are but the labor and travail of Nature, and with our spiritual growth their terrors will disappear. At length we shall learn their laws, and make them our willing servants. This would be so now, were we not, ignorantly, slaves of the seen!

Hast thou attained unto all that thou makest known unto me?

No one can fully separate himself from his day and generation, even though the spiritual pattern be truly discerned. We have not overcome, but are overcoming. The Ideal is the inmost Real, but no one save Jesus of Nazareth hath made it fully manifest. We press forward toward the Christly mind as shown through him, and can count as already ours that measure of spiritual stature which filleth our desire. [251]

Whence hast thou this wisdom, which my father, the famous teacher and Rabban, never found?

It cometh not through scholastic excellence and the logic of the head, but by simple openness to the Spirit of Truth. The power of God-likeness groweth through the earnest desire of at-one-ment, rather than by a reasoning philosophy concerning it.

Behold, as thy disciple, I now perceive how one may be in the seen and yet of the unseen!

They are one; yet the outer is only an aspect of the living realities which repose behind it.

O my dear husband and teacher! exclaimed Amabel with delight; Nature will be more beautiful than ever before, because I feel its spirit, and behold it as a visible revelation.

Yea, bride of my heart! Love is everywhere written in living characters! Our deeper vision must be open to read them!

The shadows of evening were thickening, and the happy pair reluctantly bade adieu to their delectable vision upon the house-top, and descended again to mingle with their kind, and minister to human necessity.

Serenus had expected to find some vessel at Cæsarea bound directly for Italy, which would land at Puteoli or Brundusium, from either of which ports the journey to Rome would be made by land. But upon ascertaining that there was no immediate prospect for such an opportunity, and that the Salapiæ, a merchantman of good repute, was already laden for Tarsus, and to sail on the following day, he decided to embark for the Cilician capital.

[252] They would remain there for a time, until they were minded to take the rest of the proposed journey.

Tarsus, being a great metropolis, the seat of important schools of learning, and the meeting-place of many peoples and races, might prove a fertile field for sowing the seed of the New Faith. Amabel entered heartily into the plan. Though the birthplace of Saulus, it was beyond the reach of the Judean persecutions.

The Salapiæ was a Phœnician vessel, commanded by a Roman named Vivian, of favorable reputation and experience. She was staunch and large, having a tonnage of about eight hundred tons, and rigged after the Phœnician pattern, with a ponderous mast carrying a very large mainsail upon a long yard. A much smaller triangular foresail was rigged upon a bowsprit, which projected over the stem of the vessel forward. She carried various carved images and symbols designed to insure the favor of the gods, including a finely wrought Grecian statue of a favorite goddess, which was placed upon the stem-post at the bow.

The hour for setting sail arrived, and everything betokened a prosperous voyage. The decks were noisy with the final bustle of preparation, and with much effort the heavy anchors were weighed and secured in their places. A light favoring breeze was blowing from the south, and at length a lusty command rang out to hoist all sail; and soon the canvas began to fill, and the good ship drew steadily away upon her northward course.

Serenus and Amabel stood upon the upper deck, and with mingled emotions looked back upon the picturesque shore of Samaria which was slowly receding. Though exiles from the [203] Holy City, the world was before them, and they were happy. Without the enjoyment of freedom of soul, even native land was but a prison.

The day wore away, the white towers and roofs of Cæsarea faded from sight, and the bold range of Mount Carmel, which formed the rim of the eastern horizon, grew dim and distant.

The voyage was pleasant and uneventful, and upon the fourth day they made the harbor of Salamis on the eastern end of the island of Cyprus, where vessels from the south usually touched on the way to Tarsus. This was a large commercial city, made especially conspicuous by its important temple of the Salaminian Jupiter. Beyond the temple and city was a rich plain, encircled by hills, and watered by the abundant streams of Pediæus. As in other cities where the Jews of the Dispersion had settled,

there were several synagogues. During the day, over which the Salapiæ remained, Serenus visited two or three of them, making known the New Faith, and restoring some sick-folk through the orderly working of the divine power within him. He was cordially received by the more liberal of the Hellenistic Jews, and they were sorrowful at his departure.

Early the next morning the Salapiæ again set sail, and it was expected that, with favoring winds, Tarsus would be reached on the third day.

Everything went well until after they had rounded the point of the promontory of Dinaretum, at the northeastern extremity of the island, when with almost no warning, the vessel was suddenly struck by a tempest of great violence, throwing her nearly upon
[254] her beam-ends. It came with so little premonition that the sailors had barely begun to lower the great clumsy mainsail when it was rent in twain by the force of the wind. This eased the vessel except for a list to the leeward, caused by the shifting of the cargo. Shrieks, cries, imprecations, and prayers to the gods were mingled with the roar of the storm. So great was the panic that the master found it difficult to maintain any semblance of order among a crew which was made up of a mixture of different races and tongues.

The air was thick with blinding spray, and the stricken ship, like a wounded animal, staggered onward, laboring and straining in the boiling sea. Heavy waves washed the decks, and the soaking mass of shattered canvas swung to and fro, its tattered shreds no longer resisting the wind, which howled through them with a thunderous roar.

By Hercules! quoth master Vivian; if it must come, the gods were merciful in rending the sail, else she would have foundered at the first stroke!

The tempest was not an Etesian, as certain gales from the northwest were designated in the Levant, but blew from the southeast, from which quarter it finally settled into a steady gale.

The immediate danger seemed to be past.

The remnants of the mainsail were gradually cleared away, and the Salapiæ scudded before the wind, under bare poles, with the exception of the closely reefed foresail, which somewhat steadied her. After the decks were cleared of rubbish, all hands were put to work to right the cargo, which was done with great difficulty. The hoarse roar of the gale continued unbroken. [255] It came from a little to the east of south, which was in a direction to drive them directly toward their destination, and there was plenty of sea room which was much in their favor. For their escape the gods were thanked in various tongues, libations poured, and the commotion, which had been so noisy, was quieted.

But anon a cry came up from the lower hold that the Salapiæ was leaking. The first terrible strain of the great mainmast had opened some of the seams, and they were taking water. Once more there was despair upon the faces of the bravest-hearted sailors. The gods of all grades were again invoked, and vows renewed. But the master believed in works as well as petitions.

Bring out the cables!he cried. She must be undergirded!

With great labor a cable was slipped down over the bow, being held from each side, and passed under and back until it encircled the hull amidships, and then another, and both were strained and fastened as snugly as possible over the deck. It was a vain effort. If it prevented a further opening, it did not stop the leak. The pumps were put in motion with frequent relays.

Soon the eventful day came to an end, and the darkness of night closed around them. The bellowing wind held from the same quarter with no diminution, and the speed, even with little canvas spread, was rapid. If the leak gained upon the pumps, the only safety lay in making Tarsus, and therefore the small amount of sail was then increased as much as it would bear, and the Salapiæ swept on before the wind. [256]

Amidst all the confusion of tongues and conflict of elements, Serenus remained calm and unmoved. Amabel was at first dis-

turbed, but after some reassuring words from her husband, she remained quietly in the cabin, performing such little services for the overworked and panic-stricken sailors as were possible for the delicate hands of a woman. A part of the time Serenus was at her side, and at intervals he went out upon deck to speak words of encouragement to officers and men.

The master sent the second officer below to make reports concerning the progress of the leak. There was intense anxiety to learn whether the Salapiæ were settling, or if the pumps were equal to the inflow.

Two cubita, came up in hollow but distinct tones from below.

An hour then wearily passed, with the relay at the pumps doing their utmost.

Two cubita and one-eighth!

As the report came to his ear through a small aperture from below, the face of Vivian lost color; but despite the news he went over to the pumps and gave words of encouragement to the workers.

By the Salaminian Jupiter, we shall win! said he; and then passing along, he ordered a part of the crew to begin at once to throw the cargo overboard. He said nothing of the report from below, but the significance of the last order was understood by all. Over the slippery, reeling decks they began with a will to unload the Salapiæ.

[257] They were still swept along with unabated speed. The few dim, moving lanterns, like fireflies in the blackness, seemed to make the night thicker. The shrill creaking of the pumps sounded like ominous groans of prophetic woe as it rose above the steady, deep bellowing of the gale.

Another hour dragged itself slowly by.

Two cubita and a quarter!

The night had hardly begun.

Their former enemy, the wind, now gave them the most hope. But if it held, they could not hope to reach Tarsus before the morning of the third day from Salamis.

It was a race!

Which would win? the leak or the pumps?

The cool self-possession of Serenus greatly impressed Vivian, and the master, recognizing him as a man of uncommon character, confided to him the true state of affairs.

Serenus was silent for a moment, and then replied,

With your leave, I would speak briefly with you again in two hours.

As you will, he replied, hardly knowing what he said, and thinking the request of little importance.

Serenus returned to the cabin, and seated himself by Amabel's side, taking her hand in his own.

Bride of my heart! the Salapiæ is in some peril! Art thou repentant that thou left thy father's house?

Nay, my husband! Whatever may betide, I am joyfully with thee! But for thee my life would have gone out before. Thou hast taught me that all things work together for the best for such as have faith. I believe it! Even if our bodies sink in the tumultuous [258] sea, we will go on hand in hand, on missions of love and mercy!

God bless thee, dear Amabel! The growth in thy spiritual consciousness hath been marvellously quick and steadfast!

A gentle smile and a warm pressure of his hand were her answer.

And now, dear Amabel! I would spend a little season alone. Peradventure some light may come to me concerning this present trial, its meaning and conclusion.

Light of my life! may thou be truly exalted in the silence.

Amabel remained in the cabin, while Serenus retired to their little room and closed the door.

The gift to lift the curtain which veils the future, in varying degree, has come to a rare soul, here and there, in all ages. But

more properly it is not a favor, specially bestowed from without, but a supernal attainment within, an unwonted spiritual altitude. The prophetic instinct lies deeply embedded in the soul of man, but few there be who can strip away the thick coverings of sense, so as to read the direction of the delicate needle of the spiritual compass. Such a power is no miracle in the sense of a change or improved action on the part of the Unchangeable Perfection, but an orderly lifting of the soul into a close communion with It, the Divine Mind. Through spiritual law, steadfast in its regularity, of which the world at large has yet had but fitful glimpses, events not only distant, but of the future, are clearly
[259] laid open to highly attuned souls. History, both ancient and modern, is marked with such demonstrations of the potency of a higher law. They are crowning-points of light, like the few widely separated stars of great magnitude in the black firmament of night.

There is a psychical unfoldment without its proportionate spiritual counterpart, and there is a possible reverse order; but it is the supreme and rounded combination of both which makes the true prophet.

Such was Victor Serenus.

He was in the little room alone — no, not alone. It was his to climb the Mount of Transfiguration, and gain a view from its summit.

* * * * * * * * * *

The great turbulent waves broke upon the Salapiæ, making her quiver in every timber but he felt it not! The howling of the wind, groaning of the hard-pressed pumps, and a Babel of voices rent the air but he heard them not. The peril which threatened every soul on board steadily increased but he knew it not. His animate form reclined in the little room, but he was not there.

The embrace of the Infinite was about him!

* * * * * * * * * *

As man reckons the time of the eternal now, nearly two hours passed, when the door opened, and Serenus made his appearance.

CHAPTER XXIII
A BATTERED EAGLE

Has God on thee conferred
  A bodily presence mean as Paul,
Yet made thee bearer of a word
  Which sleepy nations as with trumpet calls?

O noble heart, accept
  With equal thanks the talent and disgrace;
The marble town unwept
  Nourish thy virtue in a private place.

Think not that unattended
  By heavenly powers thou steal'st to Solitude,
Nor yet on earth all unbefriended.
* * * * * * * *

EMERSON.

Behold we draw nigh to our journey's end, said the elder of two young men to his companion. The dark red summits of Sinai lift themselves in the distance before us, and to-morrow's sun, peradventure, will find us in the shadow of a great rock!

The God of Israel be praised! replied his companion. The shelter of the mountains will gladden our hearts, and we may find water-brooks. It is a land of promise, and rest and peace will be ours when we leave behind this weary desert, thrice heated by the rays of the Arabian sun!

The first speaker aroused himself a little, and seemed to gather new strength at the prospect. His pale face, dark sunken eyes, trembling nerves, and evident weakness of body and limb, spoke eloquently of extreme feebleness. Yet, as he gazed forward, a new light came into his eyes, as if a strong soul would spur on its frame, and command it to live. It was Saul.[9] He was mounted upon a well-laden camel, while his companion walked by his side. Hardly able to keep his hold against the swaying motion of the animal, he clung as with the grasp of desperation.

A shallow stream may easily be turned in a new direction, but to change the course of one whose flashing current is deep

[9] Gal. i. 16, 17. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia.

Says Canon Farrar in his Life and Work of St. Paul, It is difficult to conceive of any change more total, any rift of difference more deep, than that which separated Saul the persecutor from Paul the Apostle; and we are sure that like Moses, like Elijah, like our Lord Himself, like almost every great soul in ancient or modern times to whom has been intrusted the task of swaying the destinies by moulding the convictions of mankind, like Sakya Mouni, like Mahomet in the cave of Hira, like St. Francis of Assisi in his sickness, like Luther in the monastery of Erfurth, he would need a quiet period in which to elaborate his thoughts, to still the tumult of his emotions, to commune in secrecy and in silence with his own soul.... Even on grounds of historic probability, it seems unlikely that Saul should at once have been able to substitute a propaganda for an inquisition.... And so Saul went to Arabia, a word which must, I think, be understood in its popular and primary sense to mean the Sinaitic peninsula.

and swift is a herculean transaction. It must tear away much material rock, soil, vegetation, and even trees by the roots, transforming them into washed and swept debris before it can adjust itself to new banks, and scour another channel. So a great
[262] soul of vehement force is an impetuous psychological river, the reversal of which, if it be sudden, produces a spiritual cataclysm.

If an eagle of powerful and sweeping wing be met in his swift course, and drenched and battered by an opposing storm of irresistible force, he must needs alight a while upon solid ground, and through some quiet recuperation plume his spent and drooping pinions before again soaring aloft.

The world has witnessed few greater transactions than the transformation of Saulus. No material conquest, and no physical change in the face of nature, can be compared with the reversal and resurrection of a great mind. Well may it be called a miracle, if the old illogical but common definition of the term be superseded by one that is orderly and rational. Miracles are lawful, not lawless. They are circles, of which an important arc is above the limited range of the ordinary observer. They are supernatural, in the sense of being above the material and sensuous comprehension, but not violations or suspensions of the universal Divine Order. The Author of all things is never disorderly in his methods.

In the psychological realm, as in the physical, while there is a conservation of energy, there are also alternations of action and reaction. When a great soul has passed through fire and water, a condition of passivity and silence naturally follows. When the black clouds that have been rolled together by a great tempest have dissolved, the torrents ceased, and the thunder died away,
[263] then is sunlit nature unwontedly calm and peaceful, even though the marks and scars of the storm remain.

Saulus, sick at heart and wrenched in body, yearned for solitude. It was an imperative necessity. As a stricken deer by positive instinct leaves the herd, so he must step out from the sur-

rounding human current. Rest, quiet, stillness! at any sacrifice! He was like a tree which had been pulled up by the roots. His wounds must have time to heal, and the torn fibres and tendrils be soothed, refreshed, and readjusted. If the foundations of a lifetime have been swept away, there must be new excavation and bed-rock replacement. The life of Saulus had been a tempestuous current of destruction to the Nazarenes. Now he was a Nazarene!

He, who had been so exceeding jealous for the doctrine of Moses, would now be counted as the enemy of Mosaism. But Moses, to his view, was transformed. No longer the man of doctrine and ceremony, he was now the man of God.

Saulus was tossed and buffeted by restless waves, though he now discerned solid land before him. He must grasp the Immovable! He would discover GOD! As Moses had been impelled to retire to the land of Midian, where the bush glowed with a flame that did not consume, and where he had communings with the Most High, so Saulus must follow the same path.

During the process of the evolution of the human individual, every one, sooner or later, must go to his land of Midian. When the foundations of time and sense begin to totter, the smaller unit must discover its place in the Greater! Man will never find real contentment in a far-away or theoretical Deity, but he must [254] grasp the Living GOD. He is most readily known and felt, not among the busy haunts of men, but in the wild solitudes of nature. Amid such an environment, light may stream forth, mysteries be resolved, wounds healed, shelter found, and nourishment assimilated. In the SILENCE is the fitting place for the human to bathe and refresh itself in the Divine. At such seasons man may,

Sit on the desert stone
Like Elijah at Horeb's cave alone;
And a gentle voice comes through the wild,
Like a father consoling his fretful child,
That banishes bitterness, wrath, and fear,

Saying, Man is distant, but God is near.

Among all the attendants who had accompanied Saulus to Damascus, but one remained faithful to him. Some of them thought him suddenly mad, and others were minded to take him back to Jerusalem under arrest. Their counsels were confused and came to naught. But Amoz, the companion of his former disturbed nights in the Holy City, though having but little appreciation of his great change, remained personally loyal, and was willing to go with him for a time, even in the wilderness. He sympathized with his infirmities, and was tender in ministration.

It was well along in the afternoon, after the midday rest, during the terrible heat of the desert air, that the two travellers started on the last stage of their wearisome journey. A great arid sand-waste stretched away on both sides of the narrow trail, with here and there a few hardy shrubs and wiry yellow grasses which were
[265] stirred by the fitful summer air. As they advanced towards the foothills of the mountain range, the landscape became more broken by the numerous wadies which were worn by the torrential mountain streams of the rainy season, and there was an increased luxuriance of vegetation.

The Sinaitic peninsula is interesting both on account of its topographical peculiarities, and historically in its association with the giving of the Law, and other events which are recorded of the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness. Between the gulfs of Suez and Akaba, this bold mass of mountains, lying south of the great desert of Ettyh Paran, projects itself well into the Red Sea.

It was thoroughly apart from all the world highways, cities, and towns a veritable corner of the earth, surrounded by sea and desert. Its lofty reddish-brown frowning peaks looked down upon a vast solitude. They were generally precipitous, having many fissures, hollows and caves around their bases, forming a shelter from the heat of the sun, and convenient even for dwelling-places

most of the year. Amid these mountains, hermits anchorites and pilgrims found a lonely resort fitted to their desires.

As the travellers went on, the ground was more broken, the valleys deeper, and the tangled reeds and grasses greener and more varied. The trail led into a wide, shallow wady, the bed of which was still soft from recent rains, and as they toiled along the slow ascent the verdure thickened. An occasional oleander in bloom, tangles of climbing vines, scattered mulberry-trees, with here and there a palm, now gladdened their sight, in marked contrast to the barren wilderness which they had left behind. They soon found themselves among low bluffs and cliffs, with here and there a tiny stream of clear water springing from the cracks of the fissured rocks.

The whistle of quail and the whir of partridges, with the song of the lark and rock-sparrow, greeted their ears, and other birds of various hues uttered their notes and flew away as they were startled from their reedy coverts. Anon a sly fox or frightened jackal was seen galloping in the distance. They had emerged from heat, bareness, and deadness into the region of living things. The sun was declining, and the cooler air, with a great change in the face of nature, gave Saulus some increase of strength and hope.

At length a beseeching moan from the patient dromedary reminded them that the end of day was near, and that the hour for encampment and rest had come. Soon a gentle decline of dry, grassy ground was at hand. Amoz gave the camel the signal to kneel, and then carefully supported Saulus in his arms as he dismounted. He had little strength left, but yet his eyes, which had been fixed and dreamy during the day, kindled at the new and more inspiring surroundings, and the prospect of much-needed repose. Amoz deftly spread a soft carpet upon the grass, and tenderly placed Saulus upon it, where he could recline while the preparations for the night encampment were being made.

As the ship is to the sea, so is the camel to the desert, and his

[267] noiseless stepping and rhythmical careening make the likeness a striking one. The full load and equipment of the awkward brute embraced all the endless variety of necessities for nomadic life. Boxes and bundles were hung over his broad back and secured by straps and girths, so that everything was snug and convenient. The harness included some color and embellishment, the bridle being trimmed with scarlet fringe, and upon the throat-strap was hung a row of tiny tinkling bells, besides other trappings, knots, and variegated ties, which made up a picturesque combination. Pride, care, and even affection are lavished upon the faithful beast, without whose aid life and travel in the desert would be well-nigh impossible.

From among the paraphernalia which formed the dromedary cargo, Amoz drew a large circular camel's-hair cloth, with a bundle of rods and a light strong pole. The frame was joined and the pole planted, and with the cloth fastened over them, a tent, small, but ample for a person to stand upright in, was soon constructed. This, with the grassy carpet beneath and other accessories, formed a nomadic home quite complete for the air of Arabia.

From pouches and willow baskets Amoz brought forth materials for a meal. There were dried and smoked meats, dates, pomegranates, wheaten wafers, honey, cheese made from goat's milk, and wine in skin gurglets. These, with fresh water from a near-by spring in the cliff, made a comfortable repast. The camel was groomed, and given a store of water, of which, for three days past, the desert had not afforded a drop.

[268] The moist freshness of the air and neighboring animal and vegetal life, with the fact that he was near his journey's end, stirred some new life in the veins of the sore and bruised Saulus, and for the first time in years there seemed to be nourishment and rejoicing in his immediate environment.

The sun was slowly sinking in the western horizon, his parting beams brilliantly lighting up the deep-red and purplish summits

and cliffs of Sinai, which were now in near and full view. As Saulus gazed upon them they seemed almost instinct with life and weird mystery. Especially the towering heights of Horeb were eloquent with ancient sacred story. The great cluster of lesser peaks stood up like gigantic living witnesses of distant events, and brought them near. When in times gone by Saulus had read the records of the scenes which here had transpired, they seemed dead and formal, but now they teemed with life.

Darkness drew on, and with crowns newly silvered by the rising moon, these great silent sentinels told anew their mute story. Was I AM here? He who had led the Children through this land, who handed down the Law to them, whose thunderings made them tremble and whose lightnings terrified them? The Past is a part of the Present. If I AM THAT I AM dwelt here of old, he is not less present now. And those great souls, Moses and Elijah, who aforetime trod these solitudes, gazed upon these cliffs, and tabernacled in Horebdo they, unseen by the eye of sense, ever revisit these scenes?

Do the generations which follow each other in quick succession repeat in endless round the same experiences, again suffer the same trials and meet the same obstacles, or do they learn new lessons, make fresh advances, and dwell upon higher levels? Is the ancient code of stern legality, the close mechanical limitations of Thou shalt not, to be gradually set aside by the true ideal of a positive spiritual freedom, faith, love, and good works?

As the shades of evening thickly gathered, Saulus looked up towards the shining firmament which testified to the infinite and unchangeable perfection of the Divine. Surely, God and his ways can neither improve nor grow old; but the seeming alteration in his dealings with the children of men must be in their own varying moods and short range of vision. Here his meditation was suddenly interrupted.

He was seized with his nightly trembling fit, with its usual accompaniment of direful fears, forebodings, and tragic visions

of the past. Every evening brought a recurrence of these nervous spasms, which rudely broke in upon him at the same hour, regardless of how he might be occupied. His agony was fearful to behold. With loud groans he cried out to the living God for forgiveness and release.

O God, spare me! Cleanse me from this awful blood-guiltiness! O Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy!

There trooped in terrible procession before his mind the forms and faces of many innocent ones whom he had scourged and tortured. In the chill of a cold perspiration he cried out and implored that his eyes might be closed against a repetition of the scenes of the Holy City, but nothing could shut them out. With
[270] contortion of face, shaking of limb, and agony of soul, at length he sank, from thorough exhaustion into enforced quietude. After gradually reviving and recovering, he remained free, until the next evening again ushered in the same terrible experience.

A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

Amoz faithfully ministered to the necessities of Saulus, tenderly soothing him with brotherly sympathy, until long-sought quietude settled upon the little tent for the night.

The deep scars of sin and crime only can be healed by slow growth. The well-worn thought-channels of a mind which has done violence to laws of its own divine being cannot be filled and levelled by any sudden change of belief or doctrinal transformation. Well would it be for the world, if once it could be convinced that cause and effect can no more be severed upon the psychical and spiritual planes than in the material realm. There is no short cut or evasion in the moral economy. Nothing on earth can put away a state of consciousness in man but the growth of a

different one, which only may gradually and lawfully displace it. It cannot be driven out forcibly or quickly. Character is formed of thought-habits, and their exercise and dominance give them ever increasing rigidity. A renewing of the mind consists of its activity projected into a higher realm. When the leading trend of a soul is discordant with the divine order and primal love, the [271] outcome is sure to be a moral wrench difficult to repair.

The early morning sun again gilded the brown and deep-red peaks of Sinai, and Amoz was up betimes to prepare the simple morning meal, and make ready for the remaining short journey.

The high ground upon which they had encamped afforded a wide view to the eastward, and the sweet and moist morning air and dewy freshness made the broad expanse seem like a newly discovered paradise. In the distance the broad blue Gulf of Akaba reflected the golden beams of the rising orb of day, gleaming like a great opalescent sea of pearl, while in the dim purple distance beyond arose the misty Arabian peaks which skirt its farther shore. The morning was a benediction, and the world seemed peaceful and good. Nature glowed with life and cheer, and the early lights and shadows capriciously chased each other up and down the mountain-slopes in unending procession. The cloud-forms which gracefully floated over the grim summits seemed to correspond, in their fleeting evanescence, to the passing generations of men which these silent rock-ribbed witnesses had looked down upon, as if they had been a slow-moving but endless caravan.

Is anything in the universe fixed and enduring? Yea, the immortal life of man! He whose material existence is like the flitting cloud-shadows possesses a real selfhood that will expand and develop when yonder solid peaks shall have dissolved to dust and found their lowest level. [272]

Saulus felt new strength and inspiration from the breath and fragrance of Nature that smiled upon him. The beautiful surroundings, or rather the great exuberant Life which pulsated

through them, seemed to warm his soul, and cause a bursting forth of the inmost springs of his nature. The hard, formal religiosity, which like an unyielding shell had long encased him, was beginning to soften and gradually disintegrate before the force of the new spiritual current in his soul.

After the morning meal was finished, and the camel had been fed, groomed, and harnessed, the light tent was struck, and it, with the other paraphernalia, loaded upon him, they started, Saulus riding in his place, and Amoz walking, as was his wont. Two or three hours more and they would be at the foot of Horeb, their journey's end. Why were they going there? Amoz had often put this question to Saulus, but no response had been offered. He did not refuse to answer from any unwillingness, but was unable to divine any definite plan even to himself. Something seemed to draw him. Was it blind fate? Nay! he was guided by a spiritual instinct, strong but gentle, soft though unerring. He could not fathom it.

From the time of leaving Damascus, through all the weary days in the terrible desert, there had been no wavering nor uncertainty. Unseen guidance shaped the pilgrimage in every detail, mysterious even to its chief actor. A path opened before him, and he felt drawn to follow its devious winding. While he had a general purpose, he felt that its definite unfoldment was provided
[273] for by that which was superior to himself. He desired to go for a season beyond the haunts of men, and to breathe the pure air of heaven, but the particulars were plainly none of his. Could it be a divine guidance? He had always believed that the orderings of Jehovah came through outward signs, thunderings and miracles. An earthquake or a tempest might have been interpreted. But what of this still, gentle influence within him? What could move a soul which had been the noisy arena of warring forces and tumults? But this seemed to well up from the very depths of his being. Could it be God?

Had a line been stretched all the way from Damascus for

him to follow he would have gone no more unerringly, but yet, mystery though it were, he felt subject to no pressure.

How many souls have vainly sought the world over to find the Infinite, the Universal Good, and have finally discovered him in their inmost nature! They have delved through history, roamed over continents, visited holy places, searched through creeds, scanned philosophies, sounded the depths of ecclesiasticism, traversed the circumference of systems and institutions, and bowed to the authority of priest and ritual, only to discover at last the divinity of the real selfhood, that inner light which is set for the teaching of every man, coming into the world. How many have looked high and low, and cried, Lo here and Lo there, who needed only thorough self-interpretation! How many inmost and potential sons of God, through the misdirection of the imaging or creative faculty of soul, have unwittingly cast their own shadows as sons of Belial, and thereby accepted the [1]dominance of evil! How many, through the glamour of a formal and institutional plan of salvation, have unconsciously covered the hidden and normal divinity of humanity! How many, through an artificial and abnormal humility, have rated themselves as poor miserable sinners, and as a natural consequence been subtly drawn, through a moral pessimism, toward the outline of their own specification!

Two hours of early morning travel brought Saulus and Amoz to the rock-ribbed base of Mount Horeb. The cooling shade of trees and shrubs, the fresh fragrant air, and the grand outlook as they came upon the still more elevated ground at the foot of the great cliff, gave Saulus a strange sense of detachment from the earth. He felt an unwonted spiritual upliftment and exhilaration which was a revelation. The surrounding sweetness, the silence, broken only by the song and twitter of an occasional bird, descended like a healing balm upon the stained and scarred soul of the erstwhile inquisitor.

No tears

Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.

The great Mount of God, firm and unchangeable, looked down with mystical and compassionate dignity, as if to bear witness to the touch of things eternal; to invest the soul of the observer with a divine awe, perchance again to unroll for the instruction of Saulus the great Drama of the Chosen People.

The narrow trail which had been followed the day before
[275] had gradually faded out or lost itself in various disused paths which branched in different directions, and now the twain found themselves close against the precipitous side of the mountain.

Verily we must turn to the right or the left, said Amoz, for we can go no farther. But here is a cool and shady thicket. Let us go beneath its shelter and rest a while.

Guiding the camel skilfully, they threaded their way into the clump of blossoming oleanders and mulberry-trees, soon coming to a mass of clinging vines which concealed the face of the great overhanging cliff in front. Amoz helped Saulus to alight, and the faithful beast uttered a cry of joy as he awkwardly kneeled for the removal of his load. The equipments were soon unladen, and there was a feeling that the long, wearisome journey was at an end. In the midst of such verdure and freshness the toilsome days in the desert seemed only like a troublesome dream which had almost faded out. The face of Saulus brightened, the dark rings around his eyes were less heavy, and he felt some increase of strength.

The mysterious Voice which speaks within me still commands, Go forward! said Saulus.

But, O my brother, we are close against the Mount! How can we go farther?

I know not! But still its tone is clear, Go forward!

Amoz left Saulus for a moment, and carefully made his way through the tangle, to spy out, if possible, the immediate foreground. He brushed aside the climbing vines, and found himself
[276] face to face with the solid rock. He was just about to turn back,

when his eyes rested upon something which had the general form of ancient Hebrew text. The lapse of ages, with the moist atmosphere, had well nigh covered it with a luxurious growth of velvety mosses, but he could not be mistaken.

The hand of man hath wrought this! he exclaimed to himself; and without waiting to make any further examination he hurried to inform Saulus.

Behold, O Saulus! the cliff hath been graven by the hand of man!

I will go with thee, and peradventure we may give it interpretation!

As it was close at hand, Saulus, with the assistance of his companion, found no difficulty in working his way through the vines to the impenetrable barrier of stone. Amoz quickly cleared away the tangle, and then stripping off the mossy hangings, an inscription stood before them in bold, deeply engraved Hebrew characters,

GOD IS HERE

Saulus and Amoz instinctively removed their sandals, and bowed their faces to the ground. They felt a Presence surrounding them. The place was holy ground. The very trees, vines, and leaves seemed to breathe forth a fragrant benediction. To the inner eye they glowed with brightness and were not consumed. After a season of silent adoration they arose and reverently made further examination. They found other carvings and symbols, mystical in form, which they were unable to interpret.

[227] Of a surety, the Voice which guided us hither is none other than the Voice of God! said Saulus. In the fulness of time it will make everything plain! he continued with confidence.

Yea, I also am persuaded that thy footsteps have been divinely led to the Holy Mount. Here we will tabernacle until thou hast recovered thy strength.

I am already stronger! The Voice will guide and help me! Behold, I have found God!

His eye kindled with a new light, and his features were suffused with an unwonted vigor and life. He trembled, not with the fulness of fear, as in the nightly spasms, but with a thrill of joy.

O wondrous mountain! O wondrous world that pulsates with the breath of God! O mystery of mysteries! God meets men face to face!

Reverently brushing back more of the tangle, and carefully removing the velvety covering, they beheld another inscription,

GOD IS ETERNAL LOVE AND LIFE.

Saulus was lifted to the supremacy and sublimity of a new, triumphant faith. He felt the sweet certainty of something nobler and purer than he had ever conceived; a gladness that nestled in his heart, making it warm and tranquil. He had no favor to ask or petition to make of the Divinity which embraced him, for his soul was filled satisfied. There was no lack. Enswathed in the Eternal Presence, he could crave no more.

Every branch and twig and leaf seemed to be tipped with a lambent, gleaming light which shone upon him. The whole
[278] Vision smiled, and the Voice gave him a welcome, until with bated breath and throbbing heart he had a sense of leaving the body, and rising and being encircled by a golden aureole.

With eyes upturned, the bodily form of Saulus sank quietly back until he lay stretched upon the soft, mossy couch beneath him. The seen world faded out amidst the uprearing of a transcendent ecstasy.

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Amoz sat by his side, wondering at the experiences of the great soul which he had seen so variously possessed. A smile played upon the upturned face of Saulus as he lay, calm and unconscious, in the cooling shade. Was there a prophetic gleam of future power and glory? Was there some dim foretaste of an Apostolic energy, which should reach, not merely one race, but possess a moulding influence upon the world? Had he been

carried up in a Chariot of Fire to an altitude where he could look out over the Future, and rapturously behold the activity of unseen forces and intelligences, through whose final triumph the kingdom of universal love and harmony, that at-one-ment of the Divine and Human is to be ushered in?

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At length Saulus opened his eyes and sat upright. He said nothing of the Vision, for it was unspeakable.

Hand in hand Saulus and Amoz stood up and drew nearer to the great rocky Breast, which reached almost perpendicularly far up beyond the range of their vision. Again they essayed to decipher and interpret the mysterious signs and symbols which [229] were clustered about the plain sentences already read, but in vain.

Then they noticed a peculiar series of small characters, which extended to the right, behind the tangle. Following its lead, and carefully clearing away the vines and leaves which covered its farther course, there was soon revealed a great cleft in the rock. It seemed to lead directly into the heart of mighty Horeb, and was broad enough to admit a laden camel. A light, cool breeze was issuing from within, and the entrance was smooth, dry, and inviting.

With an eager and expectant air the two young Hebrews entered side by side, and were soon beyond the light of the outer world.

[280]

CHAPTER XXIV
ON THE VERGE OF THE UNSEEN

In the room
Of this grief-shadowed present, there shall be
A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw
The heart, and never shall a tender tie
Be broken; in whose reign the eternal Change
That waits on growth and action shall proceed
With everlasting Concord hand in hand.

The commander of the Salapiæ anxiously paced the dark, slippery deck, occasionally halting to encourage the sailors, or direct in the movement of some heavy piece of the cargo which was to be cast overboard, to lighten, so far as possible, the stricken ship. The shrill creaking of the pumps, as they were unceasingly worked in the prevailing darkness, sounded as might the sighs and moans of malignant fiends, who were derisively gloating over the rich prey of which they already felt sure.

Another signal from below caught the quick ear of Vivian, and he proceeded to the small tube which led down to the hold, and bending over he heard in sepulchral tones,

Two cubita and a half!

The gods be merciful! he exclaimed to himself. Nothing less than their interposition can save us!

[281] The hoarse vibrations of the surrounding tempest were mingled with its shriller tones produced by its hissing sweep through the shattered spars and rigging, all combining, like the different instruments in a great orchestra, to render a grand minor symphony of Woe and Despair.

By great exertion they were able to raise a little more canvas, as the only hope lay in making Tarsus, or some other port on the Cilician coast, toward which the wind was sweeping them. Though much more distant than Salamis, which they had left behind, there was no choice. They could go only where they were driven. The gods were invoked and libations poured, that the gale, which at first had brought them disaster, might continue. Could they make Tarsus before the Salapiæ would fill and go to the bottom?

The panic and confusion which had prevailed among the crew of many races gradually subsided, and a grim desperation settled down upon all. Each worked with a dogged, sullen intensity, as though the fate of all depended upon his own persistency of effort.

To actually face death sometimes seems to inspire a kind of stolid indifference. Even to the ignorant and worldly man the vital fact comes home that it can come but once, and that, after all, the peculiar time and means of the most universal of all human experiences are not so very important. The divine economy of the human constitution is such that when the great Fact looms up in the near foreground, there is often an unwonted serenity and confidence that are lacking in lesser trials, or even in its own more distant anticipation.

Deep down beneath the perturbed and noisy surface of human [Pg 234] consciousness there is an inherent and instinctive faith in, and recognition of, the righteousness and even beneficence of that which Is and Must Be. Only a merciful Providence could have provided that the life-long fear of meeting the King of Terrors should measurably fade out upon his near approach.

Whatever may betide, every man feels, in the profound recesses of his heart, that he will be justly dealt with, and that the natural penalty for his misdeeds should not be shunned, and that perhaps in some way it is well that it should come. The artificial, dogmatic, and superficial elements drop away, and a divinely

implanted subconscious sense of universal equity, and even love, finally comes to the surface and makes itself felt.

Man feels that he is to be fairly weighed, and will inevitably find his own moral and spiritual specific gravity. The universe is so ordered that he will invariably measure himself, for it is best that he should. He that is condemned is self-condemned. True, he regrets his own manifold mistakes, selfishness, and sensuous degradation. Their penalties will surely scarify him, and make up his beneficent hell, through which he must pass, either here or hereafter, in order to purification. Metals are only purged of their dross by being cast into the crucible.

Salvation must be the result of free moral character, and that must grow from within, for it cannot be imposed. This fundamental principle underlies all surface religions, dogmatisms, and systems.

The Salapiæ plunged dizzily onward. Amid the swash of
[283] waves upon the deck, and the swinging to and fro of the tattered remnants of sails which kept time to her staggering rhythm, a few dim, moving lanterns, like fitful fireflies, were all that could be discerned.

Vivian never lost courage and composure, though he recognized that the race between the leak and Tarsus included only a bare possibility of reaching the latter, the probabilities being an hundred-fold in favor of the former.

It was past midnight when Serenus emerged from the little cabin where he had been in the silence with the Universal. His mien was calm and confident, and his face radiant with a sense of inner reserve and spiritual upliftment. He first sought Amabel, who was patiently awaiting him. There was no trace of care on her beautiful face, and she greeted him with a warm embrace.

Is it well, my husband?

It is well, Light of my life! We shall be brought safely through this trial, and it will prove a blessing to many. While I

am persuaded of the result, I wot not in what manner the escape will come.

Is the sea cruel and treacherous, or does the trial come for our sifting and testing?

The sea is good, even though it now seem contrary. Trials come in the ordinary course of things, and seeming adversity is the Adversary which appears so that we may grow through the process of overcoming him. Satan is the Tester, or negative Developer, of man. But for trials and obstacles, life would become stagnant and unprofitable for lack of exercise. Behold, the glory of the latter end of Job was the result of an experience in which the Adversary had an important office. [284]

But surely such a trial as this tempest is not a thing to be sought?

Nay, verily! We are not to go into temptation, or seek for trial! Only such testing as comes from beyond our control can minister to our discipline and profit. Having faithfully followed our highest inward guidance, everything that comes will, in some way, be transformed into blessing.

O my beloved! I feel that what you say is true, but yet it seemeth to be a great mystery. Hark! behold the tempest hath a sound like the roaring of lions!

Hast thou forgotten the record of Daniel? His uplifting faith closed the mouths of the lions of his day! These will be closed also! Behold it is our inner and secret enemies that are most besetting. It is not the angry roar of the tempest that threatens, but the still, hidden leak. But deliverance from both will come! Yea, we may exclaim, not God be merciful, but God is merciful!

I believe it! How glorious!

I rejoice that thou dost not doubt. But go now and rest, while I seek the master of the ship.

Go, for God is with thee!

With much effort Serenus lifted the cover of a small hatchway, and passed out upon the dark, storm-swept deck. The violent

pitching, noise, and blackness were forbidding; and had he not been free from the bondage of appearances, he would have quailed at the prospect. At length he found Vivian, who was much surprised.

How camest thou here? said the master. But before Serenus
[285] had time to answer, he continued,

But now I am minded of thy purpose to see me again. Thou art welcome, and I count thee to be discreet; but before I hearken to thy message, I must tell thee that unless a miracle take place, the Salapiæ will go down, and all on board perish!

Serenus was silent for a moment, and Vivian continued,

I must leave thee straightway, until once more I make inquiry concerning the water in the hold! But soon I will return.

He left Serenus clinging to one of the smaller masts, and slowly made his way to the speaking-tube to get another report. In response to his signal, hollow tones full of direful prophecy came up,

Three cubita full!

The pumps were doing their utmost, and the master fully realized that the contest was hopeless. But he was brave.

Heroes are not the exclusive product of any one time, race, or religion.

He said nothing to the crew of the increasing peril, but with cheerful tones encouraged their efforts. Skilfully guiding his course to the place where Serenus was waiting, he said,

O Hebrew! though thou art young, I am persuaded of thy wisdom. Speak now, and I will listen to thy message.

The darkness was so dense that neither could behold more than the dim outlines of the other's form, and the noise made conversation impossible except as their faces were almost to-
[286] gether. Each put his hand upon the shoulder of the other, while they steadied themselves by the mast. But both were as serene as if they were basking in the summer sunshine upon a favored shore.

The Salapiæ will be lost, but every soul on board will be safely landed in Tarsus! said Serenus.

Thou speakest in no uncertain tone, O wise young Hebrew! Whence hast thou this knowledge?

O noble and brave Roman! only by the fulfilment of my prophecy can its truth be proven to thee. I ask thee not to believe, and am well persuaded that thou wilt abate no effort for salvation because of my assurance. Nay, I would have thee use the utmost diligence; for man must employ all the means, and fully co-operate with God in working out his own salvation.

Hast thou inquired of the God of the Hebrews and received this favoring answer from him?

My vision of the future cometh not from the special God of any race or tribe, but through the power which the universal Divine Spirit, that ruleth the world and all its elements, hath conferred upon man to read and interpret his laws.

Vivian, though a man of much worldly wisdom, but dimly understood the meaning of Serenus, but yet deeply felt the superiority of the man who stood face to face with him. There was a positive spiritual influence and hope which came from contact with the young man which he could not divine.

Wilt thou not acquaint me more fully of thy power? How canst thou read the fate of the Salapiæ, and that none on board of her shall perish, except that thy God hath given thee some visible token? And if thou hast received a sign, surely thou mayst show [287] it me and reveal its significance. I would fain believe it, yet how can I be assured?

Thou art well skilled in the sailing of ships, and I will not question thy wisdom in thine own calling; but in a way of which I cannot tell thee, and which thou thinkest not of, every soul on board will come safely to Tarsus!

The gods grant that thy words may come to pass, but thou hast offered me no sign. I would that I had inquired of the oracle

in the great temple of the Salaminian Jupiter. But thou dost count thy God greater than Jupiter?

Yea, he is the God above all gods! He is the All in All! His laws and methods are orderly and universal! His wisdom and love are already perfect, and we need not importune him to change his plans. We approach him, not by vain oblation or libation, but by communion and oneness of spirit. We lift ourselves into harmony with his beneficent and eternal order. Even the laws which produce wind and wave are good, but to narrow and perverted human vision they often appear evil.

But surely thou wilt tell me more of thy prophecy, and by what means thou didst receive the message?

Behold I was about to acquaint thee with that! The divine wisdom hath placed within the nature of all men certain prophetic spiritual instincts, but they are yet latent, except in a few souls who have been inwardly illumined. Favored in my lot and expe-
[288] rience, some of this inner clear-sightedness hath come to me. At certain times and seasons it enableth me to behold that which is commonly invisible, and also, not only to foretell some events of the future, but verily to see them. This power cometh not by any special and miraculous bestowment, but through an inward unfolding, and an understanding of the law of inspiration. Thou hast the same power in thyself, but it hath not yet been awakened. Thou wouldst know how I, or rather the spirit that is within me, is assured of our safety! I answer, that though it hath not yet come to pass, yet in my retiracy this night have seen every one safe in Tarsus.[10]

The master of the Salapiæ was attentive and interested, but not convinced. But the earnest sincerity and indefinable charm of the young man's presence almost persuaded him against his

[10] If Paul, under similar circumstances, was able to foretell the result of a shipwreck, as related in the Biblical narrative, why should not an equally gifted and illumined soul in like manner be clear-sighted? The higher perception in man is an orderly attainment rather than an unearned supernatural bestowment.

will.

The Roman and Hebrew stood in brotherly embrace amidst the roar and darkness, but one represented the seen and sensuous, and the other the unseen and real. Man, to the first, was only a visible and animated form; to the second, he was a spiritual entity, even though now possessing material form and expression. To one, when he sank beneath the waves, it was his end; to the other, the manwas intact. To the latter, the sinking, at the worst, could be but an unmoral incident; not an evil, as that term conveys ethical quality. Drowning could neither take away from, nor add to, the real man or his character. The loss of one mode of expression [289] does not touch the ego.

What counsel dost thou offer me? inquired Vivian.

In the conduct of the ship, none! Abate not one jot of the labor at the pumps, and diligently employ all thy skill and watchfulness in the use of other means which thou deemest wise. My converse with thee is that of man and brother, but as master of the Salapiæ none can question thee.

Behold thou hast great charity and a loving spirit! exclaimed Vivian. I have heard many of thy race revile us as outcasts and idolaters, while they called themselves the chosen of heaven.

Thou art my brother, even though thou understandest not my faith, and we are all sons of the Most High God.

Verily such a saying mine ears never before have heard! Thou dost me too much honor! With all my diligence to please the gods, I have always counted myself as a man subject to error and passion!

While thou hast made many mistakes, and hast much to learn, thou art inmostly a child of Goodness; and as thou dost come to thy veritable self, thou wilt discover thine own likeness to the Divine Father!

Surely thou art more than a Hebrew, for thy religion is noble! Deeply hast thou persuaded me!

Think no more of thyself as a man who is in subjection to evil; for it hath been truly written, that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The thought of one concerning himself fills and shapes his inner life. Feel thyself to be a son of God, and
[290] such a consciousness will renew and purify thy soul. Behold, the world knoweth not this law! The old self with its deeds will drop away, while the new man will be formed within, and his outward works will answer to the inner thought-ideal. Thus the visible expression will be the index of the pattern that is held in the heart!

I marvel at such a doctrine, and yet feel its truth. Hath any man yet filled to the full the divine measure of which thou hast spoken?

Yea, there hath been a Man of Nazareth, of Judea, born a Hebrew, who recognized the perfect human divinity. He is the Ideal, not only for his own nation, but for all the world, whether Greek, Roman, Jew, barbarian, or Scythian! He knew the inmost oneness of God and man, because he knew himself as he was.

Where is he now? How I would like to see him!

Because he was so large in his love, he was hated and crucified by his own people, my people, and passed into the unseen.

In answer to many more questions, Serenus then gave Vivian a brief account of Jesus, the Christ, his mission, and the quality of his life. The twain, amid the hissing of the elements and the groaning of the pumps, stood in the thick darkness, with their arms affectionately around each other in brotherly communion.

Thou hast touched me deeply, said Vivian. I love thy spirit, and rejoice that we have met! I thank thee that thou hast brought me a knowledge of the Ideal, the Nazarene; so noble, so large, and so beyond race and outward condition! He will fill an uninterpreted longing of my whole life. I shall think of him
[291] even during our peril. Behold thou hast made me feel that there

is something in us, of which the tempest, at its worst, cannot rob us. Would that I could have seen the Ideal!

Thou mayst do even more, for thou canst feel his spirit within thee!

I have it, and it shall possess me!

Vivian expressed a tender and earnest thankfulness, and they parted long after midnight.

The next morning brought no occasion for hope. The water in the hold steadily increased, and the gale showed little abatement. In every direction there was nothing but an endless gray waste of boiling waves, which seemed hungry and impatient to swallow up the stricken ship. The weary hours of the second day dragged along with interminable slowness, and the impenetrable gloom of outward conditions had no ray to lighten it. The strain and fatigue brought such a torpor of stolid indifference upon the crew, that to some death would have been almost welcome. Desperate but wholly unsuccessful attempts were made to draw down some remnants of sail upon the outside to lessen the inflow, but the water in the hold gained with fateful certainty.

As the day finally wore away, the force of the tempest slowly lessened, making their progress less rapid. Even at the present rate, it would be impossible to reach Tarsus before the middle of the following day, and a careful survey made it a matter of great doubt whether or not the Salapiæ could float until the next daybreak.

The master again called Serenus upon deck, giving him an affectionate greeting. [292]

O my brother! unless peradventure a miracle be wrought, I can discern no manner of means for the fulfilment of thy prophecy! I wot not how the Salapiæ in any wise can reach the desired haven. But while I cannot descry the end of thy good message, I have joy in thinking of the Ideal, and of feeling an earnest of the same spirit within.

I rejoice with thee that thou dost recognize the living Witness!

But O most worthy brother and prophet! peradventure we be saved from this present peril, some other expedience will yet bring us to our end. How sayest thou?

There is no end! If my prophecy prove vain, and we sink in the depths of the sea, behold that spirit which is within us, and which we are, hath continuance.

It seemeth to be a great mystery!

Behold thou hast a body, but art not body! Thou art spirit even now. If thy seen form dissolve, thou wilt still live, even though in the invisible! Thou wilt see, but not with these eyes; thou wilt hear and feel, but not with these members; yea, thou wilt think and know and love!

I have heard of shades beyond the Styx, but counted them to be only shadows. Dost thou affirm that they are verily ourselves?

Yea! of a surety! When thou goest out of thy tent or house, art thou not the same? Behold the unseen country is all about us, and peopled with those who have laid off the flesh. As our garments wax old and are laid aside for those more befitting, so are we clothed with such bodies as belong to the place of our
[293] sojourn.

Unto what canst thou liken them?

Our habitations beyond the Styx, as thou sayest, are such as we are now building by our thoughts, desires, and loves. Even though unseen, we are uprearing and putting them on day by day.

In what manner art thou persuaded of these things?

The Voice within giveth its testimony concerning them, and moreover, those that are yonder have sent back messages. It cometh to pass also that certain who are still with us have their inner sight opened, so that those who are invisible become manifest. If thou wouldst know of that whereof I speak, open thy soul

and become like a little child, and the silent voice within will yield some growing assurance.

I believe that I already hear its still, sweet utterance! Unto this day it hath been asleep, but thou hast aroused it, and it will live!

Thou givest good tidings! behold the spirit of the Christ the son of God in thee is coming into manifestation!

O thou greater than a Hebrew! thou hast discovered me to myself. I joyfully accept thy teaching and prophecy, for of a truth thou hast a wisdom beyond that of earth!

The master of the Salapiæ always had been brave and manly, but now there was a light in his eye and a joy in his heart which was unwonted, even when no peril threatened. It was not so much the words which Serenus had spoken, but the spirit and love which filled him, and which he radiated, that had taken hold of the Roman.

The gloom of another night was gathering, and the Salapiæ [page] was visibly deeper in the sea. But as the blackness closed around the sinking ship, there was no more joyful soul on board than Vivian. Amidst all the stress and danger his greatest wonder was himself.

Down, and still lower down, the helpless wreck heaved and plunged heavily during the second night. Would daylight ever come?

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At last the morning dawned, and they were still afloat. The storm had ceased, and the sun arose clear and bright from the eastern sea. The wind which had driven them so strongly towards Tarsus had entirely died away, and a light breeze was coming from the opposite direction. They were able to hoist more sail, but being obliged to tack, the progress of the water-logged ship became hardly perceptible.

Tarsus was now not very distant, but every soul on board clearly saw that the Salapiæ never could reach the wished-for

port. Slowly, but with grim certainty, the water in the hold deepened, and direful Fate, with cruel footsteps, was silently approaching.

The faith of Serenus and Amabel never wavered. Even that of Vivian was firm and confident. But he neglected no feasible effort that belonged to his calling, and made all possible preparations for what seemed to be immediately impending. The ship boats had been swept away during the first assault of the storm, but with all diligence two rafts had been hurriedly constructed of such materials as were at hand, and some provisions and gurglets
[295] of water and wine lashed to them. But the waves were still high, and would wash over them if they were launched.

While there were no cries of confusion, as upon the first day of the storm, petitions were being offered, and vows made in various tongues to gods of different names.

The human mind at its greatest can grasp but an infinitesimal fraction of the Infinite, but it always has a deific ideal which fills its utmost capacity. No two ever possess quite the same, but to the individual it is the highest, and all there is. To it he must cry, and upon it he must stay himself, for he cannot go beyond.

But the Infinite dwells in every man's ideal, however low. It is the link, unseen and perchance crude, which draws and binds him to the Eternal Goodness. Let us respect the supreme pattern of every human brother, though he be ignorant, simple, theologically untaught, or even vile. For him it must stand until a greater and purer takes its place. The Father's House, even though provisional and unshapely, is hidden within the deep mists of every human soul.

But look! The city of Tarsus, with its white roofs and gilded towers, is now dimly visible in the far distance.

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The day was perfect. As if in repentance of her past angry mood, Nature arrayed herself in her most beautiful robes. The air was of crystalline clearness, and not a cloud specked the

blue azure above. During the morning hours the sea gradually calmed down, and the reflected sunlight gleamed and danced upon the crest of every billow with sparkling brilliancy. From [296] the Salapiæ the vast expanse seemed to be the embodiment of Treachery outwardly dressed in living Beauty. With cruel spirit, but seductive charm, it was stealthily waiting to take mortals into its cold embrace forever.

The ship could not possibly last until midday. The adverse breeze freshened, and her labored progress almost ceased.

But look again! A speck appears upon the water near Tarsus, and it slowly, oh, how slowly, grows larger. It was described as some kind of a ship under full sail, and under the favoring breeze it was soon evident that her approach was rapid. She was a fast sailer, and the style of her rigging was that of a pleasure-yacht rather than a merchantman. The freshening breeze rendered her oars unnecessary. Every one except those at the pumps strained his eyes in that direction.

Hope kindled in every breast, and hearts beat quickly.

> Oh, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
> Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings!

The strange craft was of graceful model, and with every sail set her sharp prow cut the waves as she moved like a graceful bird in rapid flight; and yet how slowly the distance seemed to diminish! But new hope was new life! The men at the pumps received an endowment of herculean strength. Signals of distress were hoisted and responded to, and the beautiful ship steered directly for them.

The Salapiæ was now so low that she might go down at any moment. It was like a race in the games of Olympia, where the [297] runners were full abreast as they neared the goal.

Now the strange sea-bird flies rapidly! See! she is rounding and coming alongside! What a beautiful spectacle, and how graceful her approach! She is built for pleasure and racing.

The rail and trimmings about her deck were brilliant with burnished metal, and her prow was surmounted with the graceful bronze statue of a Tarsian goddess. Upon her peak floated a silvery purple banner, heavily wrought with golden figures, representing various emblems and symbols in the Temple of Apollo. All her splendid appointments indicated that she must be owned by some one of patrician rank and great wealth. She came near. The name of the pleasure ship was discerned as the Nereid.

We will save you! cried the master in a loud voice. Behold our boats! They will take off every one!

Before Vivian had time to express his gratitude, the small boats were already lowered, and in a short time every one on the Salapiæ was safely transferred to the gayly decked barge. All were most hospitably received, and their necessities kindly ministered unto.

Vivian told the commander of himself, and of the Salapiæ, and made known Serenus and Amabel as his honored friends. The master of the pleasure ship then indicated his desire to present them to the owner, whom he said was a Roman of noble family, and Vice Legate of Tarsus. They had chosen the fine morning for a pleasure excursion.

[298] Descending a short flight of stairs, Vivian, Serenus, and Amabel were ushered into a cabin of goodly size, at the farther end of which were two men sitting at a table, evidently engaged in playing some kind of a friendly game. One was tall and straight, with long black hair, heavy eyebrows and lashes, and full beard, of dignified bearing, and features of the Roman cast. The other was rather slight and effeminate in personal appearance, with wavy brown hair, dark blue eyes, luxurious in costume, and an air of polish and refinement. The first was the Roman, Marcius, and the other Leander the Greek.[11] After a brief exchange of polite greetings and congratulations, they all ascended to the deck to

[11] Both introduced in the third chapter.

ascertain the fate of the Salapiæ. They were none too soon; for in a moment, with a great surge, she was received into the full embrace of the hungry sea, the billows closing over her forever.

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CHAPTER XXV
A PSYCHICAL JOURNEY

How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find.
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of an inner joy.

Saulus and Amoz advancing into the cave found it dry and capacious, and also well lighted for some distance from the entrance. A long-continued cleft upward in the face of the rock freely admitted the outer air and daylight, and also sunlight at certain hours. The walls on either side gave evidence of previous human habitation, being marked with various inscriptions, symbolic characters, and drawings. In the deeper recesses the darkness increased, and various intricate passage-ways opened into curious ramifications and apartments of indefinite extent. The temperature was comfortable, and the atmosphere pleasant.

Behold a favored habitation already prepared for us! said Amoz. The wisdom of the Voice is now made manifest!

Yea, of a surety it hath guided us to this place, and here we will abide!

[300] Amoz returned for the camel, and soon led him to the entrance, where he was unladen, and after a little delay a convenient place in the cave was selected for him. Before the shades of evening fell everything was well arranged for a stay of indefinite length.

The silence and seclusion seemed delightful, and even paradisaical to the restless and depressed soul of Saulus. The world, with its unending strifes and jealousies, its warring creeds and

religious persecutions, and all the surge and sweat of human passion, was far away.

Often, above all things, man needs a face-to-face interview with his real self, in order that he may interpret the hidden springs of his own being, sound the intricate deeps of his primal nature, study ideals, and survey foundations. A life devoted entirely to the Objective, even if its ends be worthy, lacks an understanding of those subjective mental and spiritual reservoirs which is indispensable to harmonious development.

No one can avoid companionship. But objective personalities supply but a small part of the innate craving for intimate good cheer and friendliness. Whether or not consciously chosen, the ego must have a supremely close communion with its own thought-forms, its veritable creations. As a duplicate selfhood it is firmly linked to them. If man must carry this secondary man with him, what sort of a character shall he be? His fellowmen, with whom he daily mingles, though seemingly near, are infinitely distant when compared with his own self-made mental environment, his real world.

Every man is like an artist who is sentenced to dwell with his own pictures, so hung that they continually stare him in the face. But especially when from choice or necessity one for [301] a season turns aside from his accustomed Objective, he finds intimate relationship with his subjective structures of the past. He is forced to a careful inspection of his own stored-up images, and it is woeful if they frown upon him. All the hates, envies, and antagonisms that he has ever projected are turned in upon himself. They surround and threaten him, and their growls are disquieting. He thought they had been sent away, but their accumulated recoil was only postponed.

On the other hand, all the loves, harmonies, and hopes that have been sent out, now possibly forgotten, rise up out of the misty deep and send back a smile, and return affection with added interest. They are lived over again.

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.

Heavens and hells are stored up in the chambers of the soul, and if perchance diversion for a time may seem to bury them, their resurrection and visitation surely follow in due course.

But as Saulus looked in upon himself, he found that he could increasingly choose and control those things that should mentally dwell with him. With all his cruel impetuosity of the past, his life had not been devoid of good thoughts and deeds, and these he struggled to keep in review. But vastly greater than all else, when the dark Past marshalled itself before him, he turned to the Present God. How unlike was the God he found in Horeb to the tribal Deity he had served in the Holy City! The difference was
[302] in his own vision.

Often he would sit for hours with eyes closed and body relaxed, in silent communion with the felt Presence. At such times he realized a positive influx of sweetness and strength from the Universal, which thrilled him in mind and body.

The crust of his former hardness was breaking up, and his soul was growing childlike and plastic. The rigid dogmatism and intolerance in him, which for so long had been impenetrable to the Spirit of Truth, were dissolving, and love and wisdom were opened up, as water from a fountain whose seal had been newly unloosed.

Saulus marvelled as much at the seeming change in his God as in the transformation in himself. That Deity who had rejoiced in persecution, and been angry and jealous, was now the Author of love, peace, and concord. It was clear that his former concept of God had been but a telescopic likeness of himself.

The cave at Horeb proved to be a most agreeable place of abode, and Saulus found in his seclusion some of the happiest days of his life. Though the evening experiences of weakness and trembling seemed to have become a fixed habit, and scars and strains in soul and body were present as the legacy of the

past, there was a gradual gain of vigor. The expanding soul was coming into a knowledge of its intrinsic divinity and oneness with the Father, and this reflected and expressed a growing wholeness.

Amoz, with the camel, made some explorations in the adjacent region; and about two hours distant, at a crossing of some of the more important paths, he found a small station of a few huts, where supplies could be replenished, and occasional [304] communication had with the outside world.

But what was the world of the past to Saulus? It seemed as if he was severed from everything that had gone before, and had built a new world for himself. His own transformation was vastly greater than the change from the Holy City to the cave. But he had no intention of becoming a hermit. He would, for a time, gather his resources, and firmly knit the sinews of his soul, in preparation for future conquests for the truth among men. The mistakes and enmities of the past he would bury beneath a mountain of love and good-will which should brighten the world.

But what of past personal ties and obligations? First of all, what of little Cassia? What of his ardent affection and faithful promises to her? Was his love, which formerly was so consuming, yet alive and burning brightly? Did she stand out in lifelike proportions in his new world, or had her image largely faded out of his heart? What had she heard of him? and what would she think?

There were hours when these and similar questions thrust themselves upon Saulus with terrible force. The intense and all-absorbing love of Cassia, her unbounded confidence in him, and his former rapt devotion to her in return, stood out before him in letters of fire.

One evening his period of suffering, which he had already named a stake in the flesh,left him in a strange condition of unrest and uncertainty. The thought of Cassia filled him with something like its old-time intensity. Questions crowded themselves upon him, and clamored for an answer. But while the little [305]

maiden of the Sheepmarket still occupied a very warm place in his heart, with it was mingled a peculiar sense of ever-widening distance.

He put himself on the witness-stand,

Am I not a different Saulus from he who aforetime loved Cassia, and to whom she was so devoted?

Has this new and larger love driven out my affection, or only for a time overshadowed it?

Is she really fair and good, or did I deceive myself?

Can my love ever again be so all-absorbing?

Yes and no were both echoed as responses through the troubled mind of Saulus. Opposing emotions marshalled themselves, and in confusing alternation took possession of him. For a little time he forgot the cave and all its associations in the fierce play of the contending forces.

But as the hours of the eventful evening wore away, the thought of Cassia gained the ascendency. The very inscriptions of ancient lore upon the walls seemed to melt into her name, and yield a fragrance of her personality.

At length a peculiar quietude slowly settled upon him, but he felt that it was not sleep. An unwonted lightness of soul and an ethereal consciousness subtly crept in and possessed his senses. The solid walls of the cave became unsteady, as if about to dissolve, but there was such a charming naturalness in the change that it did not much surprise him.

[305] Surely I am not dreaming!

Of a verity, I believe that I am out of the body!

What lightness! what freedom!

Soon he found himself standing beside his own prostrate form. He clearly looked down upon the features—his features! The eyes were lightly closed, the lips slightly parted, and the breast rose and fell but feebly with the movement of the breath. Otherwise the body was still.

What a mystery!

Have I died?

No! that cannot be, for I no, not I, for I am here but my body yonder is manifestly animate. How easily I can move!

All feeling of strangeness soon wore off. Simply from force of desire he rose in the air for a short distance, and looked down upon his material counterpart as one would view a sleeping comrade. What wonderful liberty and power before unknown! No wings were needed to move through the air as he might choose.

Amoz, wide awake, was sitting quietly near the dim lamp, but saw nothing unusual, believing that Saulus was asleep. Though the little lamp gave but a feeble light, the cave, to Saulus, seemed filled with a soft but brilliant illumination. Considering the unwonted powers and resources at his command, he was surprised at his own lack of surprise. His senses were extended and sublimated to a wonderful degree. He then tried to attract the attention of Amoz, but received no recognition. Not to be baffled, he took hold of him, and finally shouted in his ear, but with no effect.

Then Saulus began to wonder. He could see and hear, but not be seen or heard. He moved about the cave and made some further exploration, and found that the solid walls were no obstruction. They were not solid. He could not only see through them, but pass through.

Then the thought of Cassia, which had been so strongly present before, again became uppermost. But something of the same uncertainty within himself regarding her still remained.

Realizing that desire was all that was now needed for propulsion, he came to a sudden determination.

I will go up to the Holy City, and once more behold Cassia, and all the things that I left behind.

With the speed of thought, he left his own body, Amoz, and the cave behind him, and passed out from the mountain over the desert, and on, on, unerringly, by the power of simple volition. Space and time were limitations of the past.

How cabbined, cribbed, and confined is man when weighted down with the little load of dust which he has picked up, moulded, and for a brief season carried about! To him chasms of time and space are wide and unbridgable, and he travels his little round with barriers on every hand, and an ever-present sense of servitude.

But it is not the grosser body per se which is so much his real encumbrance as his false consciousness concerning it. He is steeped in a prevailing and ever-ruling materialism. He is enslaved because he is ignorant of the laws of his own independence. He not only lives in the thought that the body is I, but
[307] also bows in subjection to those ever-varying conditions, which with chameleon-like accuracy shadow forth, in exact expression, the quality of his past composite of thought. The consciousness which he has carelessly or ignorantly taken on, both racially and individually, makes it his tyrannical master. Sometimes, smarting under its rule, he has turned and denounced it as bad, and hence a gloomy and destructive asceticism. This is no less a mistake than a garish and overwrought materialism.

Everything is useful, and everything good when not misplaced. Evil is therefore not made up of the real quality of things, but of their misplacement in the mind of man. But the very misplacement is educative. So rapidly as the human mentality through evolutionary friction is rectified, the whole cosmos falls into line. Then the nothingness of evil, as an entity, will be made manifest. At present it is the name of a condition of relativity.

Psychical experiences, unshackled by the supposed necessary limitations of body in past ages, having been exceptional, have been counted as supernatural, abnormal, or only imaginary. The present age, with its scientific spirit, its broad toleration, and its recognition of the reign of law in every realm, increasingly finds that they are merely subtle links or aspects of the Universal Order. When their causation is traced, their normality observed, and their utility understood, the weirdness and seeming abnormity

which have been put upon them will be removed from the human lens, and the true place and use of uncommon phenomena become evident. So long as they are regarded as strange, uncanny, [308] or in some degree unsound in scope or tendency, they are made gratuitously harmful through the quality of thought concerning them.

With desert and mountain left behind in his flight, Saulus found himself at the portal of the Sheepgate of the Holy City, ready to enter.[12]

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The city lamps flickered here and there, the gates were still open, and the throng passing in and out as was wont. The shifting panorama of people of various races, dialects, and costumes, pouring through the massive arched portal with the general din and confusion, were all so familiar, that Saulus almost forgot himself in the midst of an environment so long habituated. He stood for a few moments in a retired corner, striving to recall the strange thread of his eventful past, and then joined the current which was entering the city. His sense of ethereal lightness continued, and he walked by mere easy desire without effort. Quickening his pace, he accidentally came in sharp contact with a Roman guard who had charge of the gate, and who was rapidly going in the opposite direction to order it closed for the night. [309] He involuntarily stopped to apologize, but was momentarily surprised to find himself utterly unrecognized. Then, halting for

[12] The Biblical narrative repeatedly confirms the supposition that Paul was, by nature and experience, subject to trances and visions, or, as translated into modern parlance, he was a psychic. It is evident that this, in legitimate form, is not inconsistent with Apostolic devotion and spiritual attainment.

The recorded experience of Swedenborg of departure from the body during a trance, and witnessing a large fire in Stockholm, three hundred miles distant, may be mentioned as an illustration in this line, among thousands with which history abounds. While in Gottenburg on the 19th of June, 1759, he saw and described in detail the progress and final control of the conflagration, which was afterwards completely verified.

a moment, he surveyed his own bodily proportions, and they seemed as usual. But anon a sense of his newly recognized powers flashed upon him, and he passed on without further hindrance or obstacle.

What security and immunity!

He could see and hear everything, but did not attract attention, and could not if he would. Following the well-worn thoroughfare, he soon came to the inn, and turned and entered. He passed by Almon, who with some companions were in the courtway, and continued to the family apartment, but seeing nothing of Cassia he ascended to the roof, thinking that she might be in her wonted corner. The moon was shining brightly, and every well-known object stood out in bold relief, but Cassia was not there. Then he bethought himself that she was presumably in her own apartment. He hurried down the stairway, where every step was like an old acquaintance, and coming to the entrance, easily passed in without any movement of the closed door.

* * * * * * * * * *

Cassia was seated upon a low divan, and near by, upon a small table, stood a lamp which had burned out for lack of oil. But, as in the cave, a strange soft light made everything clear to Saulus.

Her lithe, shapely form was wrapped in the ample folds of an
[310] easynégligérobe, and her long tresses fell behind in careless profusion over her comely white neck. She sat with one hand pressed against her childlike face, which was paler than was wont, her elbow resting upon the small table at her side. Her downcast eyes were swollen and red from weeping, her heart beating quickly, and a long-drawn sigh escaped from her lips as Saulus entered. He was distressed by her changed appearance. The happy smile which formerly played upon her delicate features had been replaced by a sorrowful, drawn expression, and the erstwhile full ripe red lips, so carelessly parted, were pale and compressed.

How changed! Is this really you, Cassia dear?

He seated himself by her side, and taking her hand in his, pressed it to his lips, and then, with a reverent air, gave her a kiss upon the forehead. She felt it not. Then he gazed into her eyes, hoping in vain that once again there might be reflected some image of himself.

Her manner was abstracted, and soon, with deep emotion, she began talking to herself,

O my Saulus! Where art thou? and what evil hath befallen thee? Behold thy Cassia weeps for thee and cannot be comforted. Shall I mourn thee as dead?

Saulus listened in agony, but could not make his presence known. Every word cut him to the heart.

I will not believe the tidings that have come to me. Some say that thou hast become a lunatic, and some that thou wast smitten by the sun and died, and others that thou hast joined the hated Nazarenes. Peradventure they are all lies! O Saulus! I am persuaded that thou art still faithful. I wot not but that thou art sick or in peril! O Saulus! why dost thou not return? [311]

Then she arose and paced to and fro in the little apartment, and Saulus beseechingly followed her. She spoke once more,

O my loved one! I feel almost that thou art here! Something like thy sweet breath came upon my cheek! Nay! my imagination doth deceive me!

Then she sat down and buried her face in her hands, and burst into fresh weeping.

Saulus could endure the scene no longer. Thrilled and overwhelmed, he withdrew in like manner as he had entered. In the effort to calm himself he visited some of the other apartments.

After satisfying himself that his father, mother, and Rebecca were no longer in the Holy City, he again ascended to the roof and sat down, if possible to quiet his distress. Soon he grew more peaceful. He looked up into the starry firmament, far above the local and temporary scenes of turmoil and disappointment, and stillness came into his soul. The intensity of that which had been

near and present was merged into a living sense of the broad, the Real, and the Universal. The personal affection which had been so narrowly centred, was submerged in a love that was all-embracing.

With a tranquil feeling of strength and inclination, and without any conscious passage of time, he found himself again in the cave at Horeb, and everything as he had left it. He sought his quiet, prostrate form, with which he had all the while been connected by an invisible spiritual cord, and with a quick but indescribable pang repossessed his corporeal frame, opened his eyes, and sat upright.

CHAPTER XXVI
A POWERFUL PULSE STIRRED

> Truth, when stripped of the masks and stains that have been unwittingly put upon her, hath a fair countenance, and all who behold her inner beauty thus revealed, have a drawing in their hearts towards her.

The blue sparkling waves closed over the grave of the Salapiæ with no sigh of repentance, their sportive play having suffered but a moment of interruption. Tears filled the eyes of Vivian as she disappeared, but soon he regained his wonted composure. From long-continued intimacy she had seemed almost a living thing, and he had regard for every plank and spar which pertained to her. Now she was gone forever.

But mingled with the sense of loss there was a great joy, not only on account of the assured safety of every soul which had been under his care, but that the prophecy, for its own sake and that of Serenus, had been so signally verified. He hailed it as a positive sign and confirmation of the wisdom of his friend, and still more of the power of the New Faith which had been awakened within him. To his belief was added demonstration.

The weather being fine, the little group, at the invitation of Marcius, were seated under a canopy upon the upper deck of the Nereid, while refreshments were being prepared for them below. The graceful galley, with a favoring breeze and every sail set, [313] was now speeding along towards Tarsus.

"The gods be thanked that I sought the sea to-day," said Marcius.

"Verily we are thankful, and fully persuaded both of the wisdom and goodness of thy choice," replied Vivian.

By Pallas! it doth seem strange! I had already directed the oarsmen to make ready the small barge for an excursion up the Cydnus, and was almost in readiness to depart. But a mysterious impulse seized me to change the plan, and to order the Nereid to be manned for a day's cruise instead. Something well nigh like a voice importuned me to put out to sea, and I obeyed.

A truce to thy superstition, said Leander. Thou art always eager for mystery, and unable to believe thy senses. I rejoice in thine altered purpose, and that through it our friends can continue their sea voyage, instead of taking a rough one over the Styx; but verily, thy fancy hath become unruly.

O faithless Greek! thou believest nothing! Thou shouldst deny that the wind ever bloweth because thou canst not see its color and shape! I am persuaded that oracular voices are not alone in temples. Peradventure the gods whispered to me!

Leander shrugged his shoulders, and good-humoredly smiled, with a derisive air.

Shades of Pluto! only children and women believe the unbelievable!

Marcius was undisturbed by the reckless sarcasm of his friend, and calmly continued,

[314] He who limits his belief to the testimony of the senses is a fool, and only lightly skims the surface of life. What sayest thou, Master Vivian?

The flight of years had wrought an important change both in the character and social position of Marcius, but the improvement in Leander was much more superficial.

The mysterious meeting face to face with Alethea in the adytum of the Temple proved to be an important event in the experience and pursuits of the Roman. After the weird night of that notable judgment and warning, which through beautiful but terribly earnest lips were wafted from the realm of the Unseen, he had become a man of higher ideals. Though fond of races, athletics, and sports in general, the overt vices of former years

fell away, and he grew thoughtful, reserved, and even kindly in his disposition. Being of patrician lineage, and possessing excellent native ability as well as great wealth, he had, by the imperial edict of the Emperor Tiberius, recently been appointed Vice Legate of Tarsus and its outlying provinces, so that he was now next in rank to the Roman governor. After the reign of Tiberius he was continued in the same position by Gaius, and still afterwards by Claudius.

While he formally continued such outward devotion to the Roman and Tarsian deities as was customary in Tarsus, there had grown to be a depth and seriousness in his life which was unwonted for the period, and far removed from the grossness of his earlier years. Though having but a dim appreciation of true spiritual attainment, yet the corrupt and sensuous worship of the time became increasingly unsatisfying. He openly avowed to his friends that to his certain knowledge human life was unbroken by [365] the dark passage of the Styx, and that character and consciousness continued. Aside, however, from a light round of official duties, his time was largely given to wholesome amusements. But this did not prevent some irregular study of Greek lore, and a little familiarity with the higher ancient philosophy.

Although Leander was now outwardly respectable, as the term went in Tarsus, there was a growing distance between the two friends which was plain to both. Marcius permitted the continuance of some intimacy because of former friendship, and also that his influence might be helpful to the volatile Greek.

Vivian gave his unqualified assent to the question of Marcius, and added,

O my lord! my good friend Serenus hath much wisdom concerning the philosophy of life, present and future, and hath taught me to my great profit.

Marcius cast an inquiring but rather incredulous look upon the young Hebrew, and observed,

I am glad that thou art a philosopher! I have many questionings which disquiet me. Peradventure we may reason together with profit. Pardon my inquiry, art thou a Greek?

The question was natural, as Serenus showed but little of the distinctive Hebrew physiognomy, and especially as philosophical inquiry and speculation were more common among the Greeks than any other nation. However, his fair and almost youthful appearance had little in common with the usual characteristics of a typical sage.

I am a Hebrew, though a native of Alexandria, replied
[316] Serenus modestly.

Marcius showed a little surprise; for his contact with the Hebrews of Tarsus had made them seem abhorrent and bigoted, and the supposition that an Israelite could be different was new. His sly, sarcastic look of unbelief expressed as plainly as words could have uttered,

A philosophical Hebrew! A curiosity indeed!

But quickly suppressing any appearance of disrespect, and noting the noble and manly bearing of Serenus, he politely continued,

Pardon me! I have in no wise much knowledge of your people, but have had the feeling that their philosophy, and religion also, consisted of a foolish round of ceremonialism, and that their devotion is paid to one poor and exclusive tribal deity. And have they not an exceeding contempt for all other religions and peoples?

With dignified calmness Serenus replied,

Thou judgest not unrighteously, my lord Marcius. I would that it were altogether different.

Marcius was pleased with the serene manliness of Serenus, and turning to Vivian remarked,

Of all Hebrews, thy friend is the only one whom I have ever known in whose eyes everything peculiar to his own people did not seem wholly righteous.

Though born a Hebrew, I am persuaded that he discerneth the inner goodness of all men, replied Vivian.

If he showeth that kind of a spirit, I shall be glad to listen, even if I do not believe his teaching! Where, O Serenus! hath thy doctrines been taught, and in what school hast thou found thy philosophy?

In my early youth I was a pupil of Philo of Alexandria, and afterwards sat at the feet of the Rabban Gamaliel at Jerusalem. But with all due honor to them, more hath come to me that pertaineth not to the schools.

From whence, then, is thy learning?

In worldly wisdom, science, and the Jewish law, I am beholden to their teaching; but there remaineth a higher knowledge, the inner working of which they but feebly discern. It hath to do with the life of man, now and hereafter, and the cultivation of his spiritual forces.

I feel a concern touching these things, and would fain know more of life and destiny. Peradventure some profit may come to me through thy wisdom.

I trow thou art not fully content with the teaching of the sages! Doubtless thou art well versed in the philosophies of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epicurus?

I boast not myself of a deep understanding of their doctrines; but at seasons when my sports have become wearisome, I have felt some inner craving which I have sought to satisfy with their wisdom. But I confess to thee that they have not fully ministered to my need.

Wherein lieth thy discontent, O my lord Marcius?

In my earlier years I counted myself an Epicurean; but it hath become manifest that the doctrine of Epicurus hath lost its purity in the lives and doings of its professed disciples. But I am persuaded that it hath error from the beginning. Aforetime an experience in the adytum of the Temple at Tarsus showed me

that death doth not end all, as hath been taught. Since then I have earnestly desired the full truth.

Thou speakest wisely. The Epicurean philosophy contained some measure of truth, but the disbelief of life after the grave is
[318] a deadly error.

Of that I am truly convinced. But what dost thou think of pleasure? Epicurus taught that it was the chief end of life, but that it could only be attained through a rational and prudent wisdom.

In other words, that excesses defeated the very thing sought!

Yea, verily; but his followers have put this out of mind.

Pleasure that cometh from righteousness is well, but that which seemeth to come from slavery to the lower self, in due time bringeth forth a harvest of self-destruction!

I have had manifold witness of what thou sayest.

But there is a pleasure that endureth which cometh from conformity to the higher law. Behold the spirit of that law may be summed up in love to all men.

Leander took no interest in the converse, and pleading some excuse, retired to the cabin below, where he could read poetry or recite tragedy in his own dramatic manner undisturbed. But Marcius, having an innate fondness for philosophical and metaphysical speculations, was greatly interested.

Amabel withdrew for rest to an apartment which had been specially assigned to her; and as the Nereid sped on towards Tarsus, Marcius, Vivian, and Serenus continued their familiar conversation.

What thinkest thou, O Serenus! of the seeming voice which turned me from the Cydnus to the sea? As it hath come to pass, had I not heeded it, every soul on the Salapiæ would have gone
[319] down with her. Was it a whisper of one of the gods?

The answer to thy question hath within it that which to all peoples and religions is a great mystery. But the strangeness hath only been in their perception. Peradventure it may seem an offence unto thy religion if I speak freely unto thee.

Nay, I am pleased to listen; for I perceive that thou hast regard to the truth, as thou believest, without prejudice.

I also perceive that thou, Lord Marcius, art a Roman of honor and fairness of judgment. But to thy question. Be not surprised when I assure thee that there is but one God, and not gods many!

Marcius was momentarily impatient. There was a sternness in his large black eyes which boded controversy and disagreement. But bethinking himself of the respect due his guest, and of his own earnest request for an answer, he quietly observed,

Pardon me; but I was minded from Vivian's testimony concerning thy broad philosophy, that thou didst no longer devote thyself to the leanness of the single tribal god of thy people. Behold how much more free and abundant is homage to all the gods!

Thou sayest well that the Hebrew ideal of God is narrow, mean, and selfish! He is not great enough to regard any but themselves! With all their sincerity, they worship a false god. But the gods of the Greeks and Romans are also false. They have the same passions, weaknesses, and changeableness that belong to men; they are but magnified images of their worshippers!

Marcius was so struck by the truth of the statement that he uttered no protest, and Serenus continued, [320]

The one true God is supreme over all. Through his perfect economy he ordereth all nations and tribes, yea, and everything seen and unseen. He loveth all, for he is Love. He is the eternal and omnipresent Spirit, who hath no local habitation, for he filleth all space. In him we have our breath and life, for he is the source of all being. We, being his children, and made in his image, are spirits, as he is Spirit, even while wearing fleshly garments.

Marcius was silent, and listened with rapt attention.

The Father of all things hath everything orderly in his dealings with the world and the children of men. He hath from the beginning ordained powers and laws which are unchangeably

perfect in their operation; and man, by acquainting himself with their methods and beneficent regularity, may command their ministry. Through an understanding of them he may even grow to be Godlike. Behold, man reckoneth himself to be a creature of the dust and of short duration; and by an inner law which he knoweth not of he hath completely filled the measure of his thought. It is an unchangeable, divine behest, that man grows into the likeness of what he believes is. Behold, the Greeks and Romans desire good in their worship, but in their craving to discern God, the Unseen, they have, in low degree, personified his laws and forces to their hurt. Hence many gods of many names! They have mistakenly tried to bring God down to their level, instead of lifting their thought towards him the Perfect and Unchangeable. This is because their minds are fixed wholly upon the things that are seen, and therefore they count [321] their bodies to be themselves.

Marcius was visibly moved.

Thou hast faithfully drawn my likeness. I had always believed that the body, or rather the head, which is a part of it, did the thinking, until the vision of Alethea. Then I perceived that thinking was possible without a seen body. I was beholden to believe what I saw, but knew not how it could be.

Of a verity, it is the real self that thinks and knows; the body being only its instrument of manifestation. Can a harp play of itself, without a harper?

Thine interpretation is good! And now, as thou hast set forth the gods of the Greeks and Romans, tell me more fully of the God of the Hebrews. Surely they worship not such an one as thou hast commended?

The Hebrew is right in his belief of One; but his small and selfish ideal concerning him hath brought forth the natural fruit of uncharitableness, pride, and hollow ceremony. But I unlovingly condemn neither Roman, Greek, nor Jew. Things that are imperfect satisfy not, and therefore finally work out that which

is higher. Because men believe their inner nature to be of the seen instead of spiritual, they become carnal in the dim light of such a standpoint, which is fixed among outward and deceptive appearances. The knowledge of their inner being, and that they are the offspring of, and one with, the Spirit, which is All in All, is not theirs, because they look downward. But all the children of men are slowly feeling their way towards God; and through the teaching of manifold tribulations will finally behold the Father's goodness, which will draw all to him. Could they be persuaded that they are spirits now, no longer mistaking their bodies for [p. 272] themselves, like the lilies, they would grow naturally towards beauty and perfection. Love would drive out hatred, and inner spiritual harmony replace the prevailing lower consciousness.

By Pallas, pardon the force of habit, thy philosophy is both reasonable and well-pleasing! Behold, while it is new to mine ears, something within—peradventure the voice of the morning seems almost to testify to its truth. But thou hast not yet interpreted the utterance which led me to turn from the Cydnus to the sea. It seemeth marvellous that, while it guided me, I felt that I freely chose the cruise.

That which I have spoken may help in the understanding of the voice. The mind of man is so subtly wrought that it hath many hidden forces which commonly remain latent, and of the usefulness of which men are ignorant. We may be likened to children with playthings in their hands, in which are wrapped up signs and wonders. The dominion of soul or mind extendeth to the ends of the earth, and is in no wise limited to the bodily members. The Universal Spirit, though not regarded in man's thoughts, often speaketh to his inner nature. Like uttereth itself to like, and spirit to spirit. Of a verity, it never ceaseth its whisperings to every inner ear that is open. But few there be that listen. Peradventure in some way thou art being prepared to be a listener. I am persuaded, therefore, that this day, before the third hour, thou didst have a touch, in thine inmost soul, of the peril

of the Salapiæ, and a prompting of thy free will to come to her relief. That which seemeth a mystery may be childlike and plain
[323] when its orderly working is made known. Thou mightest also have been moved like as by a flash by the outgoing of our own thought, which is a divine operation put into our own hands for ministry and service to one another.

Then thou dost not count the voice as marvellous?

Peradventure a miracle to thee, because it seemeth strange in thine eyes; but no more wonderful in itself than that the goodly Nereid is wafted along by the air of heaven.

The theologies of all the ages have uniformly held in disregard that which has been termed naturalism. But it seems pertinent to inquire where its boundary lines can be drawn, and, in fact, if it does not include everything, both material and spiritual. If these terms were employed simply to designate an orderly lower and higher in the established economy, as they sometimes are, their usefulness would be obvious. But they have been set in antithesis, one seeming to imply the divine and orderly course of all sequence, and the other that economy broken into or superseded. Can the perfect and unchangeable God contradict himself? Is the spiritual realm less amenable to uniform method in the relation of cause and effect than its external and material counterpart?

Just in proportion that the normality of the summits of moral and spiritual attainment is presented, they are made attractive to the human mind and consciousness. In the very nature of things, supernaturalism,which savors of the unnatural and abnormal, fails to commend itself to the highest reason. In some degree it is repellent. As human ignorance, superstition, and irrational
[324] assumption are left behind, the hearts of men go out after an orderly Deity. They turn towards him as naturally as flowers open themselves to the sun. The book of nature contains a symmetrical revelation of God, and there is nothing common nor unclean. There is no secular, for all is sacred. Everything has been consecrated without the intervention of the puny rites of

man.

A lawful chain of sequences is as surely found in the soul as in chemistry or physics. When the orderly beauty of individual spiritual unfoldment is seen by man, be he high or low, ignorant or learned, bond or free, black or white, Roman or Greek, pagan or Christian, his heart throbs, and his desire warms towards the upward path which opens before him.

The announcement came up from below that refreshments were served, and Marcius gracefully escorted his guests to the faultless repast. In the beauty of every detail, the triclinium of the house of a Roman senator could hardly have excelled the private dining-apartment of the Nereid. With artistic gracefulness flowers and perfumes were mingled with dainty viands. The highly polished floor, which was tinted with minium, exhaled a delicate, rose-like odor. Four serving-boys, in white robes of bissus, entered while the guests were standing, and placed upon each corner of the table a small tutelary statue, or Lar, and after all were reclining, reverently raised an amphora of wine above their heads, exclaiming in concert, "May the gods favor us!" Marcius seemed unconscious of any ostentation, nothing being unusual. His guests were quite at ease. Choice old Falernian and other wines were offered, but declined, and with the true instinct [326] of a host, Marcius partook very sparingly of them himself.

The conversation turned upon the recent storm, the experiences of the Salapiæ, Tarsian life, the latest news from Rome, and other current topics.

When the meal was ended they again ascended to the upper deck. With every stitch of canvas drawing the fresh breeze, and every spar bending gracefully with the pressure, the Nereid skimmed rapidly over the waves, and erelong the separate towers and roofs of Tarsus began to resolve themselves out of the broadening gray-and-white mass. The white sails of the ships of many nations also dotted the harbor in the distance.

As soon as the little group were again seated, Marcius ex-

pressed his desire to know yet more fully of the opinions and doctrines of Serenus.

Thy philosophy seemeth so reasonable and pleasing that I would fain listen to thee further. The worship of Jupiter, Hercules, and all the gods of Rome and Tarsus hath not given me full satisfaction, and their former purity hath become degenerated. But I would have none of the Hebrew austerity and stiff ceremonialism. I have beheld their gall-and-wormwood faces in Tarsus, and their sackcloth and ashes, self-conceit and ugly circumcision, disgust me. But thou art no Hebrew! If thou wert born to them, thou art not of them, for thou beholdest good in all men.

I perceive that of a verity thou dost desire the truth, replied Serenus. Whosoever seeketh it for its own sake will come more and more into its light, and wax strong in its strength.
[326] Nothing less can break the shackles of superstition and bigotry, whether of Hebrew, Greek, or Roman fashioning, and set men free. Only he who seeth some good idea, some Godlikeness in all hath his eyes open to behold the oneness and allness of Truth, which includeth concord and love, and which is yet to be the great religion of the children of men. The self-sufficient and vain-glorious devotees of the many cults and theologies each believe themselves alone to be righteous; for their outward gaze is fastened upon the most evil and unreal aspects of all systems besides their own.

Thinkest thou that I have misjudged the Hebrew? Behold I have seen those things of which I have spoken in the very streets of Tarsus.

I doubt not the outward appearances which thou hast witnessed; but even in those hollow and ostentatious ceremonials there may be an inner good intent. All men are blindly feeling after God, the chief Good; but they often lose themselves in the by-paths of external authority and unreasoning belief. Men have the utterance of the Spirit of Truth in their inmost being,

but they fail to interpret its drawing, because they are listening to a confused chorus of voices outside. Behold the divine law, or the perfect guide, for the thought and conduct of men hath not been fully set forth by seers and philosophers, inscribed in creeds or voiced by oracles, neither hath the Israelitish Decalogue, which was engraven upon tables of stone, entirely contained it. But in mans being, or real nature, it is written in living characters, letters of fire.

Then if one be wayward and disobedient, he offendeth not [127] so much external codes, as the laws and principles of his own constitution.

Thou couldst not have declared the truth more perfectly! There is a divine image, or Son of God, in man. He may be known as the Anointed One, or Christ, within. But commonly he remaineth unmanifested.

By Hercules! pass over the custom, that seemeth to be a hard saying. Sayest thou that the ignorant, the base, and all men have this Anointed One, the Son, hidden within the depths of their being?

Yea; it is the very corner-stone of their nature, though they know it not. They think and feel that all men — themselves included — are corrupt in their being, because the troubled waves upon the surface of their every-day consciousness are evil and rebellious. Therefore they yield themselves to the dominion of appearances, and become slaves to the seen, and to those things which their own thoughts have created, and their own sensuous faculties upreared.

O wise young Hebrew! nay, more than Hebrew! thy philosophy, as thou settest it forth, carrieth conviction, and seemeth worthy of confidence. It satisfieth my questionings far more perfectly than anything I have found in Greek or Roman lore. But I fain would know if any one among all the sons of men hath fully brought the Son, the Anointed One — or Christ, as thou hast called him — into real and perfect outward manifestation? Behold

is not this the great need in order that men may have their inmost quality made visible? Thinkest thou that such an Inner made
[328] Outer will ever appear among the children of men?

HE HATH APPEARED ALREADY!

The intense interest which had made Marcius almost oblivious to their rapid progress seemed to reach a climax. His strong, dark features lighted up with an unwonted curiosity; but at that moment there was a commotion around them, for they had arrived at the landing where they were to disembark.

Behold thy converse hath touched my very heart, and I pray thee that I may hear further of this matter. Do thou and thy wife purpose to abide in Tarsus?

Peradventure for a season, though we have set our faces towards Rome.

I bid you welcome to my palace. Mine is thine. Pray abide under my roof during your sojourn.

Thou dost honor us with great kindness; but we are wonted to little pomp, and thy hospitality seemeth too generous.

Thou dost deserve honor for thy great goodness and learning; but if thou dost so desire, thy abiding-place shall, withal, be humble, and thou shalt be free from obligation.

Serenus accepted the hearty invitation, and with Amabel prepared to leave the Nereid and become guests of Marcius. Vivian also was warmly welcomed to the special friendship of the Vice Legate, and was assured of the pleasure which his visits to the palace would afford.

By the order of Marcius the rescued sailors of the Salapiæ were to be abundantly ministered unto so long as their necessities remained.

[329] Leander, while outwardly gracious to the new-found friends of Marcius, could hardly conceal his jealousy towards them; for their converse had disquieted him, and his own society and games had been superseded.

The state carriage, or chariot, of Marcius, with three gayly caparisoned horses of choice breed, harnessed abreast, was awaiting him when the Nereid landed; and soon the Vice Legate, with his friends, including Leander, were rolling rapidly over the well-worn flags towards the palace. The luxurious equipage, with the richly adorned charioteer and footmen, the clatter of the hoofs of the noble steeds, and the musical jingle of silver chain traces, drew the attention of every one in the streets while they passed by. As they dashed rapidly through the business quarter, a young woman, seemingly a Jewess, no longer in the early flush of youth, but of remarkable beauty, was just emerging from one of the bazaars, where she had been to make some trifling purchases.

It was Rebecca!

Casting an involuntary glance upwards, the face of Marcius — that face forever carved upon the tablet of memory — was directly before her. A quick shiver shot through her frame, but in the twinkling of an eye her glance took in another face just behind. Barely suppressing the impulse to speak aloud, she exclaimed to herself,

My friend of the Holy City! and with THAT ROMAN!

[330]

CHAPTER XXVII
A MESSAGE FROM STEPHANOS

Every incident of the journey to the Holy City was fresh and vivid to Saulus, and he felt persuaded that it was no dream. Amoz observed his quick uprising, which astonished him, because but a short time had passed since he had been soothed and quieted after his wonted evening plaint.

The next day Saulus wrote the following letter:

Marcheshvan, VIIIth day.

IN A CAVE AT HOREB,
WILDERNESS OF SINAI.

O my dear Cassia!

Things have befallen me which will seem strange to thee! I have been led by the God which is above all gods, who speaketh to me from the stillness within, into a new and higher way that I knew not. Behold thou wilt have exceeding contempt for me when thou knowest that I have become a follower of the Nazarene, and am filled with great sorrow at my former persecution of his followers. I have deep repentance for my manifold unrighteous deeds, even though I thought to do service to the God of Israel. Through a leading that I would not resist I have journeyed into the wilderness, away from the habitations of men,
[331] that I might commune with a Greater than the God known by our nation, and receive inspiration from him. Here I am patiently adding strength to strength, that in the fulness of time I may go forth to proclaim liberty to all who are bound, whether through

subjection to the flesh, or under the galling yoke of the ceremonial law. I feel a renewing in my mind, and have an unwonted joy in the freedom and purity of the New Faith. Behold it satisfieth every desire of the heart, and cometh as a healing balm to my former restless hatred and false righteousness. I delight in the true God, for he is over all men,Abiding Love, and no longer the jealous leader of one people.

O Cassia, well beloved! my soul earnest longing is that thou also might have regard to this truth, for its value is above rubies! Wilt thou not open thy heart to its sweet spirit? My love waxeth strong towards thee, but I am constrained to make known everything concerning myself. Thou freely gavest me the love of thy heart and thy steadfast promise of faithfulness, but perchance thou wilt not regard me as the same Saulus that possessed thy warm affection. But with all humility I am persuaded that my present state is not to be compared with the former time, when I was given over to angry disputations, yea, and fiery persecutions, which are among the base things that I forever have put behind me.

In the place of hatred for all but the straitest sect of the Chosen People, I now exercise love towards all men. Dost thou not see, O my Cassia! that we were altogether fettered in our doctrine; for a Godly religion aboundeth in peace, joy, and good-will. If thy soul yet yearneth with affection towards thy lover, I pray thee that it may go out even more strongly in the favor of this great [282] and living Faith!

Behold we were altogether mistaken about the evil intent of the followers of the Nazarene! Through false report and a perverted mind we believed these children of the Light to be idolaters and unclean. But verily, they have a ministry of goodly service and longsuffering.

It is meet that I should write unto thee, O my little Cassia! with mine own hand, to give assurance that my soul affection for thee abideth single and true. I pray thee that thou consider

well that the new and all-abounding joy that I have in the New Faith hath not rendered me unfaithful. But I can in no wise abate one jot or tittle of my devotion to a great future work, to bring all men, so far as I am able, to a knowledge of the truth. This new and higher way was made manifest for all the world through the despised prophet of Nazareth, whose disciples I have so grievously smitten and afflicted aforetime.

To thee, O Cassia! I remain with all constancy, if thy heart affection still aboundeth to me-ward, not the same self-willed zealot thou hast known, but the devoted Apostle of the Most High, and the earnest minister of the New Faith to all men. But with my love in no wise abated towards thee, nothing on earth, not even the utter loss of thy devotion, can in the least tempt me to turn back to my former manner of mind. If thou hast no desire to receive the new Saulus in the place of him whom thou hast known, behold I freely give thee release from all thy plighted
[333] faith, so that thou mayest be fully free.

Perchance divers rumors have come to thine ears concerning me, but I beseech thee to give them no place. Howbeit, in this epistle I have fully opened my heart unto thee.

Of all the company that left the Holy City under my leadership, Amoz alone remaineth with me.

Again I declare my love, and send greetings to all thy father house!

Peace to thee, Cassia!

SAULUS.

On the same day that the above was written, Saulus wrote the following to Rebecca, who was now in her Tarsian home. Both letters were despatched by Amoz to the station where they would be taken by a passing caravan.

Marcheshvan, VIIIth day.

In a Cave at Horeb,
Sinaitic Wilderness, Arabia.

O my dear Rebecca!

I would fain pour out my heart unto thee! Behold, my beloved sister, thou wilt have unwonted astonishment when this epistle reacheth thine hand, to know that thy hard-hearted but now contrite brother dwelleth in a cave in the land of Arabia. But thou wilt marvel yet more greatly, when I declare unto thee that I am a disciple of the New Faith. I, Saulus! so long exceeding mad against those of that Way, am a miracle unto myself! I well nigh feel my soul to be twain in one body,the Old and the New; but I live and move, now and henceforth, in the New.

It is meet that thou, my sister, companion and guardian of my [134] tender years, shouldst now receive some acknowledgment of the abundance of thy gentle goodness and great patience to me-ward throughout my whole unrighteous course of life. While I persuaded myself through deceitful belief that I was faithful to the Chosen People, and even doing God service in my threatenings and slaughter among the saints of God, there was a Spirit giving utterance deep within my soul which never ceased to rebuke me. But I was stiff-necked, and would not listen to that Voice, which I now know to have been the judgment of the Most High. The Eternal Spirit was prone to touch my spirit, but in my blindness I would have none of it. In due season that inner reverberation became like the sound of thunder! I vainly strove to stop my ears and to drown its persuasion by scrupulous ceremonial service, and withal by persecuting all who were not of the straitest sect of the household of Israel.

But why set before thee afresh those things which thou knowest too well, and which must needs only provoke my shame. From this day I leave them behind, and hold them no more in remembrance. Thou didst ever strive to guide my feet in the higher way, but in my pride and vainglory I despised thy counsel! Of

all who abode in the house at the Sheepmarket, thou only didst discern some reflection of truth in the lives of the followers of the manifested Light!

Honor to Serenus! I was hardened against that pure wisdom in him which thou didst so clearly perceive! Perfect contentment can never again possess me until I behold him face to face, yea, and sit at his feet, and learn more of that Spirit of Truth which
[335] so clearly shone through him, after the pattern of the Nazarene. The remembrance of his unfailing virtue will remain with me and yield inspiration. Hast thou any knowledge of his place of sojourn since I banished him from the Holy City? Moreover, hast thou heard any tidings from Amabel, the daughter of the Rabban, who departed from her father's house, yea, and the Holy City also, for the sake of the New Faith?

Regarding my own present state, I am persuaded that I have some beginnings of that Spirit which filled Jesus of Nazareth. I patiently wait that I may learn more of his life from those who were outwardly taught of him.

The solitude of the wilderness, the joy of the Unseen Presence, and rest from the turmoil of the world and the differences of men, are my meat and drink. In due time they will heal the wounds of my repentant soul, and be manifested in new strength of body, howbeit a weakness yet remaineth with me. Peradventure it is a messenger to rebuke any spiritual pride that may beset me, and also that through its overcoming I may wax stronger in the inner man.

If any disciples of the New Faith should journey so far as Tarsus, I beseech thee that thou be further taught of them. I also am minded that, by the goodness of thy life, thou wilt commend the Truth to our beloved father and mother.

In the fulness of time I will return and be among men, that I may publish abroad the glad tidings of the new kingdom to all who will listen. Nothing can hinder me, and no enemies can stay my zeal in the work whereunto I am appointed. In the strength

of God, and through the power of his might, I will give myself to [336] the teaching of all nations.

My faithful friend Amoz abideth with me, and the cave at Horeb is a goodly habitation. Behold it hath been hallowed by the Godly men and prophets of past generations, and their living but unseen presence yieldeth a benediction.

I trust that in due season I may receive a letter of goodly size written by thine own hand.

Some one of the caravans from Cæsarea that cross the desert of Ettyh Paran to the land of Midian will bring it nigh to Horeb.

May the Spirit that filled the Nazarene be in and with thee!

Peace and greetings to our father and mother!

SAULUS.

The days that followed passed serenely with the two inmates of the cave. Saulus steadily gained in strength of body, and his vigor of soul also increased day by day. Often during the morning hours, with Amoz and the camel, he made short journeys in the adjacent region, generally returning by the sixth hour of the day to their wonted solitude.

Amoz felt a growing concern touching the experiences and plans of Saulus, whom he learned to love with a deep devotion, and to whose teaching he listened with gladness and profit. One evening an unwonted long silence succeeded the period of Sauluss weakness, and Amoz was moved to inquire concerning the nature of his self-communing. [337]

O my dear friend and teacher, I would know the secret of thy meditations! Behold, when thou art silent with thine eyes closed, thy face almost seemeth to shine with joy! Tell me of thy thoughts! When I fain would rest my mind, it is full of troubled waves, and I find no peace.

Thy inquiry concerneth a great truth to which the eyes of the world are yet holden. It hath been made known to me through

the working of my great tribulation. A little while aforetime my former bitterness and persecutions stood out before my soul by day and night. The thoughts of my innumerable transgressions scourged me without measure, and I knew of no escape. Vainly I strove to put them to flight, but their hellish faces of reproach gathered thick, and stared at me in season and out of season. Wherever I turned, my tormentors followed, and my soul was affrighted. But a new and higher way hath been revealed unto me. I fasten my meditation upon God, the Omnipresent Good, and upon everything that is true and beautiful and of good report, and behold the former things flee because they have no place!

Behold that is a path to freedom that I have not understood! My former life hath not been given to persecutions, but even those things that appear much smaller greatly disquiet me. Slumber forsaketh mine eyelids by reason of many things that seem against me. My soul is filled with manifold fears that have taken up their habitation in me and will not be removed. But thou hast given me much light, and filled me with hope. I thought it wise
[338] to hide these things from thee, but now rejoice that I have invited thy counsel. I will fasten my thoughts upon the Good and not the evil. But the way seemeth not easy, for the strong who possess a fortress will not be put out except by a stronger.

Thou judgest rightly. It is not a light thing, but patience will accomplish her perfect work and in due season be rewarded. Because all things rest in the bosom of God, Good is stronger than all else, yea, it is all! Behold we ignorantly magnify evil by our mistaken thoughts until it covereth everything! To the pure eye and the right thought adverse appearances become friendly. All things were created good, but man formeth them anew for himself by his thought. God is too pure to behold iniquity, because only he who hath in himself some measure of evil hath the perverted vision to recognize it.

Behold, O Saulus! thy wisdom leadeth into the light, and thou hast planted my feet upon a rock! I bless the day upon

which I turned my steps into the wilderness with thee! By thy interpretation it well nigh appeareth that every man, through his own thoughts, shapeth to himself the whole world in which he dwelleth!

Thou speakest a hidden truth, which in the fulness of time will become plain, and thereby the kingdom of Heaven will be set up in all the earth! The world groaneth and travaileth through the fear of things that it hath recreated through its own vain imagining. As to unseemly fears, they abide not only with thee, but with all men. Because our fathers have feared God instead of loving and seeking him, they have filled the earth with trembling and weakness. Fear hath torment, and bringeth forth an all-pre- [239] vailing harvest of pain and sorrow, and also sickness of mind and body! Our fathers at this very mountain did quake and tremble because they thought God, like a fretful man, was angry, and therefore sent a tempest of thunderings and lightnings. To give our souls to the dominion of things that are seen also bringeth us into subjection to evil. They are but outward appearances, while unseen verities abide forever.

I give judgment that thou hast learned all these things since thy departure from the Holy City?

Thou thinkest rightly! They came not from the traditions of men, nor the teaching of schools, but are revealed only from within!

The next day Amoz made a visit to the halting-place of the caravans, and upon his return handed a sealed package to Saulus. It was a letter from Cassia, and ran as follows:

Jerusalem, Chisleu XVIth.

O thou false-hearted Saulus!

My hand well nigh refuseth to render me service!

How hath the joy and desire of my heart turned to ashes!

How proudly didst thou mount thy steed, and depart from the Holy City at the head of thy goodly company in the service of the Chosen People!

How brave and valiant didst thou appear as thou turned thine eyes up to the casement of thy Cassia and waved a salutation, and then, in the lead of thy procession, wound thy way through
[340] the streets of the Holy City!

And now thou dost send me a constrained epistle from a lonely cave in the wilderness, where with one base follower thou dost hide thy shamefacedness!

Thou who didst chastise heretics and blasphemers, and pursue them from house to house, and take them to prison! Fallen! so that they even put thee to disgrace!

Thou! whose penetrating search after the followers of the Nazarene was like an eagle after his prey—THOU a Nazarene!

I have mourned thee sore! Rumors came to me from Damascus, but I believed them not, and remained faithful to Saul—the love of my heart!

The night-watches have witnessed my weeping and desolation!

I have clothed myself in sackcloth and mourned!

My face is bowed in the dust, and my tongue cleaveth to the roof of my mouth!

Behold the fountains of my tears have dried up!

I have wandered in the streets of the Holy City, vainly hoping that I might see thy face!

In my distress I have walked to and fro in my chamber, and anon gazed down through the casement where thine eyes rested as thou departed looking for thy return!

Once I perceived something like a shadow of thy form, and felt thy breath upon my cheek, and a kiss out of the dim light seemed to rest upon me, but in all I was mocked!

Was all thy former love and devotion but vain deceit, or hast thou gone mad? It hath been so reported, and I am constrained to believe it! [341]

Would that I had never seen thy face!

I hold in contempt the love which thou dost now profess for me!

Thou hast despised not me only, but my family and people and religion, and all which thou when thou wert Saulus rightly honored!

My heart is bruised, my face blanched, and my form shrunken!

I shall die! but many deaths would in no wise turn my heart in thy favor!

CASSIA.

The visage of Saulus as he read the missive to the end was pale but placid. Not a word escaped his lips, but with careful deliberation he slowly tore the delicate parchment into small pieces, and scattered them in one of the deep chasms of the cave.

* * * * * * * * * *

Often during a stormy evening, when the elements seem chaotic, and the gusty night wind sweeps the broken clouds or dark mist rapidly along, a brilliant star will burst into full view for a moment, and then disappear.

So down through the kaleidoscopic procession of the ages, at intervals some great soul shines out in full-orbed strength and beauty. The light of history reveals that these are they who have passed through tribulation.

The diamonds and other precious jewels owe their beauty to the intense fusing to which they have been subjected in the Plutonic blasts and glowing flames of Nature's laboratory. The cruder natural settings in which they are clasped are base, [342]

because they have never found their way into her crucible.

As the rough block of marble is chipped, broken, and seemingly almost destroyed before the imprisoned form of beauty can be set free, so the trip-hammers of Fate, whose terrible blows well nigh crush out the very life of their victim, by a strange paradox finally render him shapely beyond compare. The towering spirits that have worn material embodiment are those whose earthy cords, deemed so vital by the world, have, one by one, been snapped, until they found their life by losing it.

Saulus, the son of Benoni, was a casting from the furnace of such an order of development. Even the persecutions which had been waged by him doubtless had a place among the lurid flaming tongues which, in a white heat, contributed to the shaping of the new Saulus.

Cassia's letter severed the last subtle cord which tethered him to the earthly. He was emancipated. Not, be it understood, that celibacy, asceticism, or other-worldliness are normal, or worthy to be sought, but that in the moral and spiritual economy of humanity, there are souls whose rounding and polishing come only through infinite travail.

But if the white flower of truth and spiritual attainment seem to blossom most perfectly when its roots have struck deep in the slimiest moral soil, let it not be forgotten that the viscous mass is not the cause, but only the occasion, of its supernal beauty. The divine germ hath all potency within itself; but it becometh expedient that it be plunged into low conditions, until through
[343] the exercise of lifting itself therefrom, it not only nourishes its own strength, but finally transforms its base environment.

On the evening of the day upon which Cassia's letter had been received, the two friends felt an unwonted nearness and soul-contact. Saulus had said nothing of the contents of the message, but Amoz divined the whole matter as fully as if he had read it word for word. Though not greatly skilled in the learning of the schools, there was in him a simple spiritual sensitiveness

which made everything plain. His life with Saulus had brought them into close touch, and he measurably reflected his leader's experiences, and there was oneness in heart and interest.

Saulus was not cast down by Cassia's unequivocal decision, but instead there came a consciousness of freedom and spiritual growth. A soul-burden had been lifted. His great regard for Cassia would in no wise be lost, but the special love which had possessed him was transformed into simple compassion. Barred as he was from any possibility of leading her into the light himself, she must wait for the slower education of event and experience.

The evening being cool, the two mused before a small fire, for the service of which the spacious cave afforded ample opportunity. The hour grew late, and they long had been sitting side by side, no word being spoken. Perfect harmony prevailed with a stillness that seemed mystical.

At length Amoz opened his lips, but his voice had a strange sound. Saulus turned and looked into his face. His eyes were closed, but not with sleep. There was a calm, sweet expression [304] upon his countenance, but it was unfamiliar, plainly not that of Amoz. A slight tremor shook his frame, but only for a moment.

But harken! what saith the voice?

Saulus, behold thou art my beloved brother!

Saulus drew nearer, and warmly grasped the open hand which was extended towards him. While filled with wonder, there was nothing to disquiet him. He saw at a glance that some other soul possessed the body of his companion.

The words of thy greeting are warm, and touch my heart, but I would know thy name, and why thou hast come to me?

I am Stephanos! aforetime of the Holy City. I come to manifest my love, and give thee words of encouragement!

There flashed before the mind of Saulus the Holy City! the mob in the synagogue! the throng, which with jeers and curses, surged up the hill to the Sanhedrin! the mockery of the trial in the

Hall of the Squares! the heroic young victim! the boiling passion! the tragedy without the walls! the angelic face! and his own leadership!

O my God! I cannot bear it!

He bowed his face to the ground.

Be of good cheer, O Saulus! I greet thee only with love!

O Stephanos! thou here! and thou lovest me! Am I not dreaming? Canst thou forgive?

I am here, and it is no delusive dream! From the beginning
[345] thou hast been forgiven, and my love abideth with thee! Forget all that is behind, and press forward, for behold great things wait for thee!

Continuing the warm clasp of hands, they sat down, face to face.

And thou art Stephanos! what joyful tidings! For a season my guilty soul had rest neither day nor night. But now thou hast confirmed the peace which hath been growing in me since my sojourn in the wilderness.

I have knowledge of thy good estate. Behold thy soul will become mighty, and thou will open the eyes of much people! I am but one of an unseen cloud of witnesses who will give thee strength and inspiration!

I am but newly born of the Spirit, and have much to learn. I fain would know how thou art employed, and how thou dost come to me?

Behold they, who while in the fleshly body ministered to the needs of their brethren, continue their ministry unbroken by the change of condition. There are manifold ways in which we of the Unseen move upon the minds of men which language would fail to express, and which thou couldst not now fully understand. Love lendeth us wings, and so far as the souls of men are open to the entrance of the truth, we are able to reflect some light to them. But the multitude are ignorantly closed! They count themselves to be fleshly in being, therefore the things of the Spirit are hidden

from their eyes. They believe not in ministering spirits, neither care they for any understanding of the things of the higher life.

Do all who have passed thither engage in the ministry of love and good-will? [346]

Nay! There is a great throng whom no man can number who have laid off the flesh, but who are yet entangled in the meshes of the fleshly mind! They are spirits who are in prison, and the loving guidance of the free spirits have much exercise in their release.

Hast thou a body and members when thou dost not possess the form of Amoz through which thou speakest to me?

Yea, verily! Our bodies, though lighter than air, as known to you, are vastly more substantial than the seen shadows which men count as themselves. It is only the invisible which has real being! The seen man is but an incidental manifestation of!

I behold the beauty and truth of thy wisdom! Wilt thou not teach me further?

There are even more refined bodies than ours! When that which is perfect is come, behold we shall have laid off these for those that are still more internal and subtle! The path from glory to glory towards the perfect Love is ever away from the grosser in every degree. But that which is gross hath its place; for the seed of the divine life must needs have an early planting in coarse soil, that through the exercise of its growth back towards the Father's House it may consciously recognize its quality, and interpret its real nature!

Is the other life very near to this?

There is but one life, but it hath many expressions. While in the flesh, the quality of thought and mind of each is closely veiled from others, but here the intent of the heart is openly manifest! The inner character standeth out, fully rounded, and none can mistake it! But in due time knowledge increaseth, and those who [347] are lower are taught and inspired through the guidance of some who already have attained to greater power and glory.

It seemeth that all things work together for good.

Thou judgest rightly! We live in Spirit; for God is Spirit, and we have his image, whether in the flesh or out of it! But to live in the flesh is not to live of it!

I am much beholden to thee, for thou hast made many mysteries plain. And now hast thou any instructions which thou wouldst have me follow?

Nay. Take no man for authority, whether he be dwelling in the seen or the unseen! Men may aid and cheer and teach thee, but determination cometh from thy free will when illumined by the inner Word. Follow the divine leading within thee, and thou shalt have true freedom! Behold the Anointed Leader the Christ must be uncovered in every soul! My spoken words are at an end. Peace and joy abide with thee, and to Amoz blessing and good-will. Thanks be to him for the service which he hath rendered us.

A mild sweet fragrance and light filled the cave, but soon all was as before.

CHAPTER XXVIII
LEANDER VISITS A MYSTIC SHRINE

Rebecca made her way homeward in a state of profound bewilderment. By nature placid, intuitive, and rarely disturbed, her sweet soul, as a rule, moved with serenity amid the turmoil of life s experiences and adversities.

But could it be that the noble Serenus was the guest of that Roman of tarnished memory? Could light and darkness commingle? It seemed a strange paradox.

Having not long since returned from the Holy City, she was not aware of the great change which had taken place in the character back of that stern face, nor that it now belonged to the Vice Legate of Tarsus.

Since the rescue of Rebecca from the stampede at the great celebration of the Feast of Weeks in Jerusalem, and the conversation with her benefactor, Serenus, to her, had stood for everything that was worthy and of good report. She also remembered his lofty and quiet dignity as he headed the notable line of captives upon whom she looked down from the house-top when they were led to prison by Saulus. The devotion of Serenus to the New Faith, and the cheerfulness with which he endured persecution for its sake, had left a picture upon her mind that could never be effaced. [349]

Her wonder increased when she thought not only of the apparent intimacy between the two, but also at the possible position of Marcius, as indicated by the imperial equipment. But her wonted serenity was soon regained. She instinctively felt the power of goodness, and that however it might be explained, Serenus, in the very nature of the case, must carry a powerful benediction wherever he went.

She also had noticed Amabel, and although not recognizing her as the daughter of Gamaliel, inferred that she was the wife of Serenus. As this conviction flashed upon her, there arose for a single moment a half unconscious shadow of disappointment, although not admitted even to herself.

It is not easy for the human mind to regard virtue and nobility abstractly, or as separate from the personality through which they are expressed. But the calm, warm sunlight which constantly filled the soul of Rebecca quickly dispelled any possible mist. While she felt that the few words Serenus once had spoken to her, and the inspiration of his presence and heroism, in some way had introduced her to something higher than she before had known, there was nothing which could be interpreted as of the nature of personal love. He only had been the instrument in stirring the strings of her higher nature, peradventure to some invisible vibrations of the New Faith.

Rebecca always had been an enigma to her people. Though scrupulously reared in the observance of every requirement of the most orthodox Judaism, from her very youth there had been
[350] within her an unfathomable reserve. While conforming in every outward requirement to that which was expected of her, there was a calm but strong undercurrent of freedom, and a thinly concealed indifference to formalism, which had been a disquietude to Benoni, and an offence to Saulus. Her sojourn in the Holy City had perceptibly developed the essence of a new principle in her inner nature, which before had been little more than latent. Though having but the slightest contact with the personal exponents of the New Faith and their outward teaching, she instinctively had felt something of its beauty and force. But the more it had been repressed by the influences about her, the more it gathered volume.

There is ever an unseen moral and spiritual atmosphere in which vibrations are constant. In it are currents and eddies, winds and calms, heat and cold, as truly as in the meteorological

realm of nature. Sensitive souls, like invisible barometers, feel and register movements and tendencies which ordinarily are intangible. The spread of pure and spiritual Christianity during the time of the Primitive Church and immediately succeeding was an object lesson which all ages since might have studied with profit. It was perhaps due more to an unseen vital momentum, a spiritual tidal wave than the outward teaching of disciples and missionaries. Unweighed by dogmatism, untrammelled by ecclesiasticism, and free from rigid formalism, it, as a vital force, went out conquering and to conquer. It was a new life, a good news; but later to be shorn of its spontaneity, dispossessed of its witness of the Spirit, bereft of its healing potency for soul and body, and [291] deprived of its innate joyousness through usurped authority and burdensome accretion. Its very name came to signify something external in the place of a living principle.

The state chariot which conveyed the little party from the Nereid circled through the spacious grounds which surrounded the palace of Marcius, and all alighted at one of the private portals. Serenus and Amabel were conducted into one of the open courts, where they remained until suitable apartments were made ready. A small fountain was playing in the centre, surrounded by flowering plants and beautiful statues.

Behold we have been led in a path we knew not of, said Serenus; and I am persuaded that good will come of it.

Upon their arrival, Leander retired to his own rooms in a very unenviable frame of mind. For some time he had consciously been losing his influence with Marcius, and their ways were rapidly drifting apart. The official duties of the Vice Legate were performed with fidelity, and his growing nobility of character and public commendation had given Leander an illy concealed, cynical jealousy. But so far the fire had only smouldered. Now he felt that in the interest and regard of Marcius he was thoroughly supplanted. Was he, who for so long had been the bosom friend and adviser, henceforth to be left out of the account? There is

a jealousy not born of sex which may be fed until it grows in intensity almost without limit.

Leander finally resolved upon an interview with his old-time friend. He found him unoccupied, and proceeded to unfold his
[352] grievances.

If I may presume somewhat upon thy former friendship, I would have private converse with thee!

Marcius noted the thinly concealed suspicion and cynicism which were stirring the pulse of Leander, but passing them by, quietly replied,

Pray unburden thy mind!

By Pallas! I begin to distrust my power to solve a riddle! For some time past a mystical change seems to be coming upon thee which I am unable to fathom! Thou hast lost thy love of pleasure, and even thy devotion to the gods. In a word, thou art in danger of becoming a victim of baseless superstition.

Marcius was astonished at the bitterness of his words, but retorted with quiet sarcasm,

Thy wonted poetic grace of expression seemeth to have deserted thee! Thy speech is ungarnished, if not ungracious! If a change hath come over me, it need be no riddle to thee! As one adds to his years, it is meet that he should add somewhat to his wisdom.

Shades of Pluto! Dost thou call the babbling of fools wisdom? Thou hast waded in the shallow sophistries of so-called philosophy until it well nigh hath made thee an anchorite! Thou hast deserted thine old associates and pleasures, and art becoming a dreamer. And now, to crown thy folly, thou hast brought contempt upon thy government and religion by making this pair of Hebrew fanatics thine honored guests.

Marcius was unruffled by the sharp thrusts, and listened much as he would to the scolding of a petulant child.

[353] Thy chattering doth not in the least move me! I can well dispense with thy advice, for of late both thy friendliness and

wisdom are becoming visibly tarnished! Would to the gods or God that I had more of what thou art pleased to regard as Hebrew fanaticism! But I would have thee know that my guests are in no wise like the Hebrews of Tarsus. Their philosophy is grand, wise, beautiful, and I honor their opinions, and will know more of their teaching. It will be but a waste of thy breath to try to dissuade me!

And suppose it become known that the Vice Legate of Tarsus hath forsworn the gods of the city, and set at naught the Roman Pantheon for the worship of fugitive and unknown gods or a lone god, as I heard thy paragon, Serenus, set forth in his teaching! One would think that to a sane Roman patrician such vulgar drivel and low-bred association would be disgusting!

Were I not amused at thine audacity, and compassionate of thy shallow assumption, I should make comment upon thy growls as they deserve. Thy unwonted denunciation hath even dried the springs of poesy which aforetime hath flown in a deluge from thy lips.

Henceforth I abide no longer under thy roof, which is now devoted to the shelter of vulgar pretenders who claim all wisdom. By the right arm of Hercules! thou wilt yet rue the day when thou hast preferred the friendship of an ass in a lion's skin to the polish, art, and poetry of thy Greek companion of many years!

I spread my sail, and float away
From a shore grown now sterile and hateful;
I end this play, and start to-day
For freedom, I care not how fateful!

[354]

Broken loose again! There is nothing here to compel the presence of thy muse or thyself! I give thee farewell!

Marcius offered a dignified parting salutation, which Leander turned his back upon, and hastily left the room.

A few days afterwards there occurred one of those religious upheavals which at intervals find vent in popular tumult. The

number of Jews in Tarsus had steadily increased, and their intolerant and exclusive spirit, and the contempt which some of their number poured upon the Tarsian temple service, had aroused a bitter prejudice and growing hostility. This feeling, like a hidden fire, for some time had smouldered, only waiting for some unusual opportunity to burst into open flame. While the Roman authority and law, at that period, provided for religious toleration in Tarsus, it could take no cognizance of the intense bitterness, as no overt act had occurred to warrant interference.

It was a Tarsian holiday, and the occasion of an important festival to Apollo. For three days two children of the family of one of the priests of the Temple had been missing, and a rumor obtained circulation among the lower orders of the people that the Hebrews had stolen them, and sacrificed their bodies upon an altar for a burnt-offering. There was no foundation for the report, but notwithstanding its absurdity, it was widely accepted.

Tarsus was astir. The streets were picturesque with decoration, and lively with moving crowds and processions, and all through the day the Temple and its great garden were thronged with wor-
[355] shippers and pleasure-seekers. Every one was in festal costume, and innumerable small companies were waving banners, garlands, and palm-branches, and marching to and fro with shouts and laughter. At the Temple there were various ceremonies, oracular messages, predictions, and idolatries in progress, all forming a combination such as only a great Oriental metropolis of the period could offer.

The brazen gates which led through marble arches into the Temple grounds were flung wide open, and a continuous human current, seemingly from all the nations of the earth, poured in. Parallel roads, some for those on foot and others for horsemen or chariots, led inward toward the intricate maze of summer-houses, bowers, ponds, lotos-groves, and rose-trees, which occupied the heart of the great paradisiacal resort. The number and variety of fountains at play were amazing, and the long rows of statues,

arches, and booths stretched away in the distance in bewildering profusion. Processions of horsemen in rich costume and brilliant caparisonment, each carrying offerings for the various altars, swept in to join the great concourse. All ages, sexes, and conditions lent their contributions to the great changing panorama of color and beauty. There were uniformed companies, in white or variegated colors, carrying flags, garlands, or censers, keeping step to the music of hymns or the rhythm of flutes and taborets, the combination of intoxicating strains forming a vast confused symphony.

Upon a broad marble pavement of white and black design near the centre of the widespread grounds there were groups of gay dancers, the stroke of whose light sandalled feet kept time to the touch of small drums and tambourines. With hair [256] floating free, bare shoulders and necks, and robes of diaphanous texture, the voluptuousness of their movements can scarcely be told. They were charmers, priestesses belonging to the Temple, each having some part in its multiform mystical service. They were chanting a hymn of Eros.

Love, sons of earth! I am the Power of Love!
Eldest of all the gods, with Chaos born;
My smile sheds light along the courts above,
My kisses wake the eyelids of the Morn.

Some of the trees of the groves were large, tall branching cedars, and evergreen oaks with glossy luxurious foliage, casting a cool seductive shade upon the fresh clean grass. There were sycamores, laurels, mulberries, citron-trees, and terebinths, whose blossoms loaded the air with a spicy intoxication. The thickets were full of birds, so tame as to be fearless. The cooing of turtle-doves, the song of nightingale, and the whistle of quail, added to the unending composite of sweet sounds, shapes, and colors. The exuberance of nature, the gracefulness of art, and all

that the genius of man could invent, combined as if to surfeit the human senses.

Subtly intermingled with the degeneracy of such an age there was a blind but ever-living impulse toward some kind of worship. Man s religious proclivities are so strong that their exercise will find a place, even if it be no higher than his own animal instincts.

From the standpoints of other periods, it is far from easy to unravel the fundamental strands of life in any given time, and [357] justly interpret its underlying spirit. The autocratic rule of the sensuous consciousness is yet everywhere supreme, but its outward manifestations constantly take new shape. By the unreliable measurements of men, the ethics of one age is made the standard of judgment for those of others. The radical defeall-prevailing materialism everywhere remains, but each age shifts its moral emphasis so that its own methods for the adoration of the lower selfhood seem good in its own eyes. Though the period in review was eminent for its moral corruption, the worship of the bodily creature, in some form, after nineteen hundred years of added experience and supposed wisdom still remains dominant. Veils of outward legality are everywhere drawn, and external conformity to undoubted standards more generbut what of the great underlying sea of human consciousness? The true barometric test of the moral and spiritual essence of any and all ages is the quality of thought-occupation, whether the same be boldly expressed or subtly hidden. The world is full of veneers, and each eye complacently looks upon those of its own time, while it ruthlessly strips off all others. The twenty-first century will doubtless be as much shocked by the selfishness, pride, greed, and mad rush for place and power, which pertain to the nineteenth, as is the latter at the more open corruption of the age under review.

Leanders break with Marcius thoroughly embittered his morbid jealousy, and snapped the only cord of outward restraint which in any degree had held him. As a friend and guest of the

Vice Legate, possessed of a dashing and poetic spirit, he was well known in the gay society of the Cilician metropolis. Vain of [358] person, and proud of his dramatic accomplishments, he brought them into exercise on every possible occasion. His delicate complexion, wavy brown hair, and dark blue eyes, with an easy gracefulness which characterized every movement, gave him a pleasing personality which was his special capital. He spent much time at the baths, and commanded their perfect service. Their oils, polishing, and perfume in some measure concealed the flight of years under a youthful veneer of pearly whiteness. But the natural sparkle of his eyes was growing dull, and the open, warm, and artless temper of earlier life had become clouded with cynicism and acerbity.

His richly decorated chariot, which was drawn by three snowy white horses abreast, always drew a gaping crowd as it dashed through the Tarsian thoroughfares. His especial pride was to be regarded as the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the city. His more immediate circle of friends was often invited to his entertainments, which consisted chiefly of his own recitations of Greek poetry and tragedy. They frequently became tiresome, but as his fondness for applause was notorious, it was sarcastically bestowed *ad nauseam*. He entered with the utmost abandon into every spectacular display or ceremony, his fondness for dramatic art thereby receiving exercise and stimulation. Before ordering his chariot for his visit to the festival he sat down to warm himself with a deep draft of spiced Falernian. It came strongly to mind that on many similar occasions he had started with Marcius at his side. Now he was to go alone.

During every hour since their last interview his anger had in- [359] creased. He, the life-long friend, cast off for an obscure Hebrew! Impatience waxed hot, until his feeling rapidly became absolute hatred. In some way he would have revenge—bitter revenge. Was there not some possible means by which he could despoil Marcius of his official position, and rob him of his reputation?

But his popularity and power made it utterly inexpedient to declare open enmity. Leander would bide his time, and find a plan to secretly revenge himself, and never rest easy until the downfall of the Vice Legate was compassed. As for Serenus and Amabel, they were beneath contempt.

Wrath or jealousy that is nursed grows apace, and the enmity of Leander would have sanctioned the murder of Marcius, if it could be brought about without any finger of suspicion being pointed toward him.

But it was time to depart. His chariot was waiting; and seizing the reins of his noble steeds, he joined the great current which flowed towards the Temple and its spacious enclosure. Arriving in due time, he entered by the most prominent triumphal gateway, and after ostentatiously driving several times around the broad circular highway, left his chariot with an attendant, in order more freely to enjoy the sights and sounds, and indulge in the pleasures of the vast enclosure. He found two or three friends, and with them joined in some of the sports and games. But after a time, wearying of these, they came upon a large booth richly ornamented with occult art, having an inscription over the entrance:

[360] HOUSE OF MAGIC AND DIVINATION.

Entering, they found themselves in the spacious atrium, where each visitor waited his turn, and made his choice as to which of the divers inner mysteries he would consult. Out of this large reception-room many portals opened which penetrated to unknown interiors of enchantment and sorcery. The peculiar class to which each belonged was indicated by occult emblems or cabalistic signs inscribed upon the various oval valves that opened farther inward. An attending magician interpreted them. One led to a wizard's cave of spells and incantations; another to realms where converse with shades was held; another to oracular answers and predictions; another to charms for healing; another to the furnishing of love philters; and finally, one was given to

curses and horrors.

Leander chose the last named. His hatred towards Marcius flashed up as he saw the symbols, and he would know the mystery, and perchance an instrument for enmity.

I fear neither gods nor men!he exclaimed; and I will acquaint myself with the worst.

His friends sought enchantments of the milder forms.

He was in an impatient mood, but had not long to wait when the curious valve leading to the department last named swung open of its own accord, and a hoarse voice from within, though seemingly very distant, cried,

ENTER THOU THE MYSTIC SHRINE!

He passed in, and the valve closed behind him. He found himself in a dimly lighted, narrow passage-way, which he followed, that led under ground in mazy, sinuous fashion, seemingly without end. He smiled at the slight weird feeling which stole upon [p361] him, but pushed on. He feared nothing, for he believed nothing. There were no such things as visions, spectres, or shades. He had come for amusement or rather, if possible, to find a way of revenge.

At length the passage widened into a cave of indefinite dimensions. It was but dimly lighted by a small fire in a recess of jagged rocks. The walls of the cave in other directions seemed to be composed of an indefinable mist of unknown depth, upon which flashed a dim tremulous phosphorescence. Over the fire was suspended a caldron, the contents of which seethed and bubbled, emitting a pungent vapor that wreathed itself overhead in illy defined forms that seemed to crawl and leap. Upon a shelf suspended in mid-air without visible support, an assortment of tiny phials containing various colored liquids gleamed with an unearthly light, and near by hung small bundles of dried herbs and roots. Upon a rough iron tripod stood a grotesque statue of the Hecate, through whose eyes shone a dull red light, as if they were heated by an inner flame. Several skeletons and many

more skulls were arranged at different angles, the eyes of which remained in their places, shining with a red light of their own. Leander was the cynosure of them all.

He looked about him for a moment, taking in the various details, and then burst into loud laughter.

By Bacchus! an artistic combination to impress infants! But where, oh, where, lingereth the presiding siren? The combination
[362] seemeth to run itself! Come out! Thy caldron needs stirring!

Then he gave another hearty laugh at his own wit and eloquence. The reverberations which indefinitely repeated themselves through the distant passages sounded like a multitudinous mocking chorus.

Shades of Tophet! the acoustic properties are well provided!

He gave another loud call for the sorceress in charge. The sound of his voice seemed split into a hundred fragments chaos of weird echoes upon all keys.

Go on with your cackling! I welcome every demon that sails his bark upon the Cocytus!

But as a female form of gigantic proportions slowly emerged from the background, his heart gave a leap.

Covering her dishevelled gray locks was a tall, pointed red turban; her mouth, partly open, showed two irregular rows of long, dark teeth, and her large stony eyes were fastened upon him with a freezing stare. Her features were ashy gray and unearthly.

But in spite of appearances, Leander gathered himself together, and with a chuckle exclaimed,

By the thirst of Bacchus! I adjudge this a strong and artistic stage-setting for a Greek tragedy!

Then, striking an attitude, he began, in impassioned style, to recite some lines from one of the dramas of Sophocles.

After listening a while the horrible gigantic Shape began slowly to turn away, and exclaimed in hoarse, hollow tones,

Enough! I surrender!

[363] Leander neatly turned the exclamation into a compliment.

My oratory conquers gods, men, or she-devils!

He then addressed the retiring Shape.

Stay, I pray thee! Thou art not comely, but peradventure thou canst serve me! I would have none of thy incantations, but thou hast in store a variety of potions. Art thou skilled in their preparation?

For more than twoscore years have I distilled and cunningly concentrated the occult and deadly forces of nature, said the Shape with a ghastly grin. I am a daughter of the Etrurians, and their wonderful secrets and enchantments have come down to me from the dim past. I have philters for the loveless, promises of treasure for the needy, and potions for revenge, for tragedy, for blight, and for destiny! What wilt thou?

Hast thou a blight which will very slowly, but with grim certainty, dull the reason, destroy the wisdom, and hasten to decay before the wonted time all the faculties of the Mind?

The Shape stretched out her long, bony fingers and took one of the small phials, and holding it before her stony eyes, replied,

In color and taste like water; yet he who takes it in any form, in three years will become a drivelling idiot! The brain! the brain! It slowly scorches, and nothing can put it out! It will mingle with water or even Falernian!

The Shape gave a malicious leer.

I believe neither in shades, spectres, nor enchantments, but of chemistry am persuaded! But how can I be assured of what thou sayest?

I will give thee a sign of my power! [364]

As thou wilt.

The Shape, taking an empty phial, poured into it a portion of the contents of several of the dark liquids, and the mixture was clear and colorless.

By the eyes of yonder Hecate, thou hast power! and now the price of thy potion?

From thee, O dramatic ranter, a full purse of gold, for thou art rich.

Leander drew from an inner secret fold in his tunic a small purse filled with gold, and taking the phial, carefully deposited it in the place from whence he had taken the coin.

He chuckled to himself as he thought of his new-found secret for revenge upon Marcius, and was about to turn towards the entrance when the hag interposed,

A mutual oath of secrecy before thou departest.

Then she grasped his hand with her long, bony fingers, and placing it upon the head of the Hecate of the burning eyes, covered it with one of her own.

Repeat after me!

Leander repeated the oath.

May all the gods curse me, if I reveal aught of this transaction!

Leander turned to go.

Thou art the first who hath entered here and not quailed! Farewell!

Leander soon found himself again amid the crowds in the sunshine of the garden.

Was it a dream?

He thrust his hand under the secret fold of his tunic, and the
[365] phial was there.

It was now late in the afternoon, and the streets, leading from the Temple and its grounds towards the lower part of the city, were filled with groups of gay revellers on their return. There was an easy air of careless enjoyment which possessed all classes and ages. Young men and boys were waving banners or singing songs, and the flitting forms of women and girls in picturesque attire, with their ringing, playful laughter, were everywhere to be seen.

In one of the main thoroughfares where these merry throngs were passing was the largest Jewish synagogue in Tarsus. During

the afternoon there had been a special religious ceremonial, and the congregation emerged in a mass just as some of the crowds from the festival were passing by. The recent growing prejudice, but more especially the rumor of the missing children, had stirred up a bitter hatred which needed but a spark to cause an outburst of open warfare.

No greater contrast could be imagined in appearance than that between the lively votaries of the Tarsian deities, and the stiff, conceited, and austere Hebrews. The disciples of the synagogue wore long robes with broad borders and girdles, and mingled here and there with them were priests with tall cup-shaped turbans, breastplates, and broad phylacteries. Their measured pace, solemn countenances, and proud, exclusive bearing seemed like a spoken rebuke and even an insult to the great current which was flowing by from the Temple of Apollo. Some who were nearest began to utter derisive cries against the Israelites.

Down with the bigots! [366]

Behold the murderers, who take children for burnt-offerings!

Drive them from Tarsus!

The gods curse them!

Woe to the circumcision!

Hurl them into the Cydnus!

These were among the cries which fell upon the ears of the Hebrews as they poured out of the synagogue. The excitement grew apace, and the rabble began to close in around them, hurling such missiles as were at hand.

Soon the attack became general.

Turbans, breastplates, phylacteries, and all other distinctive insignia were stripped off, and many men, women, and children were beaten and wounded. The mêlée, so quickly started, became general, and spread over a large space. The cry, Murderers of children! was taken up in every direction.

For a while the Jews rallied, and essayed to defend themselves, but being overwhelmingly outnumbered, began to scatter

and flee as best they could. Some escaped through side streets and lanes, and many were borne down, bleeding and wounded.

Rebecca was among the number. Though caring little for the ceremonials of her people, she still outwardly observed them from strength of habit and association, and in compliance with the earnest requests of her father.

In the great tumult she became separated from all her friends, and twice was thrown down and trampled upon. At length, with
[367] torn garments and her beautiful hair streaming behind, she darted through a narrow passage into an open square, still followed by a small rabble of the lowest class.

Marcius had taken no notice of the festival, he and Serenus having gone upon a drive up the right bank of the Cydnus. They were returning when rumors of the outbreak came to their ears. Marcius hurried on in order to exercise his authority in its suppression.

They quickly turned a corner, when at a little distance a dishevelled woman was seen running rapidly toward them, screaming, and closely followed by a mob. She was faint and ready to fall; but seeing, though not recognizing them, besought their aid.

Marcius drove rapidly forward, standing with whip in hand, and with an air of authority demanded order.

Back! I say, and leave her alone! Disperse, ye rioters!

As she came near, Serenus caught a full view of her beautiful face, and could not be mistaken.

As I live, it is Rebecca!

Marcius stopped his horses, announced his office, and the mob quickly melted away. Then lifting the exhausted Rebecca into the carriage with them, Marcius drove rapidly to his palace.

They tenderly bore her unconscious form within, and deposited it in the apartments of Serenus, in the care of Amabel.

CHAPTER XXIX
CHANGES OF SOUL-COLOR

The links of circumstance are securely welded into the chain of life so that none can be lost or missed. The effect of to-day is only transmuted into the cause of to-morrow.

Marcius was deeply impressed by the face of Rebecca. There was an indefinable peculiarity about her charming features which the flight of years had not effaced. But when, where, or under what circumstances he had seen her, he was utterly at a loss to conceive.

From the moment of her rescue from the mob, until with the help of Serenus he delivered her to the care of Amabel, he seemed to be under a peculiar abstraction. But mingled with an indefinable shock at a sense of some mysterious recognition, there was a surprise, even under the untoward circumstances, at her unwonted beauty and evident refinement. His peculiar feelings were an enigma to himself. Why should one of a race so generally disesteemed, even though comely, so move him?

The injuries which Rebecca had received at the hands of the mob proved to be severe. After attending to immediate requirements for her relief, Serenus proceeded to acquaint her parents concerning her. Remembering that she had made known to him while in Jerusalem that she was the daughter of Benoni, he hastened to find him. [369]

As the father was one of the more prominent of the Hebrew citizens of Tarsus, Serenus found it easy to ascertain his place of abode. Pursuing a thoroughfare which led to the Orontes Gate, in the northwestern part of the city, he soon approached the family domicile. Upon the outside all was peaceful and serene.

The broad terraces were dotted with clusters of flowering plants and shrubs which filled the air with their fragrance. The silvery Cydnus lay spread out in the near foreground, and winding paths, with flights of steps, led directly down to the shore. The house, Hebraic in design, was simply though rather richly embellished by symbolic emblems peculiar to the Chosen People, and Serenus was impressed by the beauty and taste everywhere evident.

The door was opened in response to his knock, and upon entering he found great sorrow and confusion. Benoni and his wife had barely escaped from the mob, and had reached home but a short time before bruised and exhausted. But forgetting themselves, they were bitterly bewailing the loss of Rebecca, supposing that she had perished in the street.

Peace be unto this house! In the midst of your affliction I bring good tidings! said Serenus after his hasty but warm salutation. I am a Hebrew, lately arrived from the Holy City, and have much joy in making known to you that your daughter hath been saved from the rabble.

Benoni closely scanned the tall, graceful form and clear, handsome face of Serenus, and they brought a terrible scene of the
[370] past vividly to his memory.

The God of Israel be praised! I shall never forget thee! Thou art again a minister of mercy, and I thank thee for thy compassion.

Thou dost remember my face?

Did I not behold thee in the Temple-court, when in the mad panic thou didst lift Rebecca from my shoulders and bear her to a place of safety? Did not mine eyes see thee from the house-top in the line of captives on thy way to prison, when Almon, mine host, made known to me that thou wert he who saved Saulus from the thieves and brought him to the inn at midnight? May thou be doubly blessed! But I am grieved on thy behalf! How could Saulus count theeas his enemy?

I beseech thee think no more of the things of the past. I have come to inform thee that thy daughter Rebecca is at the palace of the Vice Legate, tenderly cared for by my wife Amabel?

Thou dost gladden my heart! And hast thou assurance that she is not sorely wounded?

Recovery will come in due season, but perchance for a few days it may be prudent that she remain.

Rebecca's mother also poured out her thanks to Serenus, but being overcome by faintness, was obliged to seek retirement.

Benoni was in a state of great perplexity. The events of the past in the Holy City, and the unexpected riotous outbreak of the day, filled him with questioning and disquietude, which were increased by the sudden appearance of Serenus. Thrice the guardian angel of his family, could this man be the enemy of Saulus? Moreover, was it possible that he was the betrayer of [301] the religion of his fathers?

While rejoicing over the escape of Rebecca, and feeling grateful for the past and present kindness of Serenus, a current of the bitterness and prejudice which possessed him at Jerusalem momentarily made itself felt. Too weak also from the terrible experience of the day to visit Rebecca, he was greatly troubled, and bowed his head in silence and tears.

After a little delay, Serenus uttered a few warm words of encouragement, and started to take his leave, promising to come again on the morrow and bring further tidings of Rebecca, and peradventure perform any other service.

Then Benoni relented and aroused himself.

Tarry for a little, I pray thee, that we may have further converse.

Serenus again seated himself by his side, gently taking one of his hands in his own, as if he would soothe his distresses.

Behold our many trials work together for good! Thy daughter will be restored, and thou made glad!

The hardness of Benoni melted before the friendly warmth of Serenus.

Thanks be to thee for thy words of comfort. Behold thou didst save both Saulus and Rebecca from the hand of the destroyer; yea, twice thou hast given back my daughter, and I love and honor thee!

Thou dost commend me overmuch! To Marcius, the Vice Legate, is due the rescue of Rebecca from the hands of the rabble. He is a noble Roman, and will have respect unto thee and thy
[372] house.

Is he thy friend?

Yea, verily!

And thou a Hebrew?

I was born a Hebrew!

I marvel at what thou sayest!

A Roman may have a warm heart!

I marvel again! but if so, I am persuaded that thou must have warmed it!

There is an affection, not born of race or position, and even the Vice Legate of Tarsus hath begun to feel somewhat of its glow!

But doth not he worship the Tarsian gods?

Aforetime and formally, yea! but he is reaching out after a Higher, the God of all the earth!

But behold the God of Israel ruleth all the earth!

And all the peoples of the earth are his children!

And thou a Hebrew! I cannot understand what thou sayest. It is written that Moses called the Lord a Man of War. Hath he not then enmity against the Gentiles?

He hath enmity against no man!

Again thou speakest strange things! Thy spirit is wise and good and thy heart full of charity, but thou lightly regardest the things that are written.

Verily the springs of God are in the inner man! The things that are written may be expedient and profitable in their day and generation, but they are not yet fully perfected. Behold the written law is a schoolmaster leading towards Truth!

Sayest thou that the revelation of God is not perfected in the law as handed down to our fathers? [373]

Nay! God is ever revealing himself in divers ways, and will never cease.

Again Benoni bowed his head in bewilderment. At length, lifting his eyes towards the face of Serenus, he inquired,

Canst thou forgive Saulus for his bitter persecution of thee and thy friends?

I have forgiven him from the beginning!

Benoni's eyes filled with tears as he put his arms about the young man, embracing him warmly. Serenus arose to depart.

I will bring thee tidings from Rebecca on the morrow, and peradventure thou mayest be able to visit her.

The conflict of the ages that which hath torn innumerable souls before and since—the Spirit versus the Letter waxed strong in the mind of Benoni for hours after Serenus had taken his departure.

Nothing less than some upheaval of marvellous force can change a strong current of chronic dogmatic prejudice. It may be interrupted, but there is a mighty tendency for the stream to return to its well-worn channel.

The vague mystery of some dim recollection of the face of Rebecca increased the interest which Marcius otherwise would have felt in her welfare and improvement. Losing no time after their arrival, he despatched a messenger to call his own physician, and also sent for two skilful nurses who were to alternate in their attendance under the general supervision of Amabel. Then he proceeded without delay to take all possible means, in connection with the Legate and other Roman officials, for the suppression of the tumult. [374]

A cohort of soldiers was hastily ordered into service; but as the Hebrews had all fled to their homes, except the small number that were killed or wounded, and the rabble scattered, they found little to do. So many of the leaders of the attack as could be identified were placed under arrest, and the Hebrews assured of future liberty and protection. A proclamation also was issued, over the imperial seal of Cæsar, commanding religious toleration.

On the evening of the same day Marcius was alone in his private office reviewing the events which had happened. Crowning the strange impressions already noted was another, which was unwonted and distinct. Transcending the romance of the rescue of the beautiful and mysterious Jewess, a peculiar gladness welled up within him at the feeling of having succored the weak and innocent in the hour of trial. It was the first purely moral upheaval in the soul of Marcius of that unique satisfaction which grows out of a beneficent act well done. Not that he took any credit for having performed a simple manly duty, but rather felt a spontaneous and genuine thankfulness that the circumstances had conferred a great privilege upon him. As he looked back over a past so long ruled by selfishness and passion, he was surprised at the revelation of the luxury of doing good, even though it came in the line of official obligation. He almost felt a reverence for the simple Hebrew maiden, who had been the instrument of revealing the loftiest consciousness within him that he had ever experienced. A hitherto unknown beneficent impulse
[375] had been awakened within him that would never again go back to latency. It included ministry to the weak, protection to the innocent, and help to the helpless, whenever opportunity might offer. Though to the world, or even the average man of affairs, the incident would seem trivial, yet a door, before unknown, had been opened, and Marcius, the Roman, had added a cubit to his spiritual stature.

After Rebecca was borne into the palace, she remained a full hour in a state of unconsciousness. Willing hands and loving

hearts exercised themselves in every form of helpful devotion. No bones were broken, but the terrible shock, with the severe bruises received while under the feet of the mob, made her condition of serious import.

Upon opening her eyes, she was bewildered on account of the strange surroundings. But the bright cheerful face of Amabel, who was holding her hand and stroking her forehead, reassured her.

Where am I? and what has happened?

Thou art surrounded by warm friends, and peace and joy belong to thee. Be not disquieted, for all is well!

I have had a terrible dreamnay, it must be more than a dream, for I am in a strange place, and cannot move!

Thou art in the palace of the Vice Legate of Tarsus! He snatched thee from the hand of the cruel horde, and brought thee here and placed thee in my charge. Our love, care, and healing influence will restore thee!

Thy kindly young face seemeth familiar! Wilt thou be pleased to tell me concerning thyself?

I am Amabel, the daughter of Rabban Gamaliel of Jerusalem, and wife of Serenus! [376]

My love and thanks go out to thee for thy goodly service.

She was then made acquainted with the escape of her father and mother; but soon a confused mingling of past scenes, with faintness from the terrible shock of the afternoon, overcame her, and she sank into a deep slumber.

After two or three hours she awoke visibly improved. Though very weak, she now clearly recalled all the events of the day, excepting those during the period of her unconsciousness. As she looked up, both Serenus and Amabel were seated by her side. The face of the former at once brought before her the well-remembered scenes of the Holy City. The panic of the Feast of Weeks, their subsequent conversation, the procession of prisoners, and other events of the persecution, were all vividly

recalled. Yet this wasthe friend of Saulus.Then she thought of the previous day, when Serenus and Amabel coming from the Nereid were driven through the streets in the company of that Roman whose dark face was so deeply engraven upon her memory.

There is much that seemeth mysterious to me! she exclaimed; and then turning towards Serenus said,

Of a verity thou wert the preserver both of Saulus and myself in the Holy City, and now, behold thou hast appeared in Tarsus and saved me from the fury of the mob! But I cannot understand

Of a truth it was not I, but Marcius, the Vice Legate, who delivered thee from danger and brought thee to this place of refuge. Perchance I rendered some service, but to him thy thanks
[377] are due for thine escape.

Rebecca again closed her eyes for a few moments, but her memory was busy.

Marvel of Marvels!

Noticing her confusion, Serenus quietly observed,

Thou wilt know all in due time, but pray let slumber gently seal thine eyelids until the morrow. We will aid thee to realize the Present Help, and through a spiritual strength which shall be thine, thou shalt feel new life with the rising of the sun!

Silence then prevailed, and she sank into a sweet, restful slumber.

O Light of my Life! said Amabel in a low tone, I am filled with the remembrance of thy gracious ministry when I passed down to the border of the tomb in my father's house. All that then seemed so adverse was but the pathway through which I was led into the Truth! And now, touching this trial, peradventure it will be the means of bringing great light and peace into the soul of Rebecca.

Yea, verily, Love of my Heart! Good springeth forth from evil! And now let us be silent channels whereby the presence of

the Universal Good shall become manifest in her.

Profound stillness then prevailed.

The place seemed hallowed.

As the dim evening light shone softly upon the closed eyes and fair cheeks of Rebecca, a sweet smile wreathed her lips. Perchance she was dreaming of peace, love, and an overcoming faith.

The two young disciples of the New Faith sat near her as the moments passed silently by. [378]

A Voice spoke through them, but not in words. Child of God! Thou art a spark of Immortal Flame! an image of the Universal Spirit! It is thine to govern and harmonize the outward form. Thou hast new life already! God is Spirit, and his dwelling-place is with his offspring. He is thy Life, Love, and Strength, through the understanding of the laws of thy being. Behold the very breath of God is within thee! His strength is freely thine own!

* * * * * * * * * * *

Serenus retired from the room.

The next morning found a very marked improvement in the condition of Rebecca. She was surprised at the unwonted joy and gladness which like a fountain spontaneously sprung up within her. There was also a great recovery in her bodily condition.

Opening her eyes, with a calm cheerfulness she warmly greeted Amabel, who was already by her side,

The morning light hath brought me peace, dear Amabel! I feel such an assurance of strength and happiness that it seemeth a mystery.

Peradventure thou hast some inner kindling of the New Faith!

Tell me of it; for even the bodily presence of you its disciples bringeth a peculiar benediction!

We are but its instruments of spiritual ministration!

Cometh it down from the God of the Hebrews in answer to your petitions?

Behold the presence of God filleth all things, both great
[379] and small, and his loving favor hath no constraint of tribe or nation! We need not beg, for no willingness is lacking with him. To open our souls to the abundance which is already provided, comprehendeth the Spirit of the New Faith!

Peradventure I felt some faint beginnings of its presence within me while I was yet in the Holy City, but Serenus and thyself have it in living fulness!

Behold the power and love which inspire may come through silent communication from another soul! The Spirit speaketh through one to another to the inner ear.

How mysterious, and yet how beautiful!

When the Image of God within is discovered, in due time it maketh its fruits manifest in the outer and seen.

Hath Marcius, the Vice Legate, accepted the New Faith?

He hath not yet fully avowed it, but is possessed of a growing desire to know the Truth. Though a Roman, the dawn of a higher consciousness already hath shone into his soul, and perchance the good seed which Serenus hath sown will spring forth into a full harvest.

It appeareth that you are his friends and guests. I rejoice that it hath so come to pass, but it seemeth strange!

Amabel then briefly related the whole story of the shipwreck, and of the friendliness and growing interest of Marcius in their teaching.

After listening to the narrative, Rebecca closed her eyes, while Memory held its graphic pictures before her.

Back, back to the evening on the Cydnus—the storm—the scene in the palace—the boyish, brotherly devotion of Saulus,
[380] and the outcome of complete salvation.

Then she quickly roamed over the succeeding years—the change in Saulus—his terrible persecutions—her life in the Holy City—and on, on, down to the events of the past two days.

Verily, life was a mysterious labyrinth!

She was *again* in a palace of Marcius!

But Marcius was another Marcius; the same only in name; the friend of her friends, and the doer of good deeds. Nay, more. He was her deliverer from death, and his house her place of refuge.

No! he could never recognize her!

She resolved to lock up the secret of the first Marcius!

He was forgiven, forgotten blotted out!

[381]

CHAPTER XXX
A PARADISE DISCOVERED

True loves the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven;
It is not fantasys hot fire,
Whose wishes soon as granted fly;
It liveth not in fierce desire,
With dead desire it doth not die;
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.

On the third day after the rescue of Rebecca she had recovered her wonted health and strength. Benoni, visiting her on the previous afternoon, fondly hoped that she might return with him, but upon the cordial invitation of her benefactors, consented that she should remain a little longer. Her interest in the New Faith grew apace, and her love and respect for its two young exponents were unbounded. The rapidity of her restoration appeared miraculous to all who understood not the signs which outwardly witnessed the new spiritual Power. The nurses which Marcius provided were not needed, and the physician made but the visit of the first day.

Since the day when he snatched her from the jaws of death,
[382] Marcius had not seen Rebecca, but manifested his interest by frequent inquiries concerning her welfare. Some part of each day he sought the company of Serenus, and his interest in their conversation, and regard for what he called the new Spiritual Philosophy, steadily increased. On the third evening, learning of

Rebeccaʼs virtual recovery, he expressed the earnest wish that she, with Serenus and Amabel, should sup with him upon the evening following. It would be a quiet but fitting celebration of her notable recovery.

Upon being informed by Serenus of the proffered honor, she would have pleaded some excuse, but feeling a great obligation to her kind host, and also that it would please her guardian angels of the New Faith, she accepted the invitation. Through the kindness of Serenus she was supplied from her home with everything that was fitting for her appearance at the festivity, so that with the delicate discrimination and assistance of Amabel she lacked nothing.

The evening came, and Rebeccaʼs fair face, though slightly paler than usual, was charming to behold. With features of rare symmetry, and complexion of a delicate brunette, her skin was of such transparency that the ruddiness beneath it clearly shone through. Her head, classic in shape and slightly below the average size, was set upon a neck and shoulders well turned, and graceful in pose and shapeliness. Her jet black hair was lightly gathered up under a cap of silken gauze with a dainty embroidery of golden threads, and a network of delicate chains adorned with small precious stones encircled her neck. She wore simple but rich flowing robes, in harmony with her faultless form, compelling attention not to detail, but to general completeness [sic] and proportion.

Who can estimate the refining and elevating influence of true and ideal beauty? No symmetrical soul can fail to be thrilled by its quality, and the admiration bestowed upon it is repaid by a reflection of its transforming potency. Everything, whether beautiful or otherwise, is ever busy in the subtle moulding of living and impressible forms around it into its own image. The lesson of Pygmalion and his fair creation symbolizes the poetic and artistic truth of a vital and universal principle.

But the outward form and costume of Rebecca were the

unimportant elements of her charming presence. The purity and artlessness of soul shining through the visible personality formed the real attractiveness of the daughter of Benoni. The costume, and even the beautiful form, were simple accessories, like the external setting of a gem.

As the hour of the repast drew near, the trio wended their way through a long corridor, paved with mosaic, then, passing two portals, entered the atrium or front court of the palace. Here Marcius would receive them. The entrances to the various rooms, with their walks, alcoves, and stairways, extended around on three sides, while on the fourth, beyond a massive wall of marble, were the palace gardens, containing flower-beds, shrubberies, fountains, and statues, with here and there a spreading plane, fig, or palm tree.

The court opened to the blue sky above, except a space covered
[384] by a large velarium, which was spread as a shelter from the rays of the sun during the afternoon. The impluvium, or rain-water tank, guarded by rails of polished metal, received its contents through grotesque gargoyles of the same material, and near by a fountain poured forth a volume of spray into a huge round marble basin, surrounded with anemones and lilies. The pavement of the atrium was of white and dark red marbles in handsome design, and the walls decorated with carved panels, upon which were representations of fantastic birds, griffins, fauns, and centaurs. Along the sides a continuous divan or resting-place was supplied with soft, movable cushions, and stools in front.

Marcius appeared soon after the announcement of their arrival. After a simple introduction, he gave Rebecca a cordial greeting,

I give thee welcome, and have pleasure in thy speedy restoration.

Rebecca glanced timidly up into the face of the Roman, half expecting that the dark, stern visage of perfidious memory would be disturbing beyond control, so that her agitation would be

evident. She had forgotten for the moment that the former Marcius was no more, and that this was another. Though the general contour of form and feature was recalled, the hard lines of brutality and sensuality had disappeared, while those of a manly and kindly dignity had taken their place. There was a sympathetic light in his eyes, a calm nobility of demeanor, and a respectful and delicate consideration which were delightful and unexpected. Even the voice of well-remembered harshness was rich, amiable, and friendly. [385]

Rebecca was so astonished at the completeness of the change that a well-defined flush upon her cheeks heightened the charm of her appearance. The severe ordeal which she had consented to undergo from force of circumstances, and out of consideration for Serenus and Amabel, suddenly lost its unpleasantness, and composure and self-command were immediately regained.

She responded to the hearty greeting, and in a manner of quiet dignity expressed a cordial thankfulness for his kindness in her timely rescue and generous hospitality.

Pending the announcement of the serving of the supper, they seated themselves for a brief converse in the court. Marcius continued to address Rebecca.

As a Roman citizen, and especially as Vice Legate of Tarsus, I have much shame at the cruel persecution which so suddenly broke out against thy people. It was unforeseen, and care shall be taken that the offence hath no repetition. But I have a peculiar gladness that my brother Serenus and I were able to render thee aid in the time of need. But verily it is to him that the praise is meet. But for his presence and teaching I should have been elsewhere.

Behold, my lord Marcius, he abounded with noble deeds while in Jerusalem. I could tell thee much concerning certain things that happened there during my sojourn.

Serenus interposed,

I beseech you, my friends, bestow no undue praise; for if any good cometh through my hand, it is not I, but the Spirit of Truth which worketh through me.

Amabel turned her eyes lovingly upon her husband, and
[386] said,

Behold I have learned that when the Spirit of Truth taketh possession of a soul it becometh one with him, so that they are no longer twain! The New Faith, which is the awakening of the Spirit already within, cometh into manifestation in the deeds performed.

Serenus gave her an approving smile. Thou hast spoken wisely. The inner or spiritual self is the veritable man, and he waiteth for the comprehension of the divine sonship.

I perceive that the sensuous or flesh-man is not truly man at all, said Marcius. How all the so-called philosophies of the world have erred! Doth it not seem marvellous that I, a Roman, have so soon become convinced of the truth and beauty of the New Faith? At times I feel doubtful of my identity, and wonder if I am myself!

Thou wert not changed by the logic and reasoning of the intellect, said Serenus, for a religious belief from without is slow and uncertain in its operation. But when there was commended to thee the natural outworking of the Godlike image within, anon thou felt the New Faith living in thy heart, and needed not an argument, after the manner of men.

Rebecca, turning towards Serenus, and recalling their conversation in the Holy City, observed,

Verily, I believe that from my early youth I have felt some quickening of the Spirit in the depths of my heart, but knew not what it might be. Being taught that the faith of the Chosen People was handed down from without, its ceremonial formality smothered the inner flame. But the touch of thy faith, which
[387] thou gavest me on the day of the mad rush in the Temple court, kindled a new life of which I had but a dim perception before.

And now, behold since I have been with Amabel, it hath waxed stronger!

I am moved to confess,said Marcius, that I loathed the manner of my early life even before I knew Serenus and the New Faith. Once I heard a voice from beyond the borders of the grave which rebuked me, and showed plainly the life of the unseen, and that virtue hath its reward, and vice its natural penalty. Then I became thoughtful, and repented of many of my evil deeds. But yet I remained long in the ignorance or twilight of Truth, until the sunlight of the New Faith, which hath come to me through Serenus, quickly dispelled the darkness that surrounded me. This not so much by his words of teaching, as by the contagion of the Spirit that filleth him.

A summons came from the triclinium, and Marcius arose to conduct them thither. Being the guest of honor, Rebecca was invited to lead the way with the host, and they started, side by side, through a spacious corridor.

Pardon me, if I confess that thy fair face calleth up some dim fancy of the past. How deceitful is the imagination, and how confusing!

The heart of Rebecca gave a great leap, but she maintained the outward semblance of calmness.

Of all our faculties perhaps it is the most commonly undisciplined, she replied; but, perchance we may tame and cultivate it, and increase its usefulness.

Thou speakest discreetly. Our new philosophy showeth that when rightly employed everything is helpful, which must include even the imagination. [388]

Yea, I am learning to see the good whichever way I turn. What a joy to live in a world where we can embellish every person and thing with our divine thought concerning them!

When unobserved, Marcius cast another quick, tender glance upon the face of Rebecca, and finally dismissed all impression of any possible past meeting. Nothing could be more improbable.

In its place came a peculiar enchantment. Such a revelation of her beauty burst forth in his soul that it filled him with surprise and delight. But though her comeliness of person was fascinating, this was unimportant and superficial. An adoration, and even reverence, filled him, which were without alloy. His high station had brought before him many proud and beautiful women of his own nation, who were refined and attractive, but this modest Hebrew maiden almost seemed to belong to another planet. His soul was uplifted in a transport of delight. Every step by her side gave him the feeling that he was upon consecrated ground.

These thoughts and experiences flashed through his mind with the force and rapidity of a tropical tempest.

He stepped over a boundary line into a delectable land almost before he was aware of it. The paradise discovered was Love. Such a love he had never before known. Devotion of a depth and power of which he would have been utterly incapable at any previous time sprung up within him. What was rank, position, wealth, or even outward grace! His soul arose from its former state to the full adoration of neighboring soul-beauty. Until now
[389] he never had known the nature of real love.

As they passed through the last portal into the triclinium, Marcius was strangely silent and abstracted. The world had been made over, and all things were new since leaving the atrium a few minutes before.

The repast, though perfect in quality, was simple rather than ostentatious. Marcius, with a fine instinct, had already learned, and even felt, that the exponents of the New Faith, while thoroughly appreciative of beauty, were quiet in their tastes, and carried their moderation into all things.

There was a profusion of flowers, and an abundance of handsome appointments, but no lares or penates upon the table, neither were any libations poured to the gods. But when all had reclined in their places, there was a brief interval of silent thanks and aspiration with bowed heads, which was spontaneous rather than

formal. The supper was not a feast so much as an occasion of friendly and joyful converse, serving as a pleasant recognition of Rebeccæs escape and recovery.

Marcius, whose enthusiasm for the new light which so signally had come to him was unwearied, soon desired to resume the discussion which they had begun in the atrium.

While I joy in the power of the truth that thrills me through and through, there are certain things of which I fain would make further inquiry, said he to Serenus.

I too would gladly receive further witness of the truth, said Rebecca.

Behold one is straitened to set forth the doctrine of the Spirit in the language of men, said Serenus. It is a hidden life, and being veiled, only can be made known through parables and [330] symbols. It dwelleth in the heart too deep for the persuasiveness of speech.

How unlike the learning of the schools! said Marcius.

Yea; words and writings which concern the bodily sensations of men, and the things that are without and seen, are multiplied, while the things of the spirit are silently digged out of the depths of the soul.

After what manner was the teaching of the great prophet of Nazareth?

Through symbols and parables! Nay, even more through his life and example, and by means of the outward signs, ministries, and miracles which witnessed the divinity that was within him.

Have all men the same divinity?

All in their real being are sons of God, but being ignorant of their sonship, have not unfolded it into outward manifestation. It is like a seed, containing life, but not yet quickened into outward form and fruitfulness. Man is only perfected as man, in the degree that he expresses God.

Why are men so slow in their progress upward?

Chiefly because they think themselves to be bodies rather than what they really are, spirits having present bodily articulation.

In other words, thou wouldst say, that having only a fleshly consciousness, they perform the works of the flesh, ignorant of the spirit or real self which hath not yet received a quickening.

Thou hast spoken it plainly. The works of the flesh are [391] mischievous, selfish, hateful, and corrupting, while those of the Spirit are peace, joy, love, and purity. So long as men think themselves carnal in their being, the corresponding works will follow. Every kind of thought and belief bringeth forth a harvest of its own kind.

If I rightly apprehend, said Marcius, thou dost not set forth that the body is evil in itself?

Nay! the body, as the temple and expression of the Spirit, is an holy building, sanctified and honorable. But to be after that manner it must be man's servant, and not his master. It may render a delightful service, or be a deadly tyrant! Shall the clay rule the potter?

Whence come its weaknesses and sicknesses?

From the prevailing bodily consciousness which giveth man the feeling that he must perish. He is therefore filled with thoughts, fears, and beliefs of ill which bring forth a universal fruitage of their own kind. Man therefore bows himself in servitude to these, his own creations, and ignorantly thinketh that they are sent by God.

How are they to be put away?

By thinking upon the things that pertain to the spiritual selfhood, and consciously ruling and harmonizing the bodily instrument. The body is a living epistle, setting forth the quality of the life, mind, and soul, of which it is the visible result and correspondence. It is the spoken word of the thought of man!

Wilt thou interpret to us a miracle? said Rebecca, who had followed every word of the conversation with great interest.

A miracle is a name which men give to any unwonted demonstration of power which is above and beyond their com- [392]
mon understanding. Miracles may be wrought as signs of spiritual verity, or exercised in works of love and mercy.

Do they require the special and direct intervention of the one and supreme God of all the earth?" inquired Marcius.

Nay; but rather an intelligent conformity to his wise and unchanging laws, only the lower domain of which is commonly understood.

We believe that thou canst perform works which to the eyes of the world would seem miraculous," said Marcius with fulness of heart.

Rebecca's eyes were moist with emotion, and her features lighted up with grateful interest as she added,

I am persuaded that Serenus and Amabel can do wonderful works! Of a surety many weeks would have passed before my perfect healing had not their ministry blessed me.

In proportion to the measure of faith and wisdom which one can bring into exercise, he can perform the works. They who make themselves fit channels for the universal and abounding Life to flow through, will be meet to minister effectually to the ills of the souls and bodies of men. Until the time cometh when each can fully work out his own salvation, it behooveth us to strengthen the weak, raise the fallen, and heal the sick, as we have opportunity. We must needs beware of thinking any manner of evil, for ourselves or others, whether pertaining to soul or body.

Why hath not the New Faith spread more rapidly, since it was proclaimed in its purity by the prophet of Nazareth?" said [393]
Marcius. It would appear that such a gospel would be received everywhere!

The world is not yet ready to discover the beauty and power of a spiritual faith. Religion, to the Roman, Greek, Hebrew, or barbarian, doth not signify a new and richer life, but some system, ceremony, sacrifice, or oblation. These have little moulding

power, and have to do with the outer rather than the inner man. Religions of belief and tradition are many, but of the Spirit there is but one.

Cometh not such systems from the darkened and vain beliefs concerning God or the gods? said Rebecca.

Yea, verily! Both the Elohim and Yehovah of the Hebrews, and the many gods of other nations, have been invested with human passions, so that they must needs be appeased or propitiated. Thence cometh the universal dread and fear of an All-Powerful One, and the innumerable expiations, atonements, rites, oblations, and libations, so that peradventure some favors might be vouchsafed by a Deity or deities whose ruling disposition is that of anger. Men are not drawn by their fears, but through their loves. As the Omnipresent Love, the true God, cometh into recognition, the hearts of all will melt into oneness with him, and the children of men be lifted out of their fears, sorrows, sins, and sicknesses.

How plain; and yet how men are blinded to this great principle! said Marcius. My former life seemeth like a delusive dream, in that I have not before been awakened to the truth. I see that as man's concept of God becometh purified, he is gradually
[394] transformed into his image.

Thou hast well described the very corner-stone of the divine life and perfection of man. To securely lay this was the work of the Man of Galilee. But verily the spirit of his advent hath been commonly darkened, not only by his enemies, but by many of his avowed followers.

How long, thinkest thou, O Serenus, will evil prevail on the earth?

Behold no evil ruleth the earth, for that which so appeareth is but the early, imperfect, and unripened Good. Only the eye of the impure can behold the impure. God is too pure to behold iniquity, for all things are working out, in due time, the universal Perfection. To our dim vision it seemeth slow, but

time is but a sensuous limitation. All things, whether in heaven, earth, or hades, are working together, yea, are in travail, for the manifestation of the sons of God.

What is the teaching of the New Faith concerning life beyond the grave? inquired Rebecca.

There is but one life, and man never enters the grave. All the false traditions and beliefs concerning it have come from the carnal or fleshly slavery into which men have sold themselves. The earth taketh back to its bosom the handful of dust which man hath gathered to himself for a brief season. He tests his soul upon it, and it outwardly marks his own and the general belief touching it. We cast off coarse and worn-out garments for those of finer and richer texture.

Dost thou believe that the more subtile or ethereal body is already enclosed within the seen form?

I am so persuaded. But in the fulness of time the grave will [385] be closed, and man will walk forth in freedom. Then will he gain such a spiritual consciousness as to be able, little by little, to transmute and refine his crude visibility into a finer and more enduring organism. That which is called death then will have served its purpose.

Thou hast made us glad by thy words of wisdom, said Rebecca. We fain will let this light shine in the darkness which surrounds us, dividing the word of Truth discreetly among those who are open to receive it.

Yea, said Marcius; we can speak effectually through our lives and deeds, and also by word of teaching wherever there is an open door.

The repast was concluded, and the guests separated.

What an evening of gladness! said Amabel. Art thou not pleased, dear Rebecca, that we were bidden?

I have had unwonted joy and profit in the friendly converse and warm hospitality. What a noble Roman is Marcius! his whole heart seems filled with the New Faith!

Yea, said Serenus. The seed of the Word hath sprung up quickly within him because he was in readiness. Men everywhere hunger for the simple bread of life, but how often stones are set before them!

Marcius retired to his cubiculum, but slumber refused to be wooed by his eyelids. Whether in the light or darkness, the pure, beautiful face of Rebecca stood out before him. To him she was a saint, a fitting embodiment of a seraphic spirit in womanly form. His mind was filled with a rushing procession of unwonted
[396] thoughts,

Blessed be the New Faith, which not only hath healed the restlessness of my former state, but yielded this vision of beauty! Blessed be Serenus! and blessed above all be the God of all the earth!

Can she ever love me, who am but the remnant of a wasted life? Nay, not so! Serenus says we have divinity within us, and the destiny of sons of God! What an inspiration! I knew not what I was, but now have found myself!

Can I presume to win such a love as that of Rebecca? Peradventure, it hath been bestowed upon one of her own nation!

Behold the wonder of Tarsus should the Vice Legate wed a Hebrew! A deposition from Cæsar! The contempt of the city! I care not! My life I give to the New Faith!

Again that vision of loveliness cometh over me! Never before have I known love, but only its semblance! Naught but the New Faith could reveal and interpret its bliss!

When Marcius finally resigned himself to the wooing of Morpheus, his visions were paradisiacal, beatific, elysian.

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A few evenings later Leander called his trusted slave Metopus to his presence.

Dost thou know well Colurus, a servitor in the palace of Marcius?

I have known him long, my lord!

Thinkest thou that he regardeth gold? [397]

I doubt it not, my lord! Its glitter dazzles his eyes!

Thy loyalty I know to be steadfast, Metopus. I have a secret errand. Dost thou sometimes meet Colurus?

We shall meet to-night at the games. What wouldst thou?

Leander drew from beneath the fold of his tunic the small shining phial containing the potion, and also a purse of gold.

I would have this potion administered to the Vice Legate! It hath no taste nor smell, and may be mixed in any of his drinks without suspicion.

Metopus gave a knowing wink to his master.

And will he fall down when he hath swallowed it? Perchance our footprints could not be covered!

Ha! thou sayest well, but I am no fool!

Nay, I have served thee too long not to know thy wisdom!

Its power worketh very slowly, so that no consequence can ever be discovered.

Not only a poet and an orator, my master, but a veritable wonder-worker!

Spare thy applause for this time, Metopus! I say to thee that a slow decline, which cometh only with months and years, seemeth natural.

I understand.

Give the gold and the potion to Colurus, and swear, by the visage of Apollo, that no harm will ever be traceable! Nay, tell any story that seemeth expedient, for thou art cunning!

The plot was carried out in every detail. [398]

Time rolled on. The disciples of the New Faith increased in number, and ere long included the father and mother of Rebecca. Their meetings were frequent, and though held quietly, were without special secrecy. They usually assembled at the rooms of Serenus, but sometimes at the residence of Benoni.

[399]

CHAPTER XXXI
IN DEEP WATERS

> Yet I argue not
> Against Heavn s hand or will, nor bate a jot
> Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
> Right onward.

The days and nights in the cave glided by rapidly and serenely with Saulus and Amoz. The stillness of the place, the beauty and grandeur of the mountains and valleys, the companionship of wild animals and birds, the luxuriance of verdure and blossom, and the sublime view of the distant sea which the heights afforded, all were ministrant to soul-growth and inspiration. Much time was also given to a reinterpretation of the law and sacred writings of the prophets, copies of which had been brought with them.

At intervals Saulus made short journeys to the shepherd villages in the adjacent country, and as occasion afforded began to teach and preach the New Faith to such of the scattered herdsmen as were within reach. This was but a light labor, and he counted his experience as an easy school in the practice and power of the great work of the future towards which he was already looking with earnest anticipation. Only the consciousness of a rapidly
[400] growing capacity to teach, and the favorable circumstances for the building up of an unwonted spiritual energy and equipment, reconciled his intense and untiring soul to a continuance of the sojourn in the desert.

In the decision of Cassia, Saulus increasingly realized that a weight had been lifted from the freedom and usefulness of his future life, and although some yearnings of heart were not

easily stilled, his mastery over them grew more complete. In the broader and more harmonious disposition of soul which he now commanded, he was astonished and humiliated as he looked back at the wonderful charm which the untaught and impulsive daughter of Almon formerly possessed for him. He had left forever behind the fantasy and unregulated passion which in time past raged within his soul, and was now able to view life in its true and broadened perspective.

In due time he received a letter from Rebecca which warmed his heart. It ran as follows:

Chisleu, XXIVth day.
HOUSE OF BENONI, TARSUS.

O my dear Saulus!

Peace, joy, and warm greetings to thee, my brother!

Thy letter from a cave of Horeb, in the wilderness of Arabia, hath come to my hand, and it rejoiceth my heart unspeakably!

O Saulus! thou a disciple of the New Faith! Do not mine eyes deceive me? What a marvel hath God wrought! Behold his loving mercy endureth forever! The Spirit of Truth was in and around thee, and would not be put away until it touched and melted thy heart. And the love of my soul also went with thee, [401] even in thy persecutions, and would not be satisfied until thou wast awakened and didst come to thyself.

Behold I have such an abundance of good tidings to give thee that of a surety my epistle will gladden thy heart, even as thy message from the cave made us rejoice greatly. Many unwonted events have come to pass in our native city, some of which I will briefly recount.

When thou didst banish the noble Serenus from the Holy City, Amabel, the daughter of Gamaliel, upon her release, became his wife and fled with him, and returned not to her father's house.

They journeyed to Cæsarea and took ship for Tarsus, on the way to Rome, toward which they had set their faces. The vessel was sunk in the depths of the sea, but behold every soul on board was saved and brought to Tarsus by the Vice Legate, whose ship chanced to be near at hand. And now I make known unto thee the most marvellous thing of all. Through the faithful devotion and teaching of Serenus and Amabel, both the Vice Legate and our father and mother have become disciples of the New Faith. I am persuaded that thy heart will leap for joy when these tidings meet thine eyes! An iniquitous outbreak of persecution in Tarsus, which seemed only evil, was blessed in the ripening of this good harvest.

On the day of a great festival in the temple and gardens of Apollo, when the throng was great in the streets, our people were cruelly set upon as they came from the services of the synagogue. It arose from a lying rumor, and came so swiftly that many of the
[402] Hebrews were wounded or faint from flight before they could reach their habitations. Thus it chanced with our father and mother, but before many days they were fully restored.

The rabble sorely bruised and trampled upon my body, and peradventure I should have perished, but in my flight, Marcius, the Vice Legate, and Serenus saved me from their hands. They brought me to the dwelling-place of Amabel, which is connected with the Legatęs palace. Through her ministration, with that of Serenus, I was speedily healed.

Marcius is a noble Roman whose heart is warmed by the New Faith, and his kindness to Serenus and Amabel, and even to me, hath been continuous. The members of the household of the higher life in Tarsus are increasing in number, and all have much gladness in the freedom of the Truth. Our gatherings for mutual converse, encouragement, and communion with the Spirit are often held at the house of our father Benoni, and the Vice Legate hath been here with the others.

The life and teaching of the great prophet of Nazareth are

faithfully set before us by Serenus, and faith, love, and spiritual singleness are strengthened and multiplied. Some who were sick have been healed, the lame made to walk, evil spirits cast out, and the whole gospel of salvation proclaimed to such as have ears to hear. Outward signs and works of mercy give abundant witness to the working of the power of God within.

All have great joy in the letter which thou didst send, and hope shortly that they may behold thy face in thy native city.

Serenus sendeth his warm brotherly greetings, and our father and mother have great comfort in their hearts concerning thy latter course.

Peace and blessing be multiplied to thee!

REBECCA.

Tears of joy coursed down the cheeks of Saulus as he finished reading the letter. He folded it to his bosom, went out of the cave, and made his way up to a frequented seat upon the heights.

The late afternoon sun, not too hot, softly gilded the surrounding Sinaitic peaks, and kindled a golden radiance upon the vast expanse of the distant Red Sea in the west. Every tree, plant, blossom, and bird seemed to be rejoicing in the rich, warm glow which bathed heaven and earth with its beauty.

The objective world was the fitting symbol and correspondence of the joy and fruition which flooded and enlarged the soul of Saulus. The message from Rebecca softened and melted the few hard vestiges of his former state, and the tender greeting from Serenus caused a great upheaval of love and thanksgiving. The dark clouds of past memories were dissolved and scattered by the warm sunshine from Tarsus.

To Saulus the light of God was within and without, and each seemed but a varying aspect of one continuous and many-sided Revelation. Man was the crown of Nature, and in him its apex towered up until it touched and became one with its Author. How

shrunken, mean, and unlovely the life of the past, which was now dimmed and even overflowed by the privileges and possibilities
[404] of the future which were unfolded before him.

A procession of months went by, and the time arrived when Saulus, strengthened and confirmed in spirit and power by his long retirement, was ready and eager to enter again the busy world of men. Any hardship, or even persecution, which he might meet would not discourage, but rather stimulate, his activity. Like other great souls who have recognized eternal principles, he knew that the progress of Truth was hastened by opposition. To encounter indifference would be far worse, but this could not be. A man whose inner nature is at a white heat must and will arouse antagonism. Error smarts when revealed by the rays of Truth. There can be no truce. Enthusiasm begets other enthusiasm, which may be either for or against itself, but in its presence stagnation is impossible. One earnest soul stored with the dynamics of Faith will accomplish more than a thousand whose spiritual outgoings are feeble and uncertain.

Saulus was deeply moved as he finally left the secluded dwelling-place which had been hallowed by so many profitable experiences, and the scene of so much soul-growth. But the fulness of time had come, and with Amoz he gladly set out upon the long journey. After an uneventful crossing of the desert they reached Damascus in due season.

Making their way to the house of Ananias, they were hospitably received. Saulus lost no time in visiting the synagogues, and immediately began to preach the higher life in spiritual simplicity as it had been proclaimed by Jesus.

The Jewish Hellenists and proselytes were numerous in Dam-
[405] ascus, and up to the time of the arrival of Saulus, the liberal party, including those who had nominally accepted the New Faith, lived in mutual toleration with the bigoted school of the Halacha, which was much more powerful. But now the dry bones were shaken. Soon the burning and unanswerable arguments of

Saulus awoke a storm of angry opposition. The slumber in dead forms was rudely ended, and fierce persecution began.

Ananias and the little band of liberal Jews found themselves utterly unable to quiet the storm which this dangerous intruder aroused. It was as if Stephanos had arisen and come back to shatter the self-sufficiency and deadness of ceremonialism, and now, as in his time, religious intolerance burst aflame.

The life of Saulus was demanded. The Ethnarch of the city, who commanded the garrison, being in sympathy with the persecution, lent his aid to the conspiracy to end the career of the over-zealous young heretic. The gates of the city were watched night and day to prevent his escape. Was his work to be brought to a close before it had fairly begun?

Not another day must pass or it would be too late to save him. There was a hurried consultation of his friends. Happy thought! the house of one of them abutted upon the city wall! The plot may yet be frustrated! He is secretly conducted to this house in the evening. The night is dark, and the sentry passes but infrequently! A little knot of faithful friends with anxious hearts are on the watch! A large basket held by a strong rope hangs out of the window over the wall. All is still, and Saulus steps in. The sentry goes by, and now strong hands lower the basket, down, [Illustration] down, carefully but swiftly. It reaches the ground!

By previous understanding Amoz is not far away, and arm in arm they go out into the darkness. Surely an ignominious beginning!

One warm afternoon a few weeks later Saulus and Amoz approached the Damascus Gate of the Holy City. Though hot and weary from their journey, as they came near its end they were imbued with new life and courage.

In many of the towns and villages through which they had come Saulus discoursed in the synagogues, but made no lengthy sojourn, as he was anxious to reach Jerusalem and confer with Peter, Barnabas, and other disciples of the New Faith.

As they entered the well-remembered portal, Saulus was reminded of the brilliant cavalcade at the head of which he formerly passed out, as compared with his unheralded return on foot with but one of his many companions. But despite the contrast, a great flood of thankfulness filled his heart.

A multitude of strange thoughts crowded upon him as his eyes rested again upon familiar places and scenes. Should he show his face boldly, or for a while avoid his old friends and companions?

What of Cassia and the household of Almon, his comrades of the Urim, the Rabban, and the Sanhedrin?

Here was the Lyceum, where he had hotly contended for the hard dogmas of the Jewish law; here the many places where he had scourged men, women, and children; and here the prison whose cruel doors, at his command, had closed upon Serenus, [407] Amabel, and the rest of the congregation of the Upper Chamber. He felt like a stranger from some far country, and the past flitted before him as a dark and terrible dream from which he had newly awakened.

Somewhat changed in appearance and costume, he passed through several streets unrecognized, finally turning into the courtyard of a dwelling where he had been told in Damascus he would find Peter and Barnabas. Amoz, after an affectionate farewell, left him to seek some of his own kinsfolk who dwelt in another part of the city.

In response to a knock at the door of the house of Peter, it was opened by a maid, who when she saw his face uttered a loud cry, and shrank back affrighted into the house. Then Peter's wife came quickly to see what had happened. She too looked upon the well-remembered features, exclaiming with great fear and agitation,

Thou art Saulus! Hast thou returned to take us to prison?

Nay, I bring peace to this house! I am no more a persecutor, but of the New Faith! I pray thee, is Peter within?

Peters wife suspected craftiness, and did not believe him, but stood trembling, not knowing how to make reply.

Peter is not within! said she after some hesitation.

I might have expected that all would flee from me, said Saulus, half to himself. A righteous retribution! Then, continuing in an earnest and friendly tone, he said, [408]

Of a surety I am now a follower of the Nazarene!

Peters wife still hesitated, not knowing what to believe, and Saulus turned sorrowfully away, saying,

Tell Peter that I love the brethren! I will come again after his return.

The maid had escaped from the house, and quickly warned the faithful who lived in the neighborhood. Many fled from their homes, taking their children with them, believing that, as Saulus had returned, a new persecution was at hand. Consternation reigned, and word was sent out among the disciples in other parts of the city that they were again to be harassed and hunted down.

Saulus was sorely grieved when he left the house of Peter. He was counted an enemy among his friends. He almost wished himself back in the desert.

It was now evening, and not expedient to visit Peters house before the morrow. He walked aimlessly along the street hardly knowing what to do, but being weary, and seeing a small inn near by, entered, thinking to sojourn for the night. After removing the dust and sweat of the journey, and partaking of a light supper, he walked out to enjoy the cool of the evening, and calm his troubled thoughts. The moon was bright, the air soft, the streets crowded, and the sound of voices and laughter echoed from the house-tops.

What a contrast with the desert and cave! What a great network, and even tangle, of disagreeing interests, systems, opinions, and religions! How sorely the world needed the resolving and transforming power of the new life, and a knowledge of the higher law! Selfishness, prejudice, sensuality, and devotion [409]

to the seen and temporal, everywhere dominant! What a change in himself, and in his interpretation of life!

As these reflections coursed through his mind, he found himself at the entrance of one of the public gardens which skirted the slope of Mount Moriah. The spicy odor of plant and blossom lent a charm to the place, and being in a meditative mood, he entered and seated himself in a retired corner of one of the bowers. Groups of people were all around, some seated and others promenading, seeking the enjoyment of social converse and recreation. Occasional peals of laughter and snatches of song gave evidence of the light-heartedness of the children of the Orient.

But Saulus was wrapped in a more profound revery. With a heart full of love he had come to bear a great blessing to the Holy City, but none would receive it. To his old friends he was now a renegade and traitor, while to his new brethren he was a terror and a cause of offence. O ungrateful world! With head bowed between his hands, the hot tears could not be held back.

A young man and woman from among the promenaders sat down near him. Although they were hard by, a partial partition of vines intervened, effectually secluding him. He started to arise, but could not retreat without passing directly before them in the full moonlight to the entrance of the bower. Moreover, the conversation could not concern him, so he kept his seat.

[410] Thou seemest sad, and not like thyself to-night, my Cassia!

Saulus was thunderstruck. But to fly would be to reveal his identity.

There was no response. The voice continued,

The last full moon witnessed our marriage feast, and behold the light of this revealeth thy sadness!

Peradventure thou judgest not rightly, Ezra!

Why, then, hast thou become silent? I hear no more thy wonted cheerful converse! thou art downcast!

To-night I am given to meditation!

Have I given thee offence?

I have made no complaint!

But why so unhappy, Cassia? Dost thou not love thy husband?

Oh, question me not! I feel strangely to-night, she exclaimed rather petulantly.

Have I done aught to offend thee?

I have no condemnation!

As thy husband, I rightfully claim to know why thou art disquieted.

I cannot reveal my thoughts! Let me be silent!

Thou dost set thy face against me, Cassia! he exclaimed with some earnestness.

Rebuke me not, I pray thee! If I am disconsolate, it lieth not within me to be otherwise!

Why didst thou become my wife, if my presence is disquieting?

I have made no such accusation!

Aha! he exclaimed bitterly. I am persuaded that thy thoughts turn towards thy former lover, Saulus!

For shame, Ezra! thou speakest foolishness!

Thou canst not deny it! [411]

Thou art cruel, and dost not love me! The tone was that of impatient reproach.

Thou hast deceived me! I am persuaded that there is love in thy heart for Saulus! Thou declared unto me that thou didst hold him in contempt!

Thou knowest not to the contrary!

Thou hast betrayed thyself, Cassia! I would that thou hadst given thyself to the mad heretic, and that mine eyes had never beheld thy comely but false face!

Frantic weeping, moans, and flighty laughter gave evidence that Cassia had suddenly become moonstruck or hysterical.

O Saulus! why did I scorn thee? O Saulus! Saulus! I seem to feel thy presence near me even now! O Saulus! Saulus!

CHAPTER XXXII
SCOURGING AND FLIGHT

On the following morning Saulus was up betimes, after a restless night, which was marked by dreams and visions of varying import.

It would be unreasonable to expect that as yet he was able to put under foot all adversities, and continually dwell upon the heights of a spiritual consciousness. Even in a great and lofty soul, Adam dies hard, and in an intense nature he fights desperately for his life, and has many apparent resurrections. Spiritual evolution has its ebb and flow, and except from a broad point of view its declensions often appear to be enduring. As with material structures, if the work projected is to reach beyond the hidden foundation, it must needs wait until the latter is broadened.

While Saulus had a good measure of the same spirit which filled the great Prophet of Nazareth, he also had an earnest desire during his stay in the Holy City to learn more of the particulars of the Masters outward life.

At the rising of the sun he set out for Golgotha. He fain would stand upon the spot of the great Martyrdom. Even the hallowed ground, with its associations, would be a means of inspiration to one like Saulus. As he reached the skull-shaped hill, the sun was shining brightly, the air clear and soft, and the whole scene quiet [413] and peaceful. He felt a benediction!

How much the great Tragedy that was here consummated signifies to the world! How the outgoing circles of spiritual life and love ever pulsate from this centre! No nation is too remote to be washed and beat upon by its outgoing waves, for a divine discontent never permits of stagnation!

Golgotha, or the hill of Calvary, was a peculiarly sacred place to the disciples, and they often resorted to its summit for converse and meditation.

As Saulus lingered, busy with the thoughts of the past and questions of the future, a man, apparently having the same purpose, came near. Lo, it was Barnabas!

They beheld each other, face to face, and surprise was pictured upon the features of both.

And thou here, Saulus! said Barnabas, involuntarily drawing back with trepidation.

O Barnabas, hear me! I love thee and all the brethren! Stepping forward, he embraced his old friend, saluting him warmly.

Saulus numbered among the disciples! said Barnabas, putting his hands upon his shoulders and earnestly looking into his face, still hardly able to believe the truth.

As I live, said Saulus, my heart hath been warmed by the New Faith! Oh, receive my testimony!

I doubt no more, and rejoice in thy behalf. Accept a brother's welcome!

Falling on each other's necks, they had great joy in a fellowship
[414] of faith and love.

After a season of delightful converse, they started, arm in arm, for the city. Barnabas gladly went with Saulus to the house of Peter, and set him and the other disciples aright concerning their former persecutor.

Thou sayest, said Saulus, that the churches have peace, and are edified, and walk in the comfort of the Spirit! Hath the Sanhedrin ceased all persecution against them?

Of late it seemeth to have given little heed to us, so we have in no wise been disquieted. They have not hindered us from teaching that Jesus was indeed a great Prophet.

How is it that their bitterness hath been put away?

Peradventure that Gamaliel and other of the liberal Jews counselled that we be let alone until our doctrine came to naught, and also because the disciples in great measure have returned to a conformity to the wonted ordinances and ceremonies.

A shadow passed over the face of Saulus.

Dost thou not count such a conformity as a fellowship with dead works? I am minded that the gospel should be separate, and that the household of the New Faith should be counted no longer as a Jewish sect!

It hath seemed expedient to some that for the present the ordinances be continued for the sake of peace, but verily I am persuaded that our spiritual life hath been deadened thereby, and its power diminished. Now that thou art here to cast in thy lot with us, our zeal may be warmed, and we receive a quickening.

It seems probable that the Sanhedrin had come to regard the church of Peter, James, and John as but one more sect added to [sect] the complex Jewish economy, which was willing to continue the established ritual. But in the movement of Jesus, and afterward of Stephanos and Saulus, it discerned a disturbing and vital force which in due time would logically supplant Judaism through the establishment of a religion radically different.

It was not difficult for Barnabas to reconcile the disciples to Saulus, for not only was his sincerity manifest, but his earnest aggressiveness in their behalf was bold and untiring.

The law of specific gravity among souls is no less invariable and operative than with fluids and solids. If a born commander be placed in the ranks of the private, he will not remain, for all the laws of the universe conspire to lift him into his fitting niche. The moral and spiritual dynamics of a great soul can no more stay pent up than the forces that stir a volcano into activity. The advent of Saulus into the Holy City ended all indifference and stagnation, and soon the various elements were glowing at a white heat.

But a few days elapsed after his arrival before he began teaching and preaching in the synagogues. Among all the enemies who sprung up to oppose his work and persecute him, none were more bitter and unrelenting than his former comrades of the Urim. These were the same who once had glorified him beyond measure.

The dignified Sanhedrin for the time was disposed to close its official ears to the work of their former agent and instrument, doubtless having in mind their moral discomfiture at the trial of Stephanos. They thought it more politic to leave the rabble to
[416] deal with him through some sudden outbreak than to take formal cognizance of his heresies through the procedure of a regular trial.

Saulus boldly entered into the synagogues of the Hellenists, and eloquently commended the New Faith, contrasting its power and beauty with the traditions, ordinances, and dead works of the Temple service.

One afternoon at a meeting in the synagogue of the Cyrenians, Saulus essayed to make an address according to previous announcement. It was in the same room where Stephanos had spoken with such zeal, and from which he had been dragged to trial and condemned.

Upon this occasion the enemies of Saulus gathered in strength, the members of the Urim, by secret understanding occupying the front seats, thoroughly organized for offensive action. He had been warned of trouble by the more prudent of his friends, but would not consent to abate one jot of his stirring presentation of the new gospel, and the contrasting hollowness of the whole ceremonial system.

For a full hour before the opening of the service the synagogue was crowded, and a dense throng gathered outside. At length the exercises began. Saulus arose to speak, but had hardly uttered a sentence before there was such a tumult that his voice could not be heard. He beckoned for silence, but the uproar continued. At

length he picked up a roll of the law to read from the prophets, and the gathering, willing to show some respect to their Scriptures, was quieted. He read the following passages from Isaiah:

> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of [417] bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.... He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself, and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.

Behold what the Lord saith through the lips of Isaiah concerning sacrifices, and burnt offerings of rams, and the blood of lambs and he-goats! The voice of the prophet bringeth judgment and condemnation to this generation! Wash you, and make yourselves clean through the gospel of the New Faith! Again, behold what Isaiah saith concerning the Messias who should arise in the fulness of time! By oppression and judgment he was taken away, but there was no deceit in his mouth. Behold its fulfilment in the Nazarene!

Laughing scornfully, they cried out,

Cursed be thy mouth! The Nazarene was an impostor, and no Messias!

Listening no longer, they rushed madly forward, and dragged him from the reading-desk.

The scourge! the scourge! the scourge! shouted angry voices from all parts of the synagogue.

[418] Looking steadfastly into the malignant faces which surrounded him, a mingled expression of dignity, compassion, and contempt was upon his countenance. The spiritual exaltation of his soul so overshadowed his bodily consciousness that he felt no fear, and neither he nor his friends offered any resistance to the howling mob which threatened him.

It was one of those upheavals with which history is crowded, which have taken place among nearly all races and religions. There is no crime nor indignity that has not again and again been committed by religious bigotry gilded by assumed dutiful consecration.

Their decision was spontaneous, and Saulus was taken away without legal formality or deliberation. Through the irony of fate, he was led outside the gates to the same spot where Stephanos had been stoned under his own supervision.

Tying both of his hands to a column, they proceeded as was usual in cases of punishment by the scourge. The leaders tore down his robe until his breast and shoulders were laid bare, then the Chazzan of the synagogue, as was customary, was selected to administer the flagellation. The scourge was composed of two thongs of ass's hide which passed through a hole in the handle. Standing on a block of stone behind the prisoner, the executioner wielded the blows with all the force of one hand, thirteen times on the breast, and thirteen back of each shoulder—all, forty, save one.

Although there had been no formal trial and condemnation, the usual custom in cases of scourging was followed. Three judges were chosen, one reading the prescribed passages from
[419] the law while the punishment was being inflicted, the second numbering the blows, the third giving the order before each blow, Hakkehu (strike him). Even in the methods of a mob the slavish literalism and ingrained devotion to traditional detail

were not lacking.

Though the scourging was given in full measure, Saulus was not greatly overcome. Before the first blow fell he passed into such a spiritual ecstasy that little consciousness of the body or of painful sensation was manifest.

Among a little group of women who gathered to witness the punishment was Cassia, who as the blows fell had alternations of hysterical weeping and laughter. She insisted upon being present, and could not be dissuaded. The most opposite emotions possessed her. After the scourging, but before Saulus was led away, a look of recognition passed between them.

He was silent!

The stripes were well laid on, and thou hast thy just reward! she cried with a loud, scornful voice; then, bursting, into tears and groans, she was led away by her friends. Hatred and love, burning in their severity, struggled within her for mastery, but the former was victorious.

Saulus rapidly recovered from his punishment, and utterly undaunted by his experience, again began preaching and teaching. But the brethren became apprehensive for his life, and also feared that another general persecution might begin. Though holding his power and zeal in great respect, they advised his immediate retirement from the Holy City. But he was reluctant to follow their counsel. Soon a well-matured plot among the members [423] of the Urim came to the knowledge of the brethren, and they yet more strongly urged his flight. But as it seemed like an abandonment of his long-cherished plans, and a dishonor to the cause which was so all important, he still lingered.

On the day before a whispered conspiracy was to have been consummated, Saulus retired to a quiet place for spiritual communion and guidance. He had trusted the inner Voice before, and been led aright, why not in the present strait? The intensity of his desire and emotion ended in a vision.[13] He entered into a

[13] The Biblical account of this transaction (Acts xxii. 17-21) is brief and

state where a broadened outlook of condition, duty, and privilege was opened before him. The dark curtain which made the future obscure and perplexing was parted, and a highway, leading
[421] forward, illumined and made plain.

The inner Voice said,

Depart, for I will send thee forth afar unto the Gentiles!

History is ever repeating itself. Persecution of the Truth scatters its seed and multiplies its influence.

Saulus hastily escaped from Jerusalem, being conducted by his brethren as far as Cæsarea on his way to Tarsus.

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natural, and there is no claim or indication that the trance was peculiar or miraculous. Paul, in his visions, guidances, and miracles, never assumed to be more than human, or unlike other imperfect men, in his experiences.

Has anything done greater harm to the Bible than the glamour that has been put upon it, and the distance which has been assumed between the events therein related and those which are common to all mankind? The laws which govern the psychical, moral, and spiritual experiences of men are uniform and unchangeable. Otherwise the whole higher economy is chaotic and unreliable.

If an exalted vision of the Divine, a guidance from the inner Spirit of Truth, a miracle of healing, or an interview with one who has passed into the Unseen one or all of these is possible in one age, then, under like conditions, it is possible for all time. If the Bible were brought near and humanized, it would become clear, practical, and harmonious. Its teachings and history would be spiritually natural and evolutionary. The grandest work of the present time is its rescue from the literalism, strangeness, and dehumanization with which it has been burdened. It is thereby honored and made congruous. The multitude of warring sects has come from its literalization. It is a natural and simple record of the experiences of men of varying condition, some of whom were spiritually developed in eminent degree. It is inspired because it inspires.

CHAPTER XXXIII
A PRIESTESS OF THE TARSIAN TEMPLE

> How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
> Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
> Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
> O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!

A day of extreme heat was closing in Tarsus. The heavens were like burnished brass, and the sultry air glowed as if newly discharged from the mouth of a furnace. The sun had dropped behind a heavy mass of leaden clouds, tinged with crimson, which hung ominously over the distant range of the western Taurus, though the horizon above the city was still clear. The torrid radiation from the dark paving-stones had arisen in quivering waves every hour of the long day, and penetrated alike palace and hut.

Marcius was seated in his private library in an absorbed though somewhat restless temper of mind. There are times when the soul is lifted out of the petty routine of every-day living, and thus loosened from present environment, it soars abroad among scenes and recognitions long past, or, anon, essays to penetrate the veil of the future. During such seasons the human spirit transcends its ordinary limitations, and is uplifted by aspirations and experiences which are beyond the realm of cold logic and materialistic science. [423]

Of late one portentous augury of bygone days lingered in the mind of Marcius with untiring persistency. It was but a brief deliverance, yet it stood before him in letters of fire. He had

often thought it trivial, and dismissed it from recollection, but as often it returned, refusing to be barred out. Was it a prophetic curse? or only a simple warning which already had been heeded and its occasion atoned for?

This evening the problem came upon him afresh, and the fateful words fairly rung in his ears,

Thou art incapable of love, and it shall remain unknown to thee!

How vividly that strange scene of the past flashed before him! The mysterious adytum of the Temple; the clammy, crawling vapor; the uncanny Shapes; the ghostly but beautiful Alethea, and her divination of the future!

He thought lightly of its interpretation when uttered how it weighed him down.

His love for Rebecca had become a consuming flame, but it was a white flame, unmingled with smoke. Day by day every passing breeze fanned it. In her the transparent beauty of the New Faith blossomed into visible illustration and embodiment.

Marcius had not yet made an avowal of his love, for he consciously shrank from breaking in upon the secrecy of the inner adoration of his own soul. If she felt no response, a declaration would only rudely disturb the symmetry of his beautiful dream, and if perchance there was a reciprocal glow, the delightful mystery, like a sealed fragrance, would keep. In social relation
[424] with him she was natural and friendly, but anything beyond was an enigma.

But again the direful words of Alethea, like the muttering of the now distant thunder, reverberated through his soul, and disturbed his dream of bliss. Was he forever doomed to be a stranger to a rounded and reciprocated love? Might not Alethea now relent, and dissolve her seeming curse, and grant a blessing instead? Can it be that human jealousy invades the realm of the Unseen?

Could he not, peradventure, again invoke the fair Alethea, and while beseeching her own forgiveness for the past, implore her blessing for the future?

The threatened storm gathered and burst with great force upon the city. Rain, and at intervals hail, beat upon the walls and roofs of houses, and cooled the hot flagstones in the streets. Forked lightning rent the clouds, and thunder caused the very foundations of the city to tremble.

Since Marcius espoused the New Faith he had discontinued visits to the Temple of Apollo. But now he strongly desired to meet Alethea. Would she again appear to him if he sought her in the same place? Her condemnation must be lifted, her forgiveness obtained, and her benediction implored!

The roar of the storm continued with little abatement. What a favorable time to go unattended and incognito! The desire strengthened into immediate purpose. Disregarding the tempest, he ordered a trusted servitor to bring his favorite horse, and hastily disguising himself, mounted, and rode rapidly toward the Temple. [425]

Upon entering he found the pronaos deserted, and but a few scattered devotees in the cella. Throwing off his outside garment, he seated himself for a little time to command his thoughts before penetrating into the adytum. The perpetual sacred fire on the great hearth sent its fitful gleams upon the symbols and hieroglyphs which thickly covered the walls and ceilings. As he sat and watched them they seemed to fade, dissolve, and reappear in capricious succession, inspiring a sense of the presence of invisible enchantments. The harps of Æolia, which hung in the openings of the outer walls, groaned and shrieked a chaotic lament, as if a great chorus of condemned spirits were disquieted by the force of the angry tempest without.

At length the signal was given, and Marcius passed through the valve, and following for some distance a dim, winding, and descending corridor, at length entered the adytum. As aforetime,

the flaming symbol of the Mysteria Eleusinia flashed upon him, and then slowly faded into a ghastly vaporous obscurity. Farther on faint flashes of blue light shot up from deeps which seemed bottomless.

Marcius silently waited for a brief period, hoping that Alethea would again appear, but was disappointed. There was no sound save distant echoes of discordant voices, now seeming to be above, and anon issuing from the pit below.

Presently, wearied of waiting, he called aloud,

Alethea! I would see Alethea!

Mocking sepulchral reverberations of his words were the only response. [426]

Again pouring out his request with a like result, his wonted composure was considerably shaken.

With growing disappointment he was about to make one louder call before leaving, when at his right hand an unseen valve suddenly opened, revealing a narrow private stairway hitherto unknown to him, leading from some of the many apartments of the great Temple above. A moment more, and footsteps, light but very real, were heard coming down.

A female form of enchanting beauty gracefully entered, and stood before him. Her eyes of a deep liquid blue turned towards him, her silken, blond tresses fell artlessly backward, and her features were of such loveliness as rarely comes in human mould. A white, flowing robe of exquisite softness and gauzelike lightness enveloped her form, leaving her shapely neck and shoulders fully exposed. A delicate fragrance of wild rose was borne in upon the atmosphere with her. There she stood, slender, lithe, symmetrical, radiant.

Marcius was startled.

She was neither Alethea, nor any other spirit.

Who art thou? and why didst thou appear when I called for another?

This is the night for mortals, and not for spirits! she replied sweetly. I am one of the priestesses of the Temple, and they call me the Chosen One.

What is thy mission here?

Behold thou didst vainly call for some one, and I have come to charm away thy disappointment, give thee solace, and keep thee company.

She smiled. [427]

Marcius retreated for a step, but his gaze was fastened upon her.

Peradventure thou dost count me for a shade who hath momentarily put on the form! she said archly. But no! I am very real flesh and blood!

Then she lightly touched her hand to one of his own convincingly.

I am well persuaded that thou hast never crossed the Styx; but I came hither especially to see another, who dwelleth beyond.

The signs to-night forbid! she replied with an intelligence that seemed to be official. Four nights of each week the mystical curtain which veils the Unseen is parted, but this is not one of them.

I will come again, Marcius replied in a low voice, beginning to turn away.

Hasten not! Perchance thy discomfiture and loneliness may be soothed. Doth not the dominion of Eros cover the earth as well as the realm of spirit? Nay, doth not the universe bow to his mastery? Even the stars of heaven woo each other by their attractiveness, and flash forth their kisses in beams of light, and the cohesion of atoms is but the warm embrace of an universal enchantment!

I cannot listen to thee!

But thou art listening! Surely thou dost not despise the worship of the Temple and her gods, else thou art not a loyal

Tarsian! None are dead to love, and both great and small do her honor!

I close my ears to thy beguilement!

[428] I would not beguile thee, but thou art heartless, and withal cold in thy devotion to our sacred divinities!

Thy words are wasted, and touch me not!

She came nearer, placing her hand upon her heart, and looking into his eyes, said,

Behold the roar of the storm without, while the blissful shrine in my sanctuary above, where I alone reign as priestess, invites a united homage!

I bid thee farewell, and will brave the storm!

The beautiful features of the priestess suddenly froze into an expression of scorn and contempt, as she swept quickly out of sight, and the valve slammed behind her.

Turning again to depart, Marcius had advanced but a step when strains of heavenly music floated in from the farther end of the cavern. He lingered entranced, while the harmony swelled and diminished with an unearthly sweetness which bound him to the spot.

Anon a great volume of dense vapor poured up from below, lifting itself by a graceful spiral motion, and gaining steadily in density!

Was Alethea yet to appear?

No!

Yes!

See!

It gathers itself into a defined form! It emerges from its soft background and comes forward!

Alethea!

Her bosom heaves with seeming life, and her eyes glisten with emotion.

O Alethea! I have come this time to implore thy forgiveness

[429] and seek thy blessing!

Marcius! I have beheld thy new life from the free domain of the Unseen, and also stood by thy side this night! Here jealousy hath no place! Thy past is freely forgiven, and my blessing, and that of Heaven, will rest upon thee and Rebecca. Until the earth-life is closed farewell!

The form slowly dissolved, and Marcius left the Temple, and passed out into the storm.

[430]

CHAPTER XXXIV
ONCE MORE UPON THE CYDNUS

Rivers are highways that move on, and bear us whither we wish to go.

A few days after the evening excursion of Marcius to the Temple, a little party emerged from the house of Benoni into the spacious grounds which overlooked the Cydnus. It was soon after mid-day. Though the sun shone brightly, a refreshing breeze down the valley from the Taurus mountains made the afternoon balmy and delightful. The cool waters of the river hurried quietly past, while the sunshine caused the ripple which danced upon its surface to gleam like molten gold.

The river barge of Marcius, called the Felicia, well manned by stalwart oarsmen, waiting at Benoni's landing by the foot of the terraces, presaged an excursion. The group lingered a little, and loitered through the grounds to enjoy the clusters of spice-trees, roses, oleanders, and jasmine which bordered the winding paths that sloped to the water's edge.

Looking up the river, the thick fringes of shrubs and trees which lined its banks could be followed by the eye, capriciously zigzag in their course, narrowing in the dim distance almost to a thread when traced toward the mountain wall of the northern
[431] horizon. The distant lofty range stood out in calm, serene beauty, its summits softened by light scattered foliage, and kissed by the rays of the afternoon sun.

The band of the New Faith in Tarsus had added many to its numbers through the labors of Serenus. Seconded by Amabel, and aided by Benoni, Rebecca, and Marcius, he was untiring in his work to kindle the higher life in the souls who were willing

to listen, and the synagogue soon became divided between those who were bound by dead forms, and the converts to a living spirituality. Works of mercy, ministry, and healing abounded, and faith, love, and service were multiplied. Such a joy lighted up the faces of the disciples that they became familiarly known among the Tarsians as the happy brotherhood. Although the Pharisaic members of the synagogue were censorious toward them, they suffered no persecution.

An excursion up the river had been planned by Marcius, both for the enjoyment of the charming scenery, and the opportunity for delightful communion and intercourse which come from the society of kindred souls possessing a common interest and aim.

Besides the family of Benoni, and Serenus and Amabel, Marcius had invited several other friends to join the company, and they gathered at Benoni's house at the appointed hour in readiness for the start. After a ramble in the garden, they passed down to the landing to embark. Some were already on the barge, when suddenly the sound of rapid footsteps was heard, and a young man appeared, hastening to reach them before their departure. [432]

It was Saulus!

His father, mother, and Rebecca were the last of the party, and not yet on board.

Each was successively wrapped in his loving embrace, and tears of joy witnessed the warmth of their reunion.

"O Saulus, thou must go with us on the excursion," said Rebecca, as soon as the first greetings were over. "Serenus and Amabel, also Marcius, of whom I have written thee, are already on the barge!

"Serenus on board! I will go! I long to greet him!

Soon all were upon the deck of the Felicia, and at a given signal the twenty oars on each side took the water as if by one impulse, and the graceful barge glided out upon the bosom of the Cydnus.

Rebecca presented Saulus to Marcius, who received him warmly, and then they sought Serenus and Amabel.

Saulus and Serenus were soon clasped in each other's arms.

O Serenus! my friend, brother, and saviour! Words fail me! To thee, whom I once counted as my enemy, I owe my life and my salvation. Blessed be these eyes that behold thee, and these ears that hear thy voice!

And thou, Amabel! who by my command wast taken to the cruel prison! Sister of the New Faith! I need not even ask thy forgiveness, for I am persuaded that thou hast bestowed it long ago. What a joy to forgive and be forgiven! Rebecca hath written the good tidings to me.

The Felicia was headed up stream, but despite the strong current she shot rapidly along. The roofs and towers of the city
[433] gradually receded, and pastoral voices and charms grew more distinct and prevailing. Delicious exhalations were wafted out from the leaves and blossoms of spicy shrubs on either hand, and their graceful forms were duplicated in trembling shadows in the clear water beneath. Nature furnished a perfect environment of peace and beauty, inspiring in the souls of all a revery of silent homage to the Word which she articulated and out-pictured.

Serenus and Saulus sat down side by side, and all visions of the troubled past melted away in their present friendliness and rejoicing. Saulus rehearsed to the group which gathered about him a full narrative of his thrilling experiences in Damascus, his life and retirement in the Desert, and his trials in Jerusalem.

Though an intensity of brotherly love, like that of David and Jonathan, immediately sprung up between Serenus and Saulus, it must not be supposed that they were alike, or thought alike. It is often assumed that those who differ in natural endowment and personal opinion must in some measure be separated in sympathy and interest. Not so. The zealous impetuosity of Saulus was in strong contrast with the serenity and evenness of his friend. They were utterly dissimilar in looks, temperament, and manner

of thinking. One might be compared to a dashing, foaming cataract, the other to a still, deep river. But their very unlikeness stimulated their affection.

Every unit is composed of unlike elements, and every truth has its widely varying aspects. It might therefore be expected that in their efforts to spread the New Faith, the methods of these two leaders would be unlike. Still more, the emphasis which each [c.34] would place upon all but the most vital and central principles would be greatly variant.

Hath any persecution been meted out to the disciples of the New Faith in Tarsus? inquired Saulus.

Nay; we have not been molested. The Tarsians have little concern either for or against our religion, and our brethren of the synagogue, while counting us as heretics and manifesting some bitterness of spirit, have done us no harm.

How unlike Damascus and Jerusalem! Behold in those cities all our exhortations in the name of Jesus of Nazareth filled the multitudes with jealousy, which brought forth persecution and even scourging.

The minds and hearts of men are not speedily changed, replied Serenus. Dost thou think it strange, O my brother! that those men are moved by the same reasoning that, in time gone by, moved thee to persecute, thinking that thereby thou wert doing God service? It is no easy thing to give righteous judgment concerning the actions of men, unless peradventure we have regard unto their ignorance, and all their past manner of thinking.

Thou sayest truly that I ought not to think it strange that others of the Circumcision persecute, even as I did, being of like mind; but I pray thee, how is the gospel of the New Faith to be established unless it be boldly proclaimed, whether men hear or forbear?

I am minded with thee, O Saulus! that the proclamation of Truth be fearlessly put forth, but it must be with forbearance

[435] and in love. Behold the still, small voice of the Spirit of Truth findeth a hearing in the affections of men whose ears are closed to argument and controversy. If the seed be cast gently into ground that is well prepared by the mellowing of love, and watered by the ministry of reconciliation, it will spring up, and in due season the blade will appear, and finally the full corn in the ear.

Thou speakest wisely, O Serenus! for only thy winning and unresistant spirit awakened a response in my own heart, that in due time overcame me, and turned my feet from the path of error and destruction. I am also minded that thy works in Tarsus are far more abundant than my vehement logic could have established had I been in thy place. Lo, from thy youth up thou hadst a gentleness of spirit, which I, even since my change of heart, greatly lack.

Serenus turned lovingly toward Saulus, and taking him by the hand, replied,

I beseech thee, my brother, have in mind the abundant power which thou hast, and not the thing which perchance thou lackest. It is well that we have differing talents and gifts. Thou canst not perform my work, nor I thine, but there is a harvest ripening for each of us. In the earthly vineyard of God the shoulders of every laborer are justly fitted to the burden which is appointed for him to bear. But of a verity there are no burdens, for they are changed to privileges.

Thy words reconcile me to my chosen work, and even to my inner hindrances. I perceive that through spiritual exercise even
[436] our shortcomings minister to advancement in the higher life.

Tarsus had faded from view, and save the rhythmic plash of the oars no sound was audible but the hum of quiet converse among the scattered groups upon the deck of the Felicia.

After listening with interest to the conversation between Serenus and Saulus, Marcius invited Rebecca's attention to the grandeur of the mountains now nearing as they ascended the

river, and soon the twain leisurely seated themselves in a retired nook near the bow of the boat.

The charm of the crystal Cydnus burnished by the rays of the sun, its fringed and swiftly passing banks, and the reposefulness of the broad, outlying landscape, combined to make the whole scene masterful.

How beautiful the world is! said Rebecca.

Yea, said Marcius. Under the inspiration of the New Faith the mountains are temples, and the rocks and trees sacred altars which enshrine the divine beauty and radiance.

A beautiful metaphor! I feel that Nature is soulful and companionable. The cold, mechanical forms of institutions, and the hollow ceremonies in temples made with hands, harden the mind and fetter its freedom. As our souls are illumined, Nature becomes a Revelation a spoken Word transparent to the Divine Spirit which shines through it.

Marcius was charmed by Rebecca's poetic consecration, and added,

Yea; Serenus teacheth even a threefold Revelation: that which shineth through the veil of the outer world; that manifested through men sons of God of whom Jesus was the [437] perfected measure; and that by the ever-present Spirit, which is the Companion and Teacher.

How clearly the eyes of Serenus are open to the light and truth of the world!

It is a marvel! said Marcius with earnestness. Blessed be the hour when first I beheld him! Behold how great good cometh out of evil! The sinking of the Salapiæ hath yielded a great blessing to Tarsus.

My life in the Holy City and since hath persuaded me that infinite forces work with us when we work through them, said Rebecca with enthusiasm. Nothing is trifling, and nothing unimportant.

Marcius felt that the moment had arrived toward which he had so long looked forward as the most eventful of his life.

O Rebecca! said he in a low, tender tone, as his eyes glanced upon her fair face, I am minded of another great blessing to me which hath grown out of evil!

The living emphasis of the soft, earnest words seemed peculiar, and Rebecca looked up inquiringly, as if to divine their interpretation.

Behold the day of the tumult, when thou wert hard pressed by the rabble! What a wicked offence, and yet from it hath come to me a revelation of thy beautiful soul.

Rebecca was startled, for there was an intensity behind the words which swept her spirit into unwonted vibration.

O Rebecca! I would more fully unveil my heart to thee!
[438] Blessed be the day when for the first time I beheld thy sweet face, and thrice blessed the time in which I have felt thy goodness and purity! I love thee! Thy father hath graciously yielded me permission to make my love known to thee. Oh, wilt thou not be the soul of my soul? The New Faith will consecrate our love, and make us one in the bonds of a union that shall be unending. Should there be no certain response in thy heart at this hour, I will not press thee for an answer now. But thou art the pure shrine at which my devotion will glow with an unending ardor!

While the calm dignity of Rebecca did not forsake her the beautiful cheeks took on a ruddier shade, and her large, radiant eyes were downcast and bedewed.

Then, looking steadily into his manly face, she replied softly,

Hast thou thought carefully of this? Thou art the Roman Vice Legate of Tarsus, and I but an humble maid of the Hebrews!

Rebecca, I have pondered it day and night! Never in my earlier days did I know there could be such love! But I feel myself to be another mana new man or I would be unspeakably unworthy of thee. I am yet unworthy, but I offer thee the homage

of a heart, purified I trust, by the higher life, and softened by the effulgence of thine own goodness.

There was a long silence, made more intense by the rapid beating of two hearts.

A smile upon her lips, and the dropping of a tear which would not stay back, gave him hope.

Unspeakable repose filled their souls.

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PART THIRD

AFTER THE FLIGHT OF TWENTY YEARS

[440]

CHAPTER XXXV
THE BAY OF PUTEOLI

The massive gates of Circumstance,
Are turned upon the smallest hinge,
And thus some seeming petty chance
Oft gives our life an after tinge.

One beautiful spring morning A.D. 61, an Alexandrian ship, flying the sign of Castor and Pollux, entered the Bay of Puteoli laden with corn for the granaries of Rome. The mirror-like surface of the water brilliantly reflected the rays of the early sun, and duplicated the palaces, gardens, and palm-trees which lined the banks. The dark-green, vine-clad slopes of Vesuvius, yet a slumbering giant, towered up from the eastward above the peaceful towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii, distinguished for their brilliant color, Greek-like gayety, and beautiful situation. It was one of the loveliest of earthly scenes.

The luxurious villas and magnificent palaces of Roman nobles which dotted the shores, and the romantic islets that lifted themselves out of the blue sea to the west and southwestward, with the flowering shrubs which pushed their color and fragrance to the waters edge, all contributed features to form an unequalled earthly paradise. Near by were Baiæ, Pandataria, Cumæ, Pausilypus, and Capreæ, each richly endowed with thrilling classical events and romantic associations of great interest in the world history. The end of the voyage was at hand, and the passengers gathered upon deck to enjoy the complex panorama which many of them viewed for the first time. They represented many different races, tribes and tongues, and appeared in a picturesque variety of costumes.

Prominent among them was a Roman officer, having in charge a prisoner who was on his way to Rome for a trial in the imperial court.

The officer, Julius, who wore the insignia of a centurion, had an intelligent and kindly face, and showed much respect unto his prisoner, who was a man well along in years, and of marked individuality.

It was Saulus on his journey to the Eternal City upon an appeal for justice. He was accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, though they were not prisoners. He stood upon the forward deck, engaged in converse with the centurion.

If official duty will enable thee to use thy discretion, O Julius, I would make an earnest request for thy favor!

Make it known unto me, and if expedient I will be pleased to grant thy petition.

Behold yonder house where the gardens reach the water's edge! It is but little more than a stadium from the landing, and is the home of Marcius, a Roman, and his wife, who is my sister. I fain would tarry there for a few days before setting out for Rome.

How knowest thou that it is the house of Marcius, never having sojourned here aforetime? [443]

I am fully persuaded of it through letters which came to me giving a full description.

I have power to grant thy request, and it shall be as thou dost desire.

When all had landed, Julius found upon inquiry that the house which had been pointed out was as had been represented, and with a soldier for a guard, Saulus and his friends were permitted to make the desired visit.

The home of Marcius occupied one of the most beautiful sites upon the shores of the heavenly bay. The water, transparent in its blueness, embraced by a lovely sky and an emerald shore, was so serene that it seemed to be reposing in a dream of bliss. The

air was heavy with the odors of flowering plants and shrubs, and a subtle and fascinating spell was wont to steal over the senses of the observer. Nature was the Charmer.

The dark, tangled crags to the southwest seemed like lazy yet faithful sentinels who were watching lest the prodigal enchantment might escape, or that its voluptuousness might tempt the sea to swallow it up. What a fairy-land to stir the fancies of the heart, and light a smile of rapture upon the face of him whose soul is attuned to a beauty that is not only upon the surface, but within!

The three friends, who were entirely unlooked for, received a most cordial welcome from Marcius and Rebecca, and their home was a veritable haven of rest after a long and troublesome voyage. Many years had passed since Saulus and Rebecca last met, but the ardor of their early affection, if possible, seemed yet increased. Saulus for the first time saw his niece Helena, the [Illegible] daughter of Marcius and Rebecca, who was now in the bloom of her youthful beauty.

After a day of hospitable entertainment and intercourse in the unity and spirit of the New Faith, the little group, as the sun declined, was seated upon the front porch which overlooked the lovely expanse of the waters of Puteoli. The air was delicious, and a purple haze enveloped the surrounding slopes and heights, softening their outlines, and forming a mystical and idealistic setting for the splendid summer-houses which dotted the shore and highlands far and near. Upon the bay, which reflected upon its bosom the splendor of the closing day, here and there might be seen the sail of some belated fisherman or pleasure boat, almost becalmed, or perchance lazily rowing toward the port.

Saulus, after gazing meditatively upon the scene for a little time, broke the silence.

In all my journeyings I have beheld no scene so glorious!

Yea, said Marcius, we count it as heavenly as any place on earth well can be. Nearly a score of years have taken their

flight since we came here from the banks of the Cydnus, and yet whenever I return from my journeys in other climes it always gives me fresh delight.

Tell me somewhat of thy journeys, and of thy success in spreading the New Faith, said Saulus.

Behold I have little to make mention of in comparison with the great work which thou hast accomplished! Not being a public
[445] teacher and preacher, my efforts have had little observation, yet after my own manner I feel that my work hath not been in vain.

I am minded that thou hast devoted most of thy wealth to the spread of the new gospel, said Saulus, and assuredly in that direction thou hast done most effectual service. I would that thou briefly recount to my brethren, Luke and Aristarchus, somewhat of thy sacrifices and labors for their encouragement.

My sacrifices have been light compared with those which each of you has made, yet I have tried to be faithful. To this day no persecution hath been meted out to me, but I yet may feel the displeasure of Nero. No one can tell. Claudius was content with my simple deposition from office in Tarsus, and since that day I have lived undisturbed as a Roman private citizen.

But Saulus desired to hear further.

I have learned through letters from the hand of Rebecca that thou hast sent trusted disciples to the ends of the earth, and that thine own journeyings have reached to Britain, Spain, and Africa.

It hath been my privilege to send a few laborers into the vineyard, and furnish them with the means of support. In my visits to these lands I have seen somewhat of the fruits of their labors, and letters lately received give me hope of their growing success.

Behold there is a diversity of gifts and members in the new kingdom! said Luke; and I perceive that thou, O Marcius! hast done a great work that hath not been chronicled by the churches or known to the saints at Jerusalem. The world is a great field,

and there are divers ways of scattering the good seed of the Word. [446]

While thou art with us, O brother Saulus! I would that thou interpret more fully the life and doctrine of the great Prophet of Nazareth! said Marcius. The disciples with whom I have had converse appear to think differently, in some degree, concerning the best way of salvation and the true ideal of the New Faith.

Wherein lieth the difference?

Some seem to teach that the new life is likeness in mind and spirit to Jesus, or an incarnation of the inner Christly quality, while others hold that it is a purchase which was made by his sufferings and death. They say that his blood, though greater than other Jewish sacrifices, in the same manner cleanseth from transgression and bestoweth pardon.

I have observed that some such differences are beginning to appear among believers, but am fully persuaded that the Spirit will not be swallowed up by the letter. A knowledge of Jesus, the Christ, after the flesh, profiteth nothing. If I have known him after the flesh, I would know him no more.

What is the significance of the shedding of blood?

Blood signifieth the inner quality or life, and not the suffering and death. Behold the literal blood availeth naught! Jesus was only the outward manifestation of the Christ, because the Saviour of men is not flesh, but spirit.

What doth belief in the name of Christ signify?

It is that Christ, or the mind of Christ, liveth in us as it lived in Jesus, though not so fully manifested. Faith in Christ is not mere belief in the death and resurrection of the Prophet of Nazareth, but it is the substance of spiritual life in man. Jesus belonged to [447] a particular time and place, while the Christ is the divine son in all men, even though not yet born into activity. It is God in the soul of man!

A saving truth! and how near, for it is an experience of the heart, said Rebecca.

Yea; the Christ is in every man, and not far away in time or distance. He is the name of divine oneness in the children of men, whether in the seed, the blade, or the full corn in the ear. Ordinances and sacraments are without, but Christ, the Truth, is within. A fleshly and sacrificial belief manifesteth itself in form and ceremony, and bringeth forth a harvest of dead works which killeth the spirit.

I feel the truth of what thou sayest, for it is easy of comprehension! said Marcius with earnestness.

Yea; no man need err therein. Christ is not a dead Christ, but the living, ever-present son or image waiting for birth and articulation in every human soul. Behold the whole creation groaneth together in bringing forth the sons of God!

Didst thou not in thine early teaching dwell much upon the seen Jesus and his sacrificial death?

Yea, thou judgest rightly; but now I see more plainly that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. I have learned that the worship of the Father pertaineth not to time, place, nor race, but must be in spirit and in truth. Behold all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, are blindly feeling after God, but through ignorance they make
[448] many vain searches! But full contentment can never come to any soul until it knoweth the Father and his kingdom within.

Of the reputed sayings of the Nazarene, some appear to come from a son of man, and others from a son of God. Canst thou make that plain to us?

Man hath within him both the human and divine nature, and Jesus being fully manifested in the God-consciousness, and recognizing his oneness with the Father, at divers times spoke as God in the flesh, and also upon other occasions as a son of man. Behold God, though not flesh, dwelleth in all flesh, but man knoweth it not, and thinketh of him as far away.

Early the next morning Serenus and Amabel also arrived at the house of Marcius. They came for a brief sojourn before taking

ship for Alexandria, now their home, being on their return from a short visit to Rome.

[449]

CHAPTER XXXVI
NOCTURNAL INTERVIEW WITH A SEER

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some lessons of the after life to spell,
By and by it came and answered,
I myself am heaven and hell.

Joy reigned in the house of Marcius. The unlooked-for arrival of Serenus and Amabel brought about a general and happy reunion of friends who long had been widely separated.

The abode of Serenus was now in Alexandria. As the worthy successor of Philo, he was the eminent head of a school of liberal Christian philosophy, where teachers and missionaries were trained and educated. The academy was not devoted to mere philosophical speculation and theorizing, but to the promulgation of the New Faith in its pristine purity. Both by precept and example Serenus inculcated a practical spiritual life which transformed those who came within its moulding influence. The school became a living fountain, from which went out the waves of a Christly Christianity. Set free, even in greater measure than the Primitive Church, from Jewish dogmatism, the truth was purged from all traditional rubbish, and given out in all its
[450] intrinsic value and beauty. It was the simple New Faith, without any admixture of asceticism, touched and gilded by the light of the highest and best Greek philosophy and idealism. The influence upon the world at large of the Alexandrian liberal school of Christianity, not being recorded in canonized history, has been mostly unrecognized in ecclesiastical annals.

The day after the arrival of Serenus and Amabel passed swiftly in mutual converse and encouragement. Every one of the reunited circle had much to recount. What a wealth of experiences gained, obstacles overcome, and inspirations kindled!

Late in the evening Marcius felt a strange and unwonted spirit of restlessness. All the rest of the household had retired for the night, when some intangible but powerful influence almost impelled him to go into the open air for a season of meditation and communion with the spirit of Nature. Telling Rebecca of his intention, he went out upon the porch and took his favorite seat overlooking the beautiful bay. The harmony and sublimity of the scene were borne in upon his soul, and gave him a sense of profound serenity. The air was soft and balmy, and the full-orbed moon was lifting herself above the horizon in queenly majesty, lighting up the expanse of waters with a sheen of wavy silver.

The arrival of Saulus, and yet more that of Serenus and Amabel, brought before the mind of Marcius a flood of former associations and emotions interwoven with his life upon the banks of the Cydnus. His inner experiences of the earlier time passed before him in a procession like the unrolling of a scenic panorama. His Christianity was also free from a too-prevalent asceticism, and the charm of everything about him found a response and revelation in his own soul. As he pondered, while drinking in the beauty of the night, he measurably divested himself of the gross sense of the Physical, and wandered back amid bygone soul-experiences. He realized that to penetrate the unseen realm of Reality there must be earnest desire, unclouded by the opaque objects of sense, usually so all controlling.

He journeyed psychically backward, and analyzed his early life, its selfishness, grossness, and superficiality. He thought of those who shared it. Where are they now? What occupies them? Have they yet discerned the hollowness of the mad pursuit of sensuous gratification?

What of Leander?

At that moment he was somewhat startled by the dignified approach of a man wrapped in a long mantle who came near and called him by name. In a reposeful and deliberate manner the stranger leaned against a pillar and waited for a response. His voice was musical, his face had a pleasant and impressive aspect, indicating refined character and a passionless depth of thought, heightened by a noble forehead and deep-set eyes.

I am Marcius! Be seated, and explain thine errand!

I come as a messenger, rather than for myself, replied the strange visitor in a cordial and friendly manner. Thy musing upon the secrets of the soul and the mysteries of the Universe, but more especially thy delving among the living relics of the past, hath awakened a yearning in other souls, or a soul, and thou only hast the power to satisfy it!

[452] Thou speakest in riddles! how did it come to thee, or to those for whom thou hast come, that my thought was occupied with the past? Behold the scene of my earlier experiences is far distant.

In mind and spirit there is no time nor distance! The echoes of thought go out, and are interpreted by those whose inner hearing is attuned. Not only the music of a fountain, but even the hoarse roar of a tempest, is heard within, and can be stilled only from the centre! There is a disquieted soul that earnestly craves thine aid. Even a word from thee would help to relieve its distresses.

Again thou speakest beyond my comprehension. What dost thou desire me to do?

Go with me to a place not very far distant where all mystery shall be made plain to thee!

Thou hast much assurance to ask me to go with thee, a stranger, to a place unknown! Common prudence might forbid.

Do I seem like one born to deceive? Only good can or will come from thy compliance.

Whom do we seek, if I go with thee?

My Superior! A wise and noble magician. One who hath profound and prophetic gifts of soul, and hath penetrated deeply

into the mysteries of Knowledge, as found in the life of man.

I will go with thee!

The moon had hidden herself behind dense masses of floating clouds so that the darkness had perceptibly increased, but Marcius was thoroughly persuaded of the sincerity of his guide, and did not hesitate.

They started. After traversing several narrow streets and [483] turning many corners, they took a road which wound steadily upward. On, on, on! would they never arrive at the journeys end? The deep obscurity and many turns caused Marcius to lose his bearings, and he had little or no idea even of the general direction which they had taken. In the gradual ascent they crossed two streams upon whose classical banks in bygone ages had encamped the invading hosts of Etruscan, Sybarite, and Roman. The whole vicinity was rich with ancient lore. Still on, until, with a sharp turn to the right, they passed through a deep and narrow fissure which parted a hill of rock, and was shrouded by abundant foliage.

Emerging from the narrow walled passage, immediately before them, upon a level plateau, stood a venerable castle. The light which streamed through a few of the windows gave evidence of life within.

Behold our journeys end! said the stranger.

They entered, and after mounting a broad, winding staircase, Marcius was ushered into the presence of a tall, dignified and venerable man, with long hair and flowing beard of snowy whiteness, who received him with becoming and polite cordiality. He was wrapped in a long white mantle, heavily embroidered in gold with mystical and occult designs. After the first greetings, he motioned Marcius to a convenient seat. The room was commodious, and possessed many remains of ancient splendor fairly well preserved. It contained large tables of costly marble elaborately carved, upon which were piles of parchment sheets and rolls, and

also many astrological, chemical, and philosophical instruments
[454] and appliances.

I am here in obedience to thy request, said Marcius inquiringly.

The kindly face of the Seer lighted up with a beneficent smile, as he replied,

I give thee cordial welcome, and am persuaded that thy visit will not be in vain. I have knowledge of thy good works, and that thou hast delight in the upliftment and release of entangled souls.

I am in no wise minded how my strange visit hath any virtue in such an accomplishment!

Peradventure there be unseen prisoners struggling for freedom that thou knowest not of.

I shall rejoice in any opportunity for spiritual ministry, said Marcius; but if thou art pleased to communicate, may I first inquire concerning thyself and thy profession?

I am descended from the Magi of the far East. My father was one of the wise men who brought offerings to the Babe of Bethlehem, an observer of the stars, and skilled in magic. I have dwelt in many lands, sojourning for some time in Athens before coming here.

Of what avail is the mystery and seclusion which are wrapped about thy seership?

Behold the minds of this generation are descended from the spiritual altitude of the sages of the earlier world, therefore the mysteries of the Universe, and of mind and spirit, must be veiled and guarded from the sensuous vulgarity of the present age. How long, thinkest thou, should we be permitted to cultivate acquaintance with mysticism and spiritual science if our Art were made
[455] known to Nero? Behold if water is to mirror the heavens it must be still and deep, and wholly unruffled by the winds of Circumstance! Our wisdom would shrink to naught unless lifted

beyond the murky atmosphere of the sense and selfishness of every-day life.

I perceive the truth of what thou speakest, and would know further of thy philosophy and aspiration.

Behold the Divine One is unveiled in many ways to the inner vision of men. Our distinctive reading of Him is through the pages of Nature. We find living oracular voices in the poetry and harmony of the Universe, and also in the underlying laws of the mind of man. To interpret Nature and Law is to interpret God. We must study the adumbration, locution, and the architecture of the whole creation. All is life, and life is LOVE. In the world of sense love is personal and narrow. In the higher spheres it reduces all things to itself, and becomes impersonal and all-inclusive. To penetrate the secrets of the Universal Mind and discover the invisible revolving wheels of Nature, one must ascend an unseen mount ALONE. Only through such solitude can the soul uncover itself and come into full contact with the Eternal, and at length gain a complete mastery over the base idolatry of the common life.

I fain would know more particularly concerning thine own chosen field of research?

I may make known to thee that the Magi of the East are of three Orders, different, though related, for they are One. The triangle hath three sides. The first Order is given mainly to the study of and communion with Nature, or rather her motives and internal forces. The second is concerned with the assuagement and healing of the ills and disorders of the race, and the third [458] seeks near acquaintance with the mysteries and manifestations of Spirit while abiding in incarnate forms, and also the invoking of those that have become excarnate. It includes a study of the laws, communications, and unfoldment of human minds and souls. My own researches and experiments are more specifically those of the third Order, to which I have the honor to belong.

The thought of Marcius went back to Alethea.

My own small experience hath convinced me, not only that spirits survive earthly dissolution, but that they sometimes appear in the seen form.

The sage nodded assent, and observed,

It is true that those who are in the Beyond, under certain favorable circumstances not commonly understood, may briefly draw to themselves some of the finer elements of neighboring bodies, and even clothe themselves with them. This is no marvel! It is in accord with the spiritual laws of man's constitution. When embodied, Mind commands its own organism. In lesser degree, after the seen hath been dropped, its inherent forces may lay hold of the subtle elements that are less closely related, and mould them for a temporary purpose.

Do those who cross the Styx find upon landing upon the farther side that they are much wiser, and at once rid of the errors of the fleshly experience?

Nay; the higher states come only by growth into harmony with the Universal Good, which is through patient and persistent aspiration. Most souls are inert until pushed forward by the pains of discordant environment. The same faults must be overcome, [457] the same phantoms vanquished and selfishness put away, as in the seen. The wonted passions rage, even though without material expression. But thanks to friendly thought-ministration from intelligences more highly developed, both in the visible and invisible, progress soon begins, and will continue. The cords that hold spirits in prison must be weakened in every strand through retributive and purifying discipline until they finally give way, and then released souls can mount aloft into a larger freedom. To put on a heavenly consciousness at once would be a violation of all the laws of normal growth and universal method. Thought must wear new channels, whether with or without the cruder embodiment.

Is there a spiritual body?

There is a finer form, which is gently released when the

grosser embodiment drops away, being no longer fit for occupancy. To the clear vision of a Hierophant there are even soul tints and colors which emanate from living forms, and index the quality of their thought. The delicate goodly hues of thine own inner nature have been plainly visible to me since thou entered yonder door.

Do the spiritual atmospheres of those upon the plane of the seen touch each other, and make themselves felt beyond the boundaries of the body?

Yea, like auras, meet and mingle harmoniously, while those which are discordant in color and vibration are mutually repellant. There is an all-pervading ethereal Substance which fills all space, and is also penetrative of all matter. It is the medium which connects individualized thought with the Universal Mind. As the trembling strings of a harp launch its music upon the undulations of the atmosphere, so the waves of thought are wafted through that Infinite Ocean in which we dwell to their desired Destination, or perchance forth into ever-increasing outward circles.

What is matter?

Matter is spirit in its crudest manifestation. It is the primary educational plane of soul, or, in other words, the moulding material for its elementary practice. Individuated soul builds it up into organic forms. We must not forget also that there are innumerable grades of individuated souls below the plane of the Human.

What wouldst thou interpret as the basic principle of all life?

Love, which when manifested in the lower forms of matter, we call attraction or gravitation, pervades the Universe, and is the mainspring of all life. As it rises in the scale of unfolding Being it becomes refined and spiritualized. All individuated consciousness must finally come into harmonic vibration with the Universal Spirit. Behold the Divine One hath made everything from HIMSELF! But the moments flee. Peradventure thou wouldst

know more fully the definite purpose for which thy visit was desired?

I await thy convenience.

A disquieted Intelligence, for some time beyond the confines of visibility, craveth converse with thee. Peradventure thou mayest be able to accomplish much in giving release and bringing reconciliation.

I cannot divine who or what It may be replied Marcius with an expression of deep curiosity.

[459] The Seer then arose, and inviting Marcius to follow, led the way into an adjoining room. There was no light save the rays of the full moon which came in brightly through two casements, the clouds having dispersed. The door was closed, and Marcius shown to a seat.

The room was octagonal in shape, and of moderate size, except in height, which was great in proportion to the other dimensions. Upon the vaulted ceiling far above there were dim points of light, which like stars seemed to have a luminosity of their own. High above their heads small Æolian harps hung in valves which were open to the gentle zephyrs without, and they were discoursing soft, sweet melody which seemed more like heavenly whisperings than earthly music.

Soon the Seer gave a signal, upon which a man clad in loose white robes entered and seated himself upon a dais between the two casements. There was sufficient light to show Marcius that the face was that of the messenger who had guided him to the castle. The harmony, beauty, and softness of the whole scene was so impressive that he awaited some demonstration with anxious expectancy. His thoughts turned once more back to Alethea, and his heart beat quickly at the memory of the vision long ago in the Tarsian adytum.

But see! A tremor passes over the frame of the figure upon the dais. His breast heaves, his muscles relax, his eyelids droop, and he seems like one entranced.

Anon a mist, at first so rare as to be barely discernible, formed in a gathering cloud just before the dais! [460]

It gains in density, gradually solidifies, and finally assumes definite form!

Leander!

* * * * * * * * * *

Marcius marvelled!

The same wavy brown hair! dark blue eyes! fair complexion, with skin white, as if polished with baths and oil! His costume was that of an actor in dramatic representation.

Marcius was still more surprised when Leander assumed an oratorical attitude, and in his old-time impassioned manner began the recitation of Greek poetry. Then followed a scene from one of the tragedies of Sophocles. After closing, he waited a moment, as if expecting applause.

Marcius almost forgot the present in such a realistic dream of the past.

Behold, said the Master in a whisper, the persistence of mental habit! Pressing though his business be with thee, this dramatic fragment must needs be projected from his surcharged soul before he can give his message!

Leander now came forward and laid his hand upon the shoulder of Marcius. An intensely woeful expression was manifest.

O Marcius! I have sent for thee! Behold I am disquieted! I fain would quench the hatred toward thee that was long ago kindled in my soul, but am not able! In spite of every effort it reasserts itself through habit! It is like a fire which when smothered in one place breaketh out anew of itself! I crave thy [461] forgiveness, which, if thou dost grant it, may peradventure help to release me from this terrible thraldom!

Take courage, for it is freely granted! I give thee my love, and pronounce thy release!

I bless thy goodness, and thank thee that thou wast minded to follow the messenger to this place! But I have yet a great work

to do! Behold the old thoughts rise up before me and will not be laid!

Marcius gave him a kindly look, and replied,

Think of love, love, LOVE! for behold its presence in thy soul will at length displace all its opposites! That is the method by which thou mayest dissolve them into nothingness.

But, O Marcius! I have not yet told thee the worst! I tried to murder thee! With base gold I bought a potion that was to dull thy reason, destroy thy wisdom, and hasten thy mind and body to decay before the wonted time! Listen to my iniquity! With more gold, by my direction, Colurus was hired to administer the potion to thee! But, thanks to all the gods none of which I have beheld since I left the body thou art here and well! The potion took no effect, but, oh, the guilt is not the less! I am tormented beyond measure for having so rewarded the best friend I ever had! A fire rageth within my thought, and I have no rest! Horror and destruction, in living forms, follow and point at me!

He groaned in spirit, and tears rolled down his face.

In vain have I called unceasingly upon the gods for release! I love thee now! but the old hateful thoughts, like foul spirits, [462] thrust themselves continually before me!

Calm thyself, Leander! All will yet be well! Love finally will conquer!

But, O Marcius! added to murderous thoughts of thee, my appetites of the flesh yet rage within my mind, even though I have no flesh to fulfil them!

The Seer cast a benignant glance upon Leander, and said reassuringly,

Behold thou hast repented of all thy sins, and they are in process of being cast out. Beneficent laws have ordained that growth cometh through pain. Virtue is valuable because it costs much, and its sweetness cometh from intelligent contrast. As Marcius hath well said, only love can heal thy disquietude. But

time is necessary, for there are no sudden leaps in soul. All things grow only from cultivation and desire.

Leander paced the room with intense agitation, as if impelled by some evil spirit, but at length, by great effort, stopped before Marcius, and kneeled with bowed head.

Bless thee once more for thy hearty forgiveness! My distress is a little lessened because I behold something of the light of the future which thou hast pointed out! Oh, how I bless thee for thy words love love LOVE! Only love can give me peace! I will grasp it, cling to it, and think of nothing else! I will love both gods and men everything!

Thy love shall wax, and the day will be hastened when thy chains shall be fully broken. My forgiveness and affection shall forever rest upon thee!

A backward step, and anon his form became cloudy and indefinable. Then, slowly, like a summer evening cloud, it dissolved, and was seen no more.

[463]

CHAPTER XXXVII
TWO WOEFUL SOULS RELEASED

It was a little before mid-day, and the forum and market-place of Puteoli were filled with a throng which represented a mingling of different races, avocations, and professions. Some were in favorite places of resort, passing the hours in dolce far niente, and even the busy ones moved leisurely under the influence of the soft and luxurious atmosphere of southern Italy. Life among all classes was spent mainly out-of-doors, or in public places like the temples, baths, forum, or porticos. Simply to exist in such a climate was a dreamy luxury. The passive enjoyment of the present hour barred out any anxious future. If an earthquake caused some trembling of the immediate environment to-day, they were yet willing to let to-morrow take care for the things of itself.

Here and there was a sleek and luxurious Roman noble, a senator, or perchance some member of the court of Nero, whose country home was on the coast, jostled by merchants and seamen from every clime of the then known world. The long toga of the magistrate or lawyer was brushed by the picturesque costume of the peasant, the embroidered tunic of the pleasure-seeker, or
[464] perchance the rags of a beggar.

Here, as in the neighboring cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, Grecian art had taken early root, and frescos, carvings, and other ornate decoration covered every available space.

Near the heart of the business quarter on the side of a colonnade were the stalls of the money-changers, with their shining heaps in full view, which were the fruit of exchanges of the coins of many nations, the corn, animal products, and merchandise of which were landed here on the way to the Eternal City. At

intervals the statue of some one of the Cæsars, a triumphal arch, a bronze or marble god or goddess, with frequent fountains whose iridescent spray danced and sparkled in the sunlight, gave variety and artistic beauty to the scene.

Petty traders displayed their varied wares, and artificers fashioned their handiwork and deftly exercised their different crafts with a well-ordered professional skill. The easy-going life of the great majority, to outward appearance, seemed like a long-drawn-out poetic revery. Gayety and love of pleasure and show glistened on the surface of the complex river of life that flowed smoothly along.

The temple of Jupiter occupied one side of the forum, and a straggling and variable procession passed in and out, who came to pay their devotions to the chief god of the Roman state. In plain sight of the temple, fronting on a narrow street which led from the forum, and on the same side, was a plain, square building, somewhat resembling a Jewish synagogue. This was the meeting-place of a small congregation of the members of the New Faith, which was composed of divers races, including a few Jews who had left behind their national ceremonialism. The [165] outgoing waves of the new spiritual movement in the East had reached this distant shore, and, chiefly through the influence of Marcius and Rebecca, had crystallized into an organization.

Up to this time there had been no dangerous persecution, though much prejudice and dishonor had been visited upon the disciples. They had been contemptuously designated as atheists, despisers of the fine arts, maligners of the gods and the temple, and by common reputation rated as disloyal to the divine Cæsar.

The great fame of Saulus as an apostle, preacher, and healer had long before preceded him, and soon the news of his arrival, as a prisoner on his way to Rome, became noised abroad. Serenus also, though less known to the common people, had much reputation.

On the day already noted, being the fifth after the landing of Saulus, a noisy group, composed mainly of idlers who frequented the streets, gathered near the meeting-place of the disciples. In the midst of the boisterous crowd, a man whose appearance indicated that he was of the lower orders, seemed to be the principal subject of an animated controversy.

He is no other than the cripple! said one.

He is not the cripple, but is like him! said another.

The man was straight, and had full command of his limbs, and began to dance with a light step to show his agility. His name was Lausus, formerly a sailor, but from the effect of a fall
[466] several years before had long been a cripple. He had sold small trinkets about the streets until he became familiarly known as The Cripple.

The dispute continued.

He is the cripple and has been healed!

He is a hypocrite, and one of the fanatics who are traitors to Cæsar! I declare to you that they are sorcerers, and worship a Nazarene Jew whom they call Christus!

It is truly Lausus! let him speak for himself!

There was a pause as he beckoned for silence.

I am the lame man who for so long hath sold ornaments! Behold I am healed of my trouble!

How wast thou restored? asked one who seemed willing to learn the truth.

Behold two members of the household of the New Faith, who are guests of Marcius, the Roman, laid hands upon me, and my limbs are whole!

What are their names?

Saulus and Serenus.

What did they say to thee?

After laying their hands upon me, in the name of the God of the whole earth, they declared my lameness healed!

He is Lausus, and his word is true, for I was a witness! said another.

I was healed of blindness! cried a new voice.

Another deceiver and fanatic! growled a bystander.

Two days ago I was able only to behold a little light when the sun shone brightly, and now, God be thanked, I can see clearly! [97]

What did they tell thee?

Thy faith hath given thee sight! Give God the praise!

Did they not touch thine eyes?

Yea, they anointed them; but said that it was only an outward symbol, and that it was my own faith that restored me!

Still other voices in the crowd gave marvellous testimonies of wonderful works.

The throng was divided. Some mocked, and cried out that it was only a conspiracy to bring the New Faith into favor.

The tumult increased, and the crowd grew larger.

Down with them! they are dreamers and beside themselves!

Nay, they speak the truth!

Their pretended healings are lies! I have heard that they are murderers of new-born babes!

It is a slander!

Down with the deceivers! drive them out!

Is it wrong to heal disease?

They show contempt to Jupiter and all the gods by paying homage to a Jew!

The controversy grew more bitter, and at length ended with the beating of Lausus, and he was left almost helpless; but soon he was borne away by some of the brethren. The aid of the twain who had ministered relief before was again sought, and he speedily recovered from his bruises.

The tumult, the rumors of healing, their denial and affirmation, with the violent aspersion of the doctrines and practices of [98] the members of the New Faith, caused a widespread dispute and division among the people of the entire coast. The opposers of the

new movement stoutly maintained that the examples of healing were temporary and imaginary, and that those upon whom the works had been wrought were self-deceived, or that they never had been afflicted with any veritable disorders.

The two visitors found themselves the subjects of a great controversy, which grew to be so earnest that even the influence of Marcius hardly could protect them from insult on one side, and homage and almost deification on the other. Their fame spread so rapidly that calls came from all directions; and when the day had ended they had ministered to scores of sick folk, and brought restoration and health into outward manifestation.

Behold your works of mercy have stirred up much commotion among the people of Puteoli, said Marcius, as the household gathered at the close of the day to hear their experiences.

It is ever thus! said Saulus. The outward signs and fruits which follow and attest the glow of the higher life are an inspiration to those who believe and accept them, but a rock of offence and stumbling to the faithless. The selfsame works, therefore, may bless or curse in due measure, according to the manner in which they are received.

Just then the conversation was interrupted by the coming of a messenger, who besought Saulus and Serenus to visit a man who was violently possessed of an evil spirit. They started immediately, and were led for some distance through the darkness of the evening, finally halting before the large and richly appointed country-house of a Roman patrician. Entering the spacious court, they were met by the wife and a few other friends of the afflicted man, who was no other than the owner of the villa.

[469]

We have heard of your wonderful works, but wot not by what power they are wrought; and now behold the master of the house is grievously tormented, and a rich reward will be given if you will restore him.

The Roman matron added her importunate request.

O sirs! he is a kind and upright man when the demon doth not possess him! Can you cast out the foul spirit? Behold when it useth him he is exceeding fierce, so that he must needs be bound with chains. Silver and gold in abundance shall be yours if peradventure you can compass his release.

We come not for silver and gold! said Serenus; but in the name of the Eternal Spirit of Goodness, to bring joy, peace, and salvation to this house. Thy husband shall be restored.

Two strong attendants led the way, a few steps in advance, to a massive room in the basement, where the Roman was securely bound with chains. He glared fiercely as they entered, and sprang forward to the full length of his bonds to attack them. Serenus and Saulus followed immediately behind, and so soon as his eyes rested upon them he relaxed and sank quietly into a seat, trembling, and frothing at the mouth as if in a fit. He was a large man, and clad in a thick leathern garb that he might not wound himself. His manly features and noble forehead were distorted with rage, his nostrils distended, and his eyes shot out fiery glances until they softened and partly closed at the sight of [407] the unwonted visitors. Soon he sat upright, and was in a more quiet but still defiant mood, though he did not try again to arise.

Saulus was the first to speak.

Thou foul and wicked spirit! in the name of the same ever-present Christ that had full and visible manifestation through Jesus of Nazareth, I command thee to come out of him!

The man was shaken as if by a paroxysm, but after much effort opened his lips.

Through the mouth of this man I confess unto thee that I am both foul and wicked, as thou hast said, and that I must needs obey thee!

Serenus turned lovingly toward his companion.

Brother Saulus, I pray thee, before sending him away to darkness and despair, if thou wilt, let us hold brief converse with

him. Behold is he not bound and in torment, and doth not he also need release, even as this Roman?

O Serenus, thou speakest with thy wonted wisdom! I thank thee, for I thought only of the Roman! With all my long missionary experiences I may still gain further knowledge and mercy from thee. I beseech thee, do what seemeth good in thine own eyes.

Serenus then came near, and calmly looked into the man's face.

Why dost thou torment this Roman who hath never done aught against thee?

Behold I am in a rage of misery which is the bitter fruit of
[471] my life while in the flesh, and I have found a certain satisfaction in the control and sensations of a material body of expression!

Why didst thou choose this man?

His weak personality lacked any positive moral and spiritual strength, therefore he offered no resistance to my occupation.

Now thou speakest the words of soberness.

Thy presence hath calmed my anger, and, for the hour, restored my power to reason understandingly.

Thou hast been an adversary to everything good or Godlike?

Yea; in my sight everything seemed to be against me, and I raged against everything in return, and that kindled a hell within my soul.

Behold the Spirit of the Eternal Goodness is everywhere, and is All, but so long as thou dost resist it, or any of its offspring, whether in the fleshly garb or out of it, thou dost make torture for thyself!

It hath tormented me beyond measure!

Behold, as thou hast possessed this man's organism, hatred, envy, and malice likewise have possessed thee!

Thou dost perfectly discern the truth!

I now declare unto thee, that even as we, through the divinity that is lodged within us, can deliver this man from the bondage

of thy possession, so, if thou wouldst, we may liberate thee from the prison of thy bondage!

Peradventure I might fall back and again be made captive!

Nay; there is one merciful Deliverer who hath all the keys for thy release, and is always with thee! He will ever serve thee if thou dost call upon him! [472]

A strange doctrine! Who and where is he?

He is Love! and is here! Call his name, think his thoughts, and feel his spirit, and thou mayest forever be free, or on the path toward freedom!

Serenus then placed his hand upon the head of the Roman.

Through the divine channel of my own Being, I pronounce freedom for thee and for this man whom thou hast possessed!

I feel in myself a strange influx of new peace and harmony! Behold I never knew these things before!

Now thou dost release forever this man of thine own free will, and also seek thine own release in the way marked out?

With all my mind and strength! Oh, I bless thee that thou didst not send me back to my former despair!

Go in peace! And to make thine own freedom more perfect and abundant, labor for the release of those of thy brethren who are yet bound!

My saviour, I will! Behold I go!

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The Roman aroused himself and glanced about him with strange surprise. As he slowly arose there was a clanking of chains. He stared in wonder at them, and then at his leathern raiment, and looking around awaited an explanation. There was a momentary silence as he surveyed his strong attendants, and then glanced into the faces of Serenus and Saulus.

Where am I? and what has happened? Oh, what a terrible [473] vision, but now I have awakened! But I am not in my bed!

Be not disturbed! said Serenus. Behold we are all here for thy good. Thou hast been set free from the evil spell of a disquieted spirit that for a season hath possessed thy members.

Oh, my terrible vision! I beseech all the gods that I may never have another!

Loose him! said Serenus. His bondage is ended!

Serenus and Saulus then retired to the court of the house, while the attendants remained to minister to his immediate necessities, and assist him in clothing himself with his own raiment.

Behold thy husband is healed, said Serenus to the matron. He will appear before thee presently, clothed, and in his right mind.

She bowed herself before the twain as if they were some strange gods in human form.

O sirs! I bless you for the great favor which you have bestowed upon this house! Henceforth we will worship your God with all devotion! Tell me his name, I pray thee!

He is the God of all the earth, the Father of all men and spirits, whether in the flesh or out of it. In him we abide! His strength is ours, and his breath is our life!

Soon the Roman entered, calm and self-controlled as he was wont long aforetime, and clasping his wife in his embrace, they wept for joy.

Behold these are thy saviours, said the matron, pointing to
[474] the two friends as soon as the first greetings were passed. declared unto them that their God shall be our God!

Yea, give God all the glory! Behold we are but instruments through which his power floweth! said Serenus.

The sudden recovery of his own consciousness was so strange that the Roman marvelled, and much explanation was necessary to make him understand the past and what had been wrought within him. His gratitude was without measure, and he pressed his new-found friends to take a reward, which was refused. After giving him a faithful but simple statement of the New Faith,

and promising that Marcius would come and instruct him more fully, and be his friend after their departure from the coast, they returned to the house of their host.

On the evening of the following day the whole household of Marcius was again gathered upon the outer porch which overlooked the charming bay. The loving circle of friends was to be broken the next morning. Perchance some of them might never again view each other's faces in the flesh. Saulus, in the charge of Julius, the centurion, was to depart for Rome on his way to trial, accompanied by his friends, Luke and Aristarchus. Serenus and Amabel at the same time were to take ship for their home in Alexandria.

As they sat looking out upon the picturesque cliffs and islets near and distant, which were softened by the purple of closing day, there was an interval of deep silence, broken only by the rhythmical plash of the waves below. All thoughts were centred upon the coming separation. [475]

At length Marcius turned toward Saulus,

Would that it were some other Cæsar than Nero before whose tribunal thou wert to appear! But we will hope all things, and believe in all good. Thou art wise and fearless, and the favor of God will abide with thee!

Whatever may come to pass, I am persuaded that all things whatsoever will work together for good,' replied Saulus. We are ministers of the New Faith, and look to that, and not to ourselves.

Yea, brother Saulus, the paths of duty and privilege are one and the same,' said Serenus.

Thinkest thou that the God of all the earth will always protect his own, O Serenus?' said Rebecca.

All divine laws that pertain to his children are beneficent; but if thou hast in mind only bodily protection, it may not always be assured, although everything worketh toward that end. But, as thou knowest well, even if the body be destroyed it doth not

harm the real man. While we should strive to care well for our bodily manifestation, because it is useful, its loss may be likened to the ruin of a house, with its owner unharmed, and a more fitting habitation awaiting him.

As thy departure draweth near, I would fain make inquiry concerning a matter of doctrine, that I may have a fuller understanding, said Marcius. I have heard it said by some that the Messias is again to come in visible form, and that the end of all things draweth nigh. What thinkest thou of this?

Behold, said Serenus,the end of the world only signifieth the closing of the old Dispensation, whether in the world or
[476] in each human soul. The Messias is all the time making his advent invisibly in the souls of men, and so far as his coming is perfected, it hath outward expression, though not fully complete in them as it was in the Nazarene. But every man already hath the unspoken Christ, who seeketh fuller and visible articulation. The light is within, waiting for a refinement of the outer nature in order that it may shine through.

There also appear to be certain differences of belief among our brethren, concerning the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus! said Marcius.

While these are well in the literal and outward sense, their importance is contained in the changes which they symbolize in the inner nature of man. A belief of the head in the sacrifice of the Prophet of Nazareth availeth naught; the Christ mind and life must be born in the soul.

How dost thou view the day of judgment?

Judgment is set up within man, and is continuous. The divine Image, or Truth, is a tribunal in every one, and until the personal and outer life cometh into full conformity, judgment is never ended. No outward legality, sacrifice, or ceremony can satisfy, but only an inner conformity to the Model.

What is the life beyond? and is there a spiritual body?

The spiritual body is already formed within the visible organism. Its quality is made by the thoughts and intents of the heart. So far as these are discordant with the pattern of the divine Image, there must still be cleansing and purification in the beyond. Such a discipline to the old man, or fleshly self, seems like a consuming fire, and brings severe growing-pains to the [417] lower consciousness.

But, dear friends, continued Serenus, why address all these questions concerning the deep things of the Spirit to me? Let Saulus speak of them, and we will listen to him.

Friends, said Saulus with warm earnestness, as he grasped the hand of Serenus, I have not the abundance of wisdom necessary to teach my brother from whom I have learned from the beginning! To Serenus I am beholden for all that I am and have! Long ago he saved my life in Jerusalem, when he knew that I was his worst enemy. Not his correct doctrine only, but his beautiful life, pricked me to the heart, and stirred my soul to its depths, and at last kindled the flame of the New Faith within me. His example was ever my inspiration; and the Spirit of Truth within, which to me is the final authority, hath confirmed to me the substance of all his teaching. Blessed be the day, when as his earnest but mistaken opponent in the academy of Gamaliel, I first beheld his goodly face!

The spontaneous and eloquent testimony of Saulus touched a tender chord in every heart. Marcius was deeply affected, and pressed forward and took the other hand of the beloved disciple.

Dear Serenus! to thee I also am beholden for everything! I beg thee to receive my testimony and blessing. Stained in my early years with the vice and sensuality of the Tarsian metropolis, I was at length renewed by the New Faith, which thou awakened within me. It not only transformed my life, but brought to me the dearest and purest wife that ever fell to the lot of man. I [418] am minded that thou cravest no praise, but am deeply moved to speak the simple truth!

Then Rebecca, whose face shone with joy, essayed to speak.

Serenus beckoned for silence, but the current which had broken forth was not to be stayed.

The birth of the New Faith in my soul began with the converse I had with thee after thou hadst saved my life on the day of the Temple panic! Thy life, while I dwelt in the Holy City, and at Tarsus also, was my unfailing example and inspiration!

What was left for Amabel?

She stepped forward, and grasping her husband in a warm embrace, wept great tears of joy. Words could not be found, but silence was more eloquent.

* * * * * * * * * *

Friends! said Serenus calmlyjoy and love fill my heart to overflowing. Your words stir the depths of my soul. But behold I have been but an unconstrained fountain, through which hath poured forth a small measure of the Ocean of Life and Love which hath pressed in upon my soul.

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PART FOURTH

SAULUS IN ROME

[480]

CHAPTER XXXVIII
AWAITING TRIAL BEFORE NERO

It was a little past mid-day, after a toilsome journey, that Julius, with his notable prisoner, accompanied by Luke, Aristarchus, and a few soldiers, approached the city of the Cæsars. From the summit of a rise in the Appian Way, a few miles distant, Saulus had the first view of the place of his fateful residence. The long wall of blue Sabine mountains, with Soracte in the distance, enclosed the broad Campagna, which stretched across to the sea and around the base of the Alban hills. The great city seemed blended in one indiscriminate mass of color, in which were mingled every grade and variety of human domiciles, with colossal baths, temples, theatres, colonnades, and palaces, relieved by the gilded domes and roofs which flashed forth the brightness of the warm afternoon sun. As they approached the emporium, the great thoroughfare became more confusing and thronged. It seemed like a mighty, swift-flowing river with counter currents. Chariots, richly carved and gilded, drawn by three or four horses abreast, two and four wheeled vehicles of all qualities, luxurious litters, inlaid with mother of pearl, carried upon the shoulders of slaves, whose proud occupants looked down upon pedestrians, horsemen, and footmen of all nationalities, soldiers and civil- ians, patricians and beggars, formed a dense and endless moving panorama. It was the pulsation of the main artery near the heart of the world. On either side were countless tombs, architecturally beautiful, containing numerous bas-reliefs and inscriptions, including those of the Scipios, Cæcilia Metella, and others of notable fame, with endless statues, columns, and other stately memorials.

What conflux issuing forth or passing in;
Prætors, Proconsuls to their provinces
Hasting, or on return, in robes of state,
Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power,
Legions and cohorts, turms of horse and wings,
Or embassies from regions far remote,
In various habits, on the Appian road ...
Dusk faces with white silken turbans wreathed.

Many an eye glanced with disdainful curiosity upon the chained Saulus and his little knot of Jewish sympathizers, as they threaded their way among the crowd with an escort of soldiers. At length in the distance they catch sight of the imperial palaces on the Palatine Hill, and still beyond, crowning the summit of Capitolinus, the Capitol, or Tabularium. Soon they pass by the fountain of Egeria, thence by the pyramid of C. Cestius, under the arch of Drusus, and through the Capenian gate. Turning abruptly to the right at the Circus Maximus, their route is lined with temples, triumphal arches, baths, and statues, until they finally reach the barracks of the Prætorian guard, which was always kept close at hand for the immediate service of Cæsar.

[483] Saulus, by his own appeal, was now at the seat of the governmental and military power of the earth. Even though coming as a prisoner, a long dream of his life was now accomplished. He was in Rome.

Julius left his prisoner with the guard at the entrance to the barracks, and made his way to the office of Africanus Burrus, the Prætorian Præfect, to announce the termination of his long and successful commission. After the usual military salute, the centurion began his report,

O Præfect! I come to make known my return from Cæsarea with the prisoner Saulus, in charge of whom I was sent, and now he is here, ready to be delivered into thy keeping.

It is well! I commend thee that thine arduous service hath been accomplished. But so long a time hath passed since I was

informed concerning this case that I have forgotten about the nature of the charge. I must consult the records.

While the scribe of the Præfect was searching the docket, Julius continued his verbal report,

The man is a Jew, but hath the rights of Roman citizenship. After being tried by Agrippa, he appealed unto Cæsar.

Ah, yes! I now call him to mind. He is the one who stirred up such a commotion among the Jews at Jerusalem and Cæsarea. He was charged with preaching a strange faith, and worshipping some unknown god. Was he also answerable for speaking against the authority of Cæsar?

Nay; his political loyalty was unquestioned! His only real offence was some violation of Judaism. There was a great clamor among the Jews for his punishment, and even death. Their na- [404] tional religion appears to be peculiarly bigoted and intolerant. I am minded that King Agrippa found no real fault in him. I heard that it was declared both by Festus and Agrippa that the man had done nothing worthy of death or even bonds, and that he might have been set free had he not appealed to Cæsar. Feeling the injustice of the accusations which came from his own countrymen, he nobly sought the highest tribunal.

He must be an uncommon prisoner, and I shall accord him special privileges!

I rejoice in that! Though a chained prisoner, he is the wisest and most marvellous man that I have ever known. He is gifted with more knowledge, even about sailing a ship, than the master with whom we took passage. Had his advice been followed, we should have been spared a shipwreck, and even then, but for his wisdom and wonderful encouragement, I am persuaded that all on board would have perished.

May the gods be merciful to him! Thine experience proves that a prisoner may sometimes be a philosopher, said the Præfect thoughtfully; but how unfortunate that a man of such superior wisdom should be a devotee of a strange and superstitious

religion!

Yea! He pays homage to a countryman of his own, a Nazarene whose name was Jesus, whom he calls the Christ. He teaches that this Christ was a God-man, and therefore a leader and ruler; but that his kingdom is in the souls of men, and that it hath no dishonor for the government of Cæsar.

[485] Shade of Apollo! that is a strange kind of an empire! Even our Roman gods have but feeble power to change the feelings and conduct of men. But it would seem that much learning hath made the man strange, and perchance a little beside himself!

So I thought at first sight, most excellent Præfect! but his life, virtue, and power are marvellous. He hath ability, through his God, to heal the sick and cast out foul spirits, and both at Melita and Puteoli he did many wonderful works. The inhabitants were unwilling to part with him.

Our soothsayers essay to perform miracles, but I have in no wise confidence in their pretension. But your report hath made me much interested in your notable prisoner. I shall give him as large a liberty as my duty will allow.

I assure thee that he in no wise will abuse it, said the centurion with enthusiasm. Behold his presence, though not at first outwardly prepossessing, is very attractive and helpful! I cannot describe it, but he is unlike any other man I ever knew. I feel strangely loath to part with him. But my duty is ended, and I have only to deliver him into thy hands.

Julius then handed to Burrus the sealed parchments that were sent by Festus and King Agrippa. The Præfect broke the seals, and carefully read the contents.

I perceive that this is an unwonted and prejudiced case from the beginning. The charges are made wholly by the Jews, who accuse the man of sedition and blasphemy. But there is no evidence here. Did any witnesses come with thee?

[486] None, O Præfect! but I was informed that some were to follow. It hath been made known to me that a vessel which

sailed from Cæsarea soon after ours was lost in the same terrible storm in which we were shipwrecked. Peradventure some of the accusers of Saulus were aboard of her.

That may cause delay in the trial. But what dost thou think of the charges?

That they are false, and have no basis other than in the prejudice of that peculiar people, the Jews. Notwithstanding his strange faith, which we cannot rightly understand, he is a man whom gods and men must reverence, yea, even love.

I would look upon the face of this unwonted Jew, said Burrus. Bring him in!

The centurion left and soon returned, conducting his prisoner into the presence of the Præfect. Saulus showed signs of his many hardships, and his face looked like one whose life had been exposed to many strains and shocks. His hair was gray, his brow furrowed, and his cheeks hollow, but his eyes were bright and piercing. While unattractive in form and feature, there was an indescribable light and vigor within, which seemed to shine through the flesh, and impress and attract the most careless beholder.

This is thy prisoner, O Præfect, Saulus of Tarsus, said Julius.

Saulus gave the Præfect a proper greeting.

The report of the centurion to which I have listened giveth me great respect for thee. Thy captivity shall be made as easy as my service to Cæsar will allow, and when opportunity offers I shall be pleased to have some converse with thee. But now, after thy long journey, thou dost need rest and refreshment, so for the present I will send thee to thy quarters.

Saulus thanked the Præfect for his kindly words.

A Prætorian was directed to take him to a comfortable outer room in the best part of the prisoners' quarters, and the order was given that he be allowed to hire a house in the vicinity for himself, if he so desired, until the time of his trial.

Beyond the Tiber, in a district mostly squalid and miserable, there had grown up a large community of Jews. It was the residential section of the rabble, and headquarters for the most ignoble trades and poorest merchandise. Although low and thoroughly despised by the Romans, but a small portion of the Hebrews were slaves. At this time toleration was general, and both they and the Christians enjoyed immunity from disturbance in their synagogue services.

As ever before and since, the Jewish element was distinct and unamalgamated. Through all the ages they have been a standing wonder, a peculiar people.

As soon as Saulus was settled in Rome, in order that his countrymen might not misunderstand his position, he lost no time in inviting their principal men the rulers and elders of the synagogues to meet him, so that he might disabuse them of prejudice, which many of them already had concerning him. They were sharply divided into parties and sects. There were Jews of the old order, who were hostile to Christianity; Judaizing Christians, or such as nominally accepted the Prophet of
[488] Nazareth, but clung to ceremonialism; and a few converts to the New Faith, who nearly or quite disregarded the traditional code. With such incongruous elements Saulus began his labors, striving upon the basis of essential truth to harmonize their discords and make peace.

At the time appointed, which was only three days after his arrival, the room of Saulus was crowded with the principal representatives of the various sects which he had invited to meet him. While intending to preach the gospel both to Jew and Gentile, he was minded to begin by an effort to conciliate the feelings of his Hebrew brethren both toward himself and the New Faith. He came at once to the point, as soon as his auditors were convened, and began his address.

Brethren and friends! I would make known unto you that I am no traitor to our nation because I have appealed to the Roman

power. It hath been rumored among you that I have come to Rome as an accuser of the Sanhedrin before Cæsar. But instead, I have come to defend myself against its enmity. The chief priests and elders invoked the lower tribunals of the foreign power, and thus compelled me to appeal to the supreme authority for justice and vindication. I have committed no offence against Israel, or the customs of our fathers, yet my countrymen delivered me up with accusations of sedition and blasphemy.

Behold I am one of your brethrenof the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and my labors have been abundant for the salvation of our people! Even the Roman governor was ready to set me free, but my Jewish enemies would none of it. [489]

I call God to witness that my only crime hath been my firm faith in the deliverance of his people through the Messiah, foretold and promised by the prophets of old. I am set for the defence of the gospel, not by envy and strife, but through love and good-will, that it may abound unto all nations and to you-ward. Behold the covenant which the God of glory made with our father Abraham, and the testimony to Moses while in the wilderness to raise up a Prophet unto us, and the Holy One spoken of by Isaiah, all are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth! As foretold, he was put to death, and opened not his mouth against his enemies. I beseech you, do not vainly continue to look for a warlike Messiah, who, through garments rolled in blood, shall restore only a seen kingdom, whereby the things of this world prevail! Behold in due season a spiritual dominion cometh which shall fill the whole earth! Carnal weapons must give place to the sword of the Spirit, until all nations shall be brought under the mild sway of the Prince of Peace. The Prophet of Nazareth laid the foundation for an Universal Kingdom, but its coming will be without observation.

I might persuade you by arguments without end, drawn from your own Scriptures, of the truth of the spiritual faith which I

proclaim! I could fill your ears with the warnings, promises, and inspirations of the ancient patriarchs, law-givers, singers, and prophets that have arisen among our own people. I beseech you, therefore, to lay aside every prejudice, and no longer dwell in dead forms and ceremonies. I would that ye be transformed
[490] by the renewing of your minds through the power of the Holy Ghost. I beseech you to give heed unto the words I have spoken, and declare unto you that it is for the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain!

Instead of bringing peace, the earnest appeal of Saulus increased the dissensions among his auditors.

It was ever thus. Truth, when launched into the midst of error and prejudice, unfailingly stirs them up, and brings their bitter dregs to the surface. There is far more hope of winning an honest sceptic than a self-satisfied bigot. The Gentiles, or heathen, finally proved much more accessible to the New Faith than the Chosen People themselves, although the number of Hebrew Christians somewhat increased.

After a heated discussion, the larger part of the audience withdrew, and a formal separation took place between them and the Apostle to the Gentiles.

During the two years that the trial of Saulus, for various reasons, was delayed, he remained in his own hired house, and was permitted much liberty in proclaiming the power of the gospel to all who came to him. He also wrote important letters to the churches of the East. But he was still a prisoner, chained by the arm, both night and day, to a Prætorian. Many of the rough soldiers who guarded him were moulded by his influence, and thoroughly transformed in life and character by the spiritual righteousness which he awakened within them. Even some of the household of Cæsar and a few patricians were touched to the heart by the halo of the divinity which shone out through the
[491] personality of the great Apostle.

As fair white lilies sometimes shoot up from the foul black

slime at the bottom of a pond so that their fragrance is wafted abroad by the breezes of heaven, so the seed of a spiritual tree was scattered in the great seething morass of corruption on the banks of the Tiber, which would yet spring up and overspread the nations with its branches.

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CHAPTER XXXIX
ANTIPODES BROUGHT FACE TO FACE

Present Saulus of Tarsus for arraignment!

Immediately after these words fell from the lips of Nero, the notable prisoner was led into the basilica of the imperial palace.

The room, of magnificent grandeur, was of great size and perfect proportion. The pavement, in mosaic designs of wonderful pattern and finish, was a masterpiece of skill, in which serpentine, onyx, and porphyry were artistically blended. A long row of lofty white marble columns, containing zones of blended pale green, stretched down the length of the hall on either side, and the walls were inlaid with giallo antico, lapis lazuli, and other fine marbles of variegated shades, which came from the mountains near Pisa. The broad cornices of alabaster were covered with a wealth of mythological figures carved in strange and grotesque design. The arched roof, of imposing height and of a deep blue shade, was so studded with golden points as to represent the evening heavens. The outer spaces beyond the columns were filled with statues in bronze, silver, gold, ivory, alabaster, and marbles, many of which were the fruits of despoliation in various cities of the East. Mingled with the statues were rare flowers in
[493] graven or embossed silver vases which stood upon veined tables of citron.

Nero s gold and ivory chair, in which he half reclined, was at the centre of the apse, which projected from the eastern end of the basilica. Broad, polished steps of porphyry, with a white marble balustrade on each side, led up to the seat of the imperial judge. A little to his right, in a place of special honor, an ivory cabinet, inlaid with mother of pearl, contained his poems, tragedies, and orations, which he counted of priceless value to the world; and

near by hung his golden harp, adorned with precious stones, upon which, in the rôle of a divine artist, he played to special audiences.

Ranged in a double row below him on either side stood his special guard of Prætorians, whose silver eagles and gilded uniforms gave glitter and pomp to every official sitting, whether important or otherwise. Clustered a short distance behind him stood a group of tall lictors, whose shining axed fasces symbolized a power which none on earth could dispute.

Saulus was placed at a little distance in front of Nero, upon a spot marked by a different color in the pavement, and known as the prisonerscircle. His chain was upon him, and there was no friend by his side.

To the right and left, on raised seats, and nearly in front of the imperial chair, was the council of Assessors, twenty in number, who were all men of high rank. Among them were the two consuls and the selected representatives of other magistracies of Rome, while the remainder consisted of senators, chosen by lot. [194]

As Saulus took his place, Nero looked down languidly, as if impatient at such an interruption in the work of revising a new tragedy, in which he had great pride. He wore a white tunic and a toga of rare purple, and upon his head a laurel wreath. His eyes were dull and bloodshot, and his low, flat head, square jaw, flabby double chin, and thick neck combined to give him an unmistakable canine cast of countenance. His fat white hands looked waxy from constant bathing and polishing, which was submitted to in order that their suppleness might be improved for harp-playing. Mingled plainly in his face were colossal vanity, cruelty, suffering, and silliness. He was not naturally a fool, but his talent had become strangely abnormal. Though yet young in years, they had been long enough to transform a man into a monster. He blinked as he turned his head from side to side, as if the air were thick with bloody spectres that he could not avoid, and from whom he expected an assault. Disordered in mind and

body, he was distracted by physical pains and psychical hallucinations. Guilt had honeycombed him, and in a tragic manner he often told his intimates that he was haunted by all the Furies. But though a profligate and buffoon, he was lord of all the Roman legions, and through them the world was at his feet.

Saulus before Nero!

World-wide contrasts in the same picture!

Blackness and high light in juxtaposition!

Not merely opposite personalities, but two irreconcilable kingdoms even worlds confronting each other!

[495] Hatred, love resistance, non-resistance vice, virtue legions, moral ideals animalism, spirituality! These, rarely in the world s history so sharply defined between persons, but ever in warfare in human souls!

Nero called upon one of his consuls to read the indictment. It was briefly summed up in three charges.

First, the prisoner, Saulus, is accused of disturbing the Jews in the free exercise of their worship, which is secured to them by Roman law.

Second, he is charged with desecrating their Temple.

Third, it is claimed that he violated the public peace by seditious agitation, as the leader of a factious sect which is treasonable to the authority of Rome.

Saulus was asked to enter a plea concerning the indictment.

I stand before the tribunal of Cæsar, and answer not guilty! said he in a calm but firm voice.

Nero looked down contemptuously upon the prisoner, and took but a sluggish interest in the charges. He showed plainly by his manner that the whole affair was too trivial to be worthy of more than a passing notice. Of the Jewish religion he knew little and cared less. The idea that this poor fanatic, with no armed following, was a menace to the peace of the Empire was preposterous. Nevertheless, he must keep up the forms of justice, and the trial proceeded.

The witnesses who had come from Cæsarea were examined, and the papers in the case, which had been sent by Agrippa, read by the consul. It was plain to every one that the evidence was partial, and even contradictory. After the prosecution had been fully heard, Nero again cast his eyes indifferently upon Saulus. [496]

Hast thou any one to speak in thy defence?

With the consent of Cæsar, I would be heard briefly in my own behalf! replied Saulus.

While the Apostle could but recoil from the character and personality of his judge, he was the man to respect the dignity which belonged to an exalted office. He began his reply in a manner courteous, calm, and respectful. Years of discipline had softened his native impetuosity, and given him thorough poise and self-command.

I appear before this supreme tribunal, O Imperator, with assurance that I shall find complete justice at thy hands. As the fountain of government and power in this, the greatest Empire the world hath seen, I am persuaded that thou mayest look with indifference upon the small jealousies of Judean sectarianism. I might confidently rest my case before thee almost wholly upon the discordant and even contradictory testimony of my accusers. I call thee to witness, O Cæsar, that King Agrippa, who hath much knowledge of the religion of our nation, found me guiltless of the charges for which I am called to make answer! Behold the whole matter is but an opinion or interpretation between Jewish sects, concerning which the imperial government hath no concern!

Regarding the first accusation, I have called in question the liberty of no man concerning the exercise of his religious faith. I went up to Jerusalem to take alms to the poor, and to preach a pure faith, but neither in the Temple, nor in the synagogue, nor the street, did I dispute with any man, nor in any manner disturb the peace! It is indeed true that I belong to the Nazarenes, [497] which the scribes and elders call a heretical sect, but of a truth,

we worship the God of our fathers. We accept the things which are written in the law and the prophets when truly interpreted, and peradventure it be allowable to have sects of Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews, there is nothing more illegal in the existence of the Nazarenes. Behold it is but a question of religious liberty, which Rome, to her honor, guarantees to all her subjects. I have in all this controversy a conscience void of offence toward God and man!

Nero moved uneasily, but made no interruption.

The second accusation, alleging the profanation of the Temple, hath no foundation. Behold my visit was only in discharge of sacred duty, and I made no tumult with any man! Such a strange charge hath not been proven, and cometh only from the prejudice of the Sadducees. I have always held honor toward the Temple of our fathers, and in no way profaned its courts or ordinances.

Concerning the arraignment of stirring up sedition, it is utterly vain and empty! I have honored the Roman law, and taught that the powers that be are ordained of God. I ask that you hold in remembrance that they who have complained against me are all Jews, and that no Roman in all Judea, who is set by the authority of Cæsar, hath said aught for my condemnation.

I would not weary thee by pointing out the subtlety of the differences between the Jewish sects, for much of it would seem to be foolishness to any Roman; but, O Imperator, I may truly
[498] avow that the Nazarenes live a New Faith which hath priceless value for all men! It is a spiritual kingdom which is set up within them, and hath no controversy with the material kingdoms of this world. So long as religious liberty is proclaimed by Rome, the Nazarenes never will be found disloyal!

But, O Cæsar! I cannot close my appeal without sayingIthat feel a love in my heart for thee, and would that the most excellent faith of the Nazarenes might light up thy soul!

A look of strange surprise at the audacity of Saulus passed like a flash over the faces of the spectators, and all eyes were

turned toward Nero to see its effect upon him. But the outburst of the Apostle had been so evidently spontaneous and sincere that Cæsar was momentarily touched. His flabby features turned paler and more constrained than was wont, and moisture appeared in his heavy eyes as they were staringly fastened upon his prisoner. Instead of resentment, he seemed fascinated by so strange a human phenomenon.

I have earnest good-will toward thee, O Imperator, and warmly commend the New Faith for the health of thy soul! I beseech thee to bring forth the works of righteousness, temperance, and mercy! Thy Jewish prisoner wishes thee well, and whatever befall him, he hopeth and prayeth for thy salvation!

The auditors were yet more astounded, and expected to see Nero fly into a rage at the closing words of Saulus.

The tables were turned, and behold the great Apostle was in the judgment-seat, and Cæsar the prisoner!

But there was only gentleness in the tones of Saulus, and the earnest love of man for his fellow-man shone out so clearly [419] that it could not be mistaken. Such a warm spiritual brightness lighted up his features that the Lion of Rome was both awed and softened.

The trial closed with hasty formality. The Assessors by a large majority voted for acquittal, and Nero confirmed the verdict, and the chains of Saulus were stricken off.

[500]

CHAPTER XL
THE VISIBLE FORM LAID ASIDE

My prison walls cannot control
The flight, and freedom of the soul.

Again Saulus was face to face with Nero. Since his first acquittal the Apostle had made long and important missionary journeys, laboring earnestly for the spread of the New Faith. But at length, upon the testimony of informers, he was arrested by the magistrates of Nicopolis, and again sent to Rome for trial before Cæsar.

Great events had taken place in the world-metropolis since the former trial. A conflagration probably instigated by Nero had destroyed nearly half the city, and the Christians were charged with the wholesale incendiarism. Their number was now considerable, and they had become recognized as a peculiar sect, distinct from the Jews, and were popularly counted as grossly superstitious and disloyal. Bitterness and persecution were meted out to them.

Instead of living in his own hired house, as aforetime, Saulus was incarcerated in the dungeon of the Mamertine prison, and his friends were denied the privilege of visiting him. But his indomitable spirit rose above all outward things, and his last
[501] letter, written to Timotheus while on the verge of the Unseen, is full of triumph. Pessimism, doubt, and fear had no place in his soul. There was no such thing as defeat.

With perfect confidence in the inherent power of Truth, and its final supremacy, he was aware that its progress was not dependent upon the bodily continuance of himself or any other person.

During his final hours in the seen form he was calm and joyful. Even the sleep of his last night on the rock floor of his dungeon was sweet and refreshing.

The final scene, which took place in the early morning, was secret and sudden. Saulus, with the few who had him in charge, passed out upon the Appian Way, through the gate, which after nineteen hundred years is yet called by his name, by the pyramid of C. Cestius, and on about three miles, to a green and level spot known as Aquæ Salviæ, where they halted.

The face of the martyr already shone with a heavenly light! He had ascended a Mount of Transfiguration, and his inner vision was opened! The realm of physical sensation and suffering was left behind, and now he looks out and up, and behold the whole Invisible is visible! He has already landed upon the Delectable Shore! Here is a new and real Universe!

Hands are clasped with those who had passed before!

A warm unison of love thrills through reunited souls!

Things that seemed lost are found!

Stephanos was by his side, and gave him love and cheer!

What new spiritual activities and delightful ministries of loving service! [502]

How the former missionary journeys shrink by comparison with new opportunities now opening!

What glorious and far-reaching vistas!

How many problems solved and mysteries made clear!

What a golden sunshine of harmony, beauty, and love!

What unending cycles of spiritual progress and activity stand out and wind upward forever!

* * * * * * * * * *

The hallowed place of the translation is now marked by the magnificent church resplendent with colored marbles of great richness of San Paolo fuori le Mura.

Transcriber's Note

Variations in spelling or hyphenation were not changed.
The following changes have been made to the text:

page 45, single quote changed to double quote after I'll defend him!
page 153, occuping changed to occupying
page 182, houshold changed to household
page 425, proanos changed to pronaos
page 458, quote mark added after circles.

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