

**HENRY WOOD**

VICTOR

SERENUS

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**Victor Serenus**

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# Henry Wood Victor Serenus

*It is only the finite that has wrought and suffered; the infinite lies stretched  
in smiling repose.—Emerson.*

## PREFACE

It seems unnecessary to suggest that this book is entirely independent of the conventional lines of the modern realistic novel. To any who hold that idealism in fiction is not artistic, that a didactic element is inadmissible, and that philosophizing has no place, the work will hardly commend itself. To others, who believe that fiction may be a useful vehicle for the conveyance of helpful ideals, and even abstract truth, it is offered with the hope that it may furnish some measure both of entertainment and profit.

On many historical and chronological points that are involved, authorities differ; but so far as the author has been able to sift them, the prevailing and apparently most probable hypotheses have been followed. As may be inferred, it has been necessary to glean in many fields for the facts, opinions, and conclusions that make up the historic portion of the raw material from which this story has been fabricated.<sup>1</sup>

A majority of the characters being creations, and a large part of the action also unhistoric, it must be left to the judgment of the reader how well they fit into their historic frame-work. So far as St. Paul is introduced in the narrative, nearly everything delineated belongs to those portions of his life which are but very briefly or incidentally touched upon, either in the Scriptural writings or other history. But utilizing many undoubted realities, the aim has been to fill in the wide blanks with that which is in accord and in the line of the possible or probable.

The author has intended to respect the hallowed associations which cluster about the name of the great Apostle. But Paul was a man with like passions as other men, and to be faithful, any outline of the forces that played through his great soul should be drawn naturally, and without that misleading glamor often imposed by far-away time and distance. Only by such a treatment can his life be brought near, and its practical lessons enforced. If to any the interpretation seem unduly broad, they may be assured that the author has no iconoclastic intent, but on the contrary, an aim which is wholly constructive, whereby everything wholesome and uplifting in human life may be encouraged and strengthened.

Boston, 1898.

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<sup>1</sup> Besides the history contained in the New Testament Scriptures, the grateful obligations of the author are due, in varying degree, to Farrar's "Life and Work of St. Paul," his "Darkness and Dawn;" the "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," by Conybeare and Howson; "Paul the Missionary," by the Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D.; "The Ideas of the Apostle Paul," by Rev. James Freeman Clarke, D.D.; various works by Stanley, Jowett, Arnold, Martineau, Lytton, and Brewer; besides Josephus, Strabo, and other ancient historical authorities.

## PART FIRST

### CHAPTER I A RELIGIOUS PROCESSION IN TARSUS

In an ancient city, late in the afternoon of a warm day in early autumn, a little procession was winding its way through the narrow crowded streets. The calm, measured pace and solemn countenances of the group plainly indicated its character as a religious ceremonial. Slightly in the lead were two priests, of such official and dignified mien that they appeared as though they knew the God of Israel face to face. It was as if the little Hebrew band, in threading a great throng of Gentiles, were laden with the accumulated weight of all the traditions of the Chosen and Circumcised since the time of Abraham. The reverberation of every sandal, as it struck upon the well-worn pavement, proclaimed, as loudly as words, "We are separate." Even the flocks of pigeons that were in the air seemed to hover over the moving column, as if to lend the gleam of their white wings to its stately rhythm.

The priests wore tall turbans of cup-shaped form, and were clad in long robes having broad borders decorated with a deep fringe, and gathered about the body with an ornamented girdle. Broad phylacteries, square in form, were bound by thongs, one upon the forehead, and one upon the left arm, each containing inscribed passages from the Law. They also wore embroidered ephods covering the back and breast, held together on the shoulders by brooches of onyx stones richly set in gold, and fastened below by a black band garnished with jewels. Their hands were crossed upon the breast, and eyes turned toward heaven.

Following just behind the priests were men and women in costumes such as were usually worn in the synagogue, which indicated that they were returning from a sacred service. At intervals the low, monotonous tones of a religious chant, or some soft rendering of passages from the Mosaic ritual, might have been audible to those in the near vicinity. They formed an embodied fragment of that long line of the faithful, who forget not the patriarchs and the lawgivers, and whose eyes are always turned towards Jerusalem and the Temple.

In the arms of one of the women was a young infant, and around this least personage there seemed to gather an interest which showed that whatever the nature of the service just concluded, the babe must have been the central figure. The fond glances of the women and evident attention of the men plainly revealed that thorough satisfaction which comes from holy duty well performed.

The city of Tarsus was the place, and the time about the middle of the first decade of the Christian era. Tarsus was a great commercial metropolis. It was located in the midst of a broad, fertile plain which mainly made up the province of Eastern or Flat Cilicia, as distinguished from Rugged Cilicia which bordered it on the north and west. The prolific soil, central location, and peculiar physical configuration, all tended to give it great political importance. Leading from the great plain through the 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 “no 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.

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 subtle 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’s 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, 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 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. “I 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 good, had become incrustated 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 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, 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 "a 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 incrustated 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 Phariseism 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 “vineyard,” 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. 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 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 cosy 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 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,<sup>2</sup> and be taught of him. Thou wilt bring honor upon the 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—to 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 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

“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.

## 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 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 earth’s 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?”

“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 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 interwoven—everything was 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 Marcus. 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 splash 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, 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 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 brother. ‘Behold, 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.

“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 Marcus of their sad plight, received a message from him. She turned to Rebecca.

“O my fair Jewess! Marcus, 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.

Marcus 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’s self, shall be  
Blest and honor’d more than thee!’”

“O thou noble Roman!” said the Hebrew lad, opening his eyes wide upon Marcus. “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.

Marcus 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.

Marcus, 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 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. 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 Marcus 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 Marcus. 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.

Marcus 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 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.”<sup>3</sup>

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 firmly 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.

Marcus 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. Marcus was prostrated and lay as one dead. The 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 passageway to the front portal, they soon found themselves in the street.

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<sup>3</sup> A ten-minute hour-glass.

## 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 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.

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. 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 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's 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 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 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 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's 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 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 subtle 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,—

“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 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.”

He involuntarily turned, and the maiden’s 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 moment’s hesitation, he continued,—

“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 chattered 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 subtle 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 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 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 and incongruous.

Law as all pervading with the latest refinement—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 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 would'st 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,—

“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 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 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.

## 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 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 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.

“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,—

‘Wreath the roses, wreath,  
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.”

“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 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 shallows, 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 *pronaos* of 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 thrall! 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 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 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 bedeviled 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 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”—

“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*.

## 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 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 steepes 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 Ideal—her 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.

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’s 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.

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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 reverie, and took her accustomed place in the household. It was taken for granted that she had been sleeping.

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 would’st 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.”

“I do not understand thee, Serenus! Would’st 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. 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 Rabban’s 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 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’s 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.

On the evening of the same day, there was to be a meeting of the society of the *Urim*.<sup>4</sup> This was a secret Pharisaic organization composed of certain pupils of Gamaliel. Some were regular lodgers

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<sup>4</sup> 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.”

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.



## 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 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 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.

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.

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.

“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.

“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.

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.<sup>5</sup>

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 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.

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

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<sup>5</sup> It is probable that no race—whatever 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.

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 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 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-quickenings 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 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.

“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 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 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 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 condemn the counsel 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.

“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 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 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?

“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! 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.”*

## 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, anemones, 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's rays might penetrate, were shaded by hanging portières woven of fine goat's 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 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 subtle 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 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?”

“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.”

“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, 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 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 Messiah, and the deliverer of Israel! What sayest thou? Is not this blasphemy?"

"Nay. He claimeth not sole possession of sonship, but declared 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 Messiah 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."

## 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, 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's 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 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 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 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 moment's 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 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 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 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 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.

## CHAPTER XIV LOVE VERSUS DUTY

*O loving hearts with anguish rent;  
No sacrifice was e'er 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 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 called to the library by a scribe. As the evening was sultry, the others repaired to the house-top, where the Rabban would ere long 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.

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