THE
DOOM OF
THE HOLY CITY

LYDIA HOYT FARMER
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1630–1900

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THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.
THE

DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

CHRIST AND CAESAR.

BY

LYDIA HOYT FARMER,

AUTHOR OF "A KNIGHT OF FAITH," "A MORAL INHERITANCE,"
"A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION," "THE
LIFE OF LA FAYETTE," "FAMOUS RULERS AND
QUEENS," "A STORY BOOK OF SCIENCE,"
"THE PRINCE OF THE FLAMING
STAR," ETC.

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH AND COMPANY,
182 FIFTH AVENUE.
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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A.
 Dedicated,  

BY SPECIAL PERMISSION,  

TO THE  

RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE.
HISTORY, from Creation to Calvary, but more clearly still from Calvary down the centuries, points with unerring finger to One effulgent Character. He who came to give eternal life to perishing men, walked the streets of Jerusalem eighteen centuries ago, as actual an historical fact as that Nero sat on the throne of the Cæsars, or that you and I tread the earth today. To endeavor to make more realistic the setting of that Wondrous and Divine Life, by painting in words the picture of that era in the world's history, is the aim of the author of this volume; with the hope that the marvellous mission of the God-Man may appear with greater vividness to some soul, and that the Sun of Righteousness may blaze forth as the Shining Centre of past, present, and future history.
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CHRIST AND CAESAR.

CHAPTER I.

JERUSALEM THE BEAUTIFUL. — THE STRANGE PROPHET. — THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE. — THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

It was the first of October, in the year of our Lord 64; and of the cities of the East, Jerusalem the Beautiful excelled them all in splendor. Herod the Great had adorned it with costly edifices, spacious forums, theatres, and gymnasiuims, while graceful colonnades testified to his lavish expenditure. But the crowning achievement of his life was the rebuilding of the glorious Temple on Mount Moriah, and which was of such noble proportions that all the fanes of Rome might have been placed within its imposing courts. On this October morning Herod’s Temple stood upon the hill, a poem in marble, a symphony in architectural design and coloring.

Another writer\(^1\) has sketched the Temple with such vividness that we will let him paint the word-picture.

“There it stood, covering nineteen acres, and ten thousand workmen had been forty-six years in building it. Blaze of magnificence! Bewildering range of porticos, and ten gateways, and double arches, and Corinthian capitals

\(^1\) Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.
chiselled into lilies and acanthus; masonry bevelled and grooved into such delicate forms that it seemed to tremble in the light; cloisters with two rows of Corinthian columns, royal arches, marble steps pure as though made out of the frozen snow; carving that seemed like a panel of the door of heaven let down and set in; the façade of the building on shoulders at each end lifting the glory higher and higher, and walls wherein gold put out the silver, and the carbuncle put out the gold, and the jasper put out the carbuncle, until in the changing light they would all seem to come back again into a chorus of harmonious color. The Temple! The Temple! Doxologies in stone! Anthems soaring in rafters of Lebanon cedar! From side to side and from foundation to gilded pinnacle, the frozen prayer of all ages!"

Behind the Sanctuary stood the massive Tower of Antonia, a gigantic fortress, situated on the northwest corner of the Temple, erected upon a huge rock forty cubits high.

On Zion's Hill was the gorgeous palace of Herod the Great, its white marble walls glistening in the morning sunlight like a huge bank of snow, towered and turreted, forming outlines of grace and beauty, while green groves and gardens surrounding the royal residence gave the needed touch of nature, which always enhances art. But towers and triple walls, and gleaming palaces on Zion's crest, and turreted fortresses, and spacious forums, and smiling hills, villa-dotted, and purple-mantled with the glowing fruit of myriad vineyards, all paled before the dazzling Temple crowning Moriah's brow, whose roofs of gold, studded with golden spikes, lifted towards the blue, flashed back the sunbeam's light in shining splendor and caught the eye of the pilgrim, and riveted his gaze
from whatever side he might approach this imposing city, of which it was written in the Talmuds, —

"He who has not seen Jerusalem has never seen a beautiful city."

And now above the noise of city streets, and busy throngs, and stamping beasts, and lowing of sacrificial kine, and bellowing of imprisoned bullocks soon to be slaughtered by priestly hands, and cooing of the caged doves, and bleating of unblemished lambs brought for temple offerings; above the hum of city traffic and the buzz of gathering, gossiping groups of pilgrims, rings out a voice upon the morning air, which startles the ears of men and beasts and birds, as its mournful clarion tones swell and resound, causing the listeners to mutely question with startled glances the meaning of this strange and foreboding omen.

"Woe, woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the city and to the people, and to the Holy House! A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Holy House! A voice against the bridegrooms and the brides; and a voice against this whole people! Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"

"What means the cry of that bird of ill-omen?" asked a burly Levite, elbowing his way towards the Temple through the pressing crowd. "Was Jerusalem ever more prosperous since the hated Romans placed their yoke upon our sacred necks?"

"Hist, man," retorted a bystander. "Be not so rash with thy forward tongue. Perchance some evil doth portend. Hast thou not seen the star in the form of a sword, of which men whisper?"

"And dost thou not mark the comet that has not ceased to burn for a whole year?" asked another.
"Enough of stars and comets, ye fools," rejoined the Levite. "Have not stars shone before, and comets blazed? and the earth still remains, and the Jews continue to be the mighty people of God, in spite of Roman eagles and Roman yokes, and the Nazarene besides, who claimed to be the King of the Jews? But that cross on Golgotha was the only throne He ever knew."

"Perhaps not, thou prating Levite!" said a Roman soldier, then passing. "That Nazarene, though dead, as you claim, seems still to have much power; for even in Cæsar’s household He has been called the Divine Son of God. I know not what it means, for I have to do with war, not religions; but I have met the followers of the Nazarene in all climes, and neither Roman legions, nor racks of torture, nor burning stakes, can force them to deny their faith."

"Peradventure thou art also a believer?" sneered the Levite. "And who art thou that pretendest to know more than a holy Jew of that episode on Calvary?"

"My father was the Roman centurion at that cross," replied the soldier, reverently.

"Ah! doubtless that weak fellow who was so frightened at the darkness occasioned by the eclipse that his terror made him believe the crucified malefactor was 'the Son of God,' as rumor has it. Well, over thirty years have passed, and the Temple still stands, and will continue, in spite of the dead Nazarene’s declaration that it should be destroyed."

"Beware, Levite!" rejoined the Roman. "Strange things have happened, as the Nazarene did foretell, and stranger yet will happen, if I mistake not certain signs in the Imperial City."

"I care not for thy Rome, nor Roman legions!" cried the Levite. "The Jews will yet be masters of the world."
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"It might not be good for thy bodily safety, should such seditious words come to the ear of mighty Cæsar," rejoined the Roman soldier, Placidus, as he turned from the Levite, who continued his way towards the Temple, where the people were gathering, and around which they were erecting their booths of branches; for this October morning was to usher in the memorable Day of Atonement, which preceded the Feast of Tabernacles.

As the early morning sun gilded the crest of the Mount of Olives, a solitary pedestrian had emerged from the shade of the olive groves, and began the descent of the declivity. His clothing was made of the skins of wild beasts; his long, gray hair and white beard were unkempt; his face was haggard, and his eyes were cast upon the ground in meditation; he carried in his right hand a staff, and in his left a scroll; his sandals were coarse and worn. Where the mantle of skin was parted in front, there was revealed an under garment of sackcloth. The appearance of the wayfarer denoted extreme sorrow. Now and again, as his lifted head was turned towards Jerusalem, his eyes were eloquent with a hopeless grief, an overwhelming woe, his soul shrouded in deep despair. But no selfish sorrow was apparent. He cast no ashes upon his head, nor rent his garments in sign of personal bereavement. His glance, when not cast upon the ground, was riveted upon the Holy City, towards which he was slowly approaching; and as he murmured, "Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the Holy City!" in tones so hopelessly mournful, even the birds, twittering in the branches of the olive-trees, ceased for a moment their morning carol, seemingly hushed to silence by such an unusual wail of human woe.

As the wayfarer passed out of the Garden of Gethsemane, and continued his course through the Valley of
Jehoshaphat, great crowds of people were already entering the gates of the city, on their way to the Temple.

The prophet was still separated from the throng as he slowly walked through the Vale of the Tombs. Pausing at the Tomb of Absalom, the prophet opened his scroll, and attentively perused it for a few moments. Then he murmured aloud, —

"It is written! It is fulfilled! Woe to Jerusalem! Woe also to me! for I stood in my youth beside that Holy Cross, and mocked with the passers-by, crying, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!' — and even as I jeered, the Dying One opened his marvellous eyes and looked upon me; and straightway my soul was thrilled with horror, as though a sword had pierced my heart; and I knew He was the Holy One of God. I have searched the Scriptures, and in Him the prophecies are fulfilled. It is laid upon me to cry, Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the Holy House! for they shall utterly be destroyed; for they cast out the Son of the Most High God!"

Closing the scroll, the prophet continued his walk. Passing by the Tomb of Zechariah, he paused by the Tomb of Saint James, and, resting beneath the portico, supported by slender pillars, he once again gazed long and mournfully upon the city of Jerusalem, exclaiming, —

"Woe to the city and to the people! Jerusalem shall be left desolate! Graves! graves! naught but graves!"

Again he resumed his walk, and passing through the Vale of Tombs, at length reached the gates of the city, and for a time was lost in the moving crowds of people.

Passing in and out of this centre of eastern trade and commerce, were caravans of camels, laden with ivory, cinnamon, rich spices, gorgeous Oriental fabrics, and various articles of traffic from other eastern countries.
Other caravans were slowly approaching the city from the direction of Jericho, — that "City of Palms," which Herod the Great had restored to much of its former magnificence, in the erection of fortifications and royal palaces; for though the palace of Herod had been partially destroyed by fire, it had been rebuilt by Archelaus. And on this October morning the highway to Jericho was gay with frequent groups of pedestrians; bands of Roman soldiers; camels with their loads of balsam, for which the country of Jericho was famed, and multitudes of Jews going up to Jerusalem, bearing branches of olive, palm, pine, willow, and myrtle trees; for the Israelites were commanded to dwell in booths, or tents, during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

And again that bodeful cry rang out upon the air, "Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the Holy House!"

"What means that, father?" asked a young Jewish maiden of one of the chief priests, called Ananus, as he passed through the Court of the Gentiles into the Temple, preparatory to entering upon his solemn duties on this memorable day of sacred observances.

"I know not, Miriam, my daughter," answered the father. "Perchance it is the voice of some lunatic from the mountains. Fear not! It means naught to the mighty Jewish nation."

And Ananus ascended the steps leading from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women, and having passed through the Beautiful Gate, which divided the two enclosures, he proceeded through the Nicanor's Gate, which was of Corinthian brass, all the rest of the gates of the Temple being of wood covered with plates of gold and silver, and then entered the Court of Israel, or Court of the Jewish Men.
Through this court, now thronged with worshippers, the High Priest passed into the Court of the Priests, and having entered into one of the priests' cloisters, he there bathed, according to ceremonial law, and fully dressed himself in the holy white linen garments, appointed for the sacred ceremonies of this memorable Day of Atonement, which occurred on the 10th Tishri, when the High Priest alone, of all the days of the year, should enter the Holy of Holies.

The entrance to the Holy Place was through a two-leaved gate covered with plates of gold, over which was twined a colossal golden vine, of which the clusters of grapes were formed of precious stones,—rubies, emeralds, the topaz, amethysts, and others of various hues and brilliancy; for each year the Jews added grapes or golden leaves to this wondrous vine, until it had become a marvel of the world.

And when the shining gates were opened, the High Priest lifted a gorgeous curtain of Babylonian tapestry, of blue, scarlet, yellow, and purple, embroidered with the symbols of the constellations of the heavens, the colors also being of significant meaning, the scarlet signifying fire; the fine flax, the earth; the blue, the air; and the purple, the sea.

Within this Holy Place stood the Altar of Incense, before the sacred Veil, which concealed the Holy of Holies. Here also was the Golden Candlestick, seven-branched, where in Solomon's Temple had stood seven golden candlesticks. And here, too, was the Table of Showbread, of solid gold, together with the other golden tables upon which were placed the golden vessels used in the services of the Temple.
CHAPTER II.

MIRIAM, JESSICA, AND AZIEL. — THE TEMPLE COURTS. —
THE HALL OF HEWN STONES. — THE DOVE BAZAAR.

Miriam, the daughter of Ananus, one of the chief priests, together with her younger sister, Jessica, attended by their faithful nurse, Rachel, who was the constant guardian of the two motherless maidens, formed a group a little apart from the crowds thronging the Court of the Gentiles.

Miriam was a typical daughter of the Jews, — beautiful as Rebecca, graceful and stately as Queen Esther, brave as the Miriam of old, for whom she had been named, faithful as Hannah, the mother of Samuel, filial as Ruth, and as devout as Eunice, the mother of Timothy.

A transparent white scarf partly draped her head, crowned with its raven locks, for the Jewish maidens might display their wealth of braided or curled tresses. On her low, broad brow fell the golden coins which formed a part of a Jewish maiden's dower; while the same precious coins were garlanded across her swelling bust, modestly hidden by folds of scarlet crape, held in place by a richly embroidered linen girdle, from which fell in graceful folds the silken skirt of her pale blue tunic, which was partially concealed by a mantle of Persian design.

Her white throat was clasped by a necklace of rare pearls, caught by an emerald of priceless value. As the eldest daughter of a rich and powerful priest, her attire was becomingly costly; while her younger sister, a maiden
of some twelve summers, was clothed simply in garments of white, with a girdle and mantle of dark blue.

Old Rachel wore a cloak of brown, which so shrouded her figure that naught else was visible of her costume, save the white cotton turban wound round her head, and forming a sort of veil as it hung upon each side of her face. This article of dress was known among the ancient Hebrews as the wimple.

The feet of Miriam and Jessica, partly visible beneath the tunic, were encased in shoes of soft leather, adorned with little bells. This foot-covering was worn only by the higher classes of the Jews. Rachel wore the customary sandal, with a sole of wood, and straps of leather made from the skin of the camel.

As Miriam and Jessica, accompanied by Rachel, were about to enter the Court of the Women (the "Azarath Nashim" of the Temple), beyond which no woman must penetrate into the more sacred precincts of the Sanctuary, a youth joined them.

At this moment, once more that doleful cry rang through the air, "Woe! woe to Jerusalem!" and the voice was near, even at hand; and Miriam beheld with affright the old prophet, who had now reached the Temple, where his bodeful lamentation had arrested the attention of the crowds around him.

Just as Aziel, the Jewish youth, accosted Miriam and her sister, the prophet had been seized by the bystanders, who were proceeding to bind him, to lead him before the Sanhedrin, which would shortly assemble in the "Lishcath Hag-gazith," or Hall of Hewn Stones.

"What means this terrible curse, Aziel?" asked Miriam, not yet wholly recovered from the fright occasioned by the unusual cry, but evincing her relief at the sight of
this young friend by a smile of welcome; disclosing her pleasure by the tell-tale blushes deepening the rich tint of her cheeks, while the shadows lightened in her large dark eyes.

"I know not, Miriam. But I think not, with yonder crowd, that the man is a disturber; for I feel a dim presentiment that he is rather a prophet sent to warn this nation," answered the Jewish youth, after he had gracefully uttered the Jewish "Shalōm" of the Talmuds, ("Peace be with thee!")

Aziel was related to the family of Joseph of Arimathea, and was a descendant of a long line of pious Israelites. Like Absalom, he was of that rare type of Jew appearing now and again in Jewish chronicles; for Aziel was fair of countenance, with brown locks glinting to gold in the sunlight, and eyes of violet blue, the symbol of truth.

He wore the Hebrew "Chatuk," or tunic of linen, which fitted the figure, and came down to the feet. His "Talith," or robe, was of purple silk, girdled with a broad band of linen embroidered in divers colors; while his golden locks, perfumed with the costly ointment of spikenard, which among the Jews was not a sign of effeminacy, but rather of rigorous attention to the laws of purification, fell beneath the white linen "Sudar," or turban, and hung upon his broad shoulders in luxuriant curls.

The Jew did not, like the Roman, display his muscular strength and physical proportions by the short, sleeveless tunic; but, nevertheless, Aziel's manly beauty of form and fine contour of limb and shoulder were not wholly concealed by the flowing robe, or long tunic, for the girdle held the mantle in graceful and convenient folds, so as not to interfere with his free gait and manly proportions.

He indulged in no extravagance of dress, though the
materials were handsome and costly, as became his rank; but his youth was betokened by the ornamental stick, or cane, with its carved pomegranate upon the top, rather than the plainer staff carried by the older and more sedate Jews.

A signet ring, upon a finger of his right hand, bore the seal of his illustrious family; while his purple mantle was bordered at the four corners with the fringed "Çiççith," as commanded in the law.

At a signal from the prefect of the Temple, Aziel entered with Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel, through the Beautiful Gate, into the Court of the Women, and they proceeded to deposit their Temple offerings in the receptacles provided for them. Thirteen gates led into this court from the Chel, or open space which separated the Court of the Women from the Court of the Gentiles. Before each one of these gates stood chests, called in the Talmuds "Shophharoth" (rams' horns, or trumpets), because of their narrow necks. Each chest was for a different object, indicated by an inscription in the Hebrew tongue.

Miriam and her sister deposited their offerings in the chest holding the money for turtle doves, while Aziel put a handful of silver shekels into the first chest, and a golden coin into the fourth and sixth boxes; and with a parting salutation to Miriam, he passed beyond, through the Gate of Corinthian Brass, into the "Azarath Yisraël," or Court of the Israelites.

From this court were visible the solemn services performed by the priests in the inner "Azarath Cohanim," or Court of the Priests, and into which none else might enter.

And now the ringing of the little golden bells which bordered the robe of the High Priest became audible, as he came back from the priests' cloister, where he had laid
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aside the white linen garments in which he had performed the special duties of the Day of Atonement, and resumed his customary priestly robes.

The solemn services of the Day of Atonement having been completed, the people returned to their respective homes, preparatory to erecting the booths of the branches of willow, palm, myrtle, olive, and pine, in which they were to dwell during the coming Feast of Tabernacles, on the 15th Tishri.

And now let us follow the strange prophet, whose name was Joshua, into the Hall of Hewn Stones, whither he had been led as a disturber of the peace, to answer his accusers before the bar of justice, presided over by the distinguished and powerful assemblage of learned Rabbis and priests composing the Sanhedrin.

There were three places in the Temple where it was lawful to sit for discussion. The first was at the Gate of Susa; the second, at the Gate of the Court of the Gentiles; and the third, in the first half of the Hall of Hewn Stones.

As for forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, according to the Talmuds, the Sanhedrin had ceased to meet in the part of the Hall of Hewn Stones included in the Court of Israel, we must follow the prophet into that portion of the Basilica reached through the Chel. Around the Hall, upon a raised platform, sat the seventy-one members of the Sanhedrin, in a half circle. The Nasi, or President of this body, the Supreme Court of the Jews, had been in past times chosen on account of his eminence and wisdom; but the office became, at length, an honor to be bought by the most wealthy. Often it was held by the High Priest. The "Father of the House of Judgment," or Vice-President of the Sanhedrin, sat at the right hand of the President.
Into this august assembly the strange prophet had been brought by his accusers.

"Why dost thou disturb the peace of the city?" asked the President, who, in this instance, was also the High Priest of Jerusalem.

But the prophet was deaf to all questions and to all accusations, repeating only his weird and bodeful lamentations,—

"Woe to the Holy City, and to the Holy House! A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds! Woe! woe to Jerusalem!" Neither would he give any account of himself.

"What thinkest thou, Ananus?" inquired the High Priest, of the Father of the House of Judgment, which place of honor was held by the father of Miriam.

"It may be he is some lunatic from the mountains," responded Ananus; "nevertheless, it were doubtless better to insure his silence by scourge or punishment, lest his doleful cry raise a riot in the city."

"That is wise counsel," answered the High Priest; "in these troublous times it were good to keep such brawlers well muzzled."

Whereupon, the Sanhedrin condemned the prophet to be scourged. But when he was laid hold upon, and taken to the place of scourging, the prophet uttered not one word of supplication for himself, insomuch that the soldiers marvelled, and he ceased not to cry as before.

As the prophet Joshua could not be restrained by the punishments inflicted upon him by the Sanhedrin, the rulers of the people led him before Albinus. Festus was dead, and Albinus was procurator in his place. Herod the Great was dead, and his kingdom had been allotted by Augustus to Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philippus.
The fall of Archelaus left the throne of Judea and Samaria without a direct claimant, and the Emperor attached it to the Roman dominions. The general administration of the country was through the proconsul of Syria, but the provinces were more directly governed by an imperial procurator, who then dwelt at Cæsarea Philippi.

Both Augustus and Tiberius respected the peculiar prejudices of the Jews. When Pontius Pilatus entered Jerusalem with the Roman standards flying, upon which the image of the Emperor was displayed, which the Jews considered a national insult, as they were forbidden by their law to make any images, thereupon they made complaints, and Tiberius commanded Pilate to withdraw the offending images.

The Emperor Caligula, however, demanded of the Jews that they should allow his statue to be set up in Jerusalem, which decree had already been carried out in other cities of the Empire.

This command of the Emperor was sent to a certain Publius, prefect of Syria; but as soon as the Jews were informed of it, they assembled at the town of Tiberias, whither they had been convened by Publius, and when he endeavored to enforce the decree of the Emperor, the multitude of the Jews cried out,—

"We will die rather than our law should be broken!"

"Will ye, then, war with Cæsar?" said Publius, to which one of the chief among the Jews replied,—

"For Cæsar and the Roman people twice a day do we sacrifice, but if he erects these images, he must first destroy the whole Jewish nation; and we now present ourselves, our wives and children, ready for the slaughter."

This heroic stand of the Jews in defence of their religious laws so moved Publius that he dismissed the
assembly. But Caligula, incensed that the Jewish nation should thus defy his authority, gave directions that a colossal statue should be made of himself, and that it be placed in the Holy of Holies, in the Temple at Jerusalem, having inscribed upon it his own name, with the title of Jupiter.

The report of this atrocious sacrilege was received at Jerusalem with wild manifestations of astonishment and horror. But the speedy assassination of the tyrant prevented the consummation of this infamous deed.

While Judea and Samaria were thus annexed to the Roman province, Galilee and the outlying regions of Peraea and Ituraea were suffered to remain under their native rulers; and the dominions of Herod the Great became once more united under a single sceptre.

At this time Nero had been for ten years emperor. In 52 A.D., the Emperor Claudius appointed Herod Agrippa II., the son of Herod Agrippa I. and Cypros, a granddaughter of Herod the Great, to the tetrarchies formerly held by Philip, the son of Herod the Great, with the title of king. Nero afterwards enlarged the dominions of Agrippa by the addition of several cities, and Agrippa erected costly buildings both at Jerusalem and Berytus.

Agrippa had also added an apartment to the old Asmonean Palace, which stood on the eastern brow of the Upper City, and commanded a full view of the interior of the Courts of the Temple. As the Jews saw this desecration of the Sanctuary (for it was a law of the Rabbis that none should build his house high enough to overlook the Temple), they built a wall on the west side of the inner quadrangle. This wall not only intercepted the palace of Agrippa, but also the view from the outer cloisters, in which the Roman guard was stationed during the festivals. Thereupon both
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Festus, who was then procurator, and King Agrippa complained to Nero. The Jews pleaded that, once built, it was a part of the Temple, and it would be sacrilegious to remove it. Nero admitted their plea, but retained as hostages the High Priest and treasurer, who had headed the deputation to Rome.

Such is a brief outline of some of the political events preceding the time of our story.

Albinus being now procurator, the prophet was brought into his presence.

"Who art thou, and whence didst thou come, and why sayest thou these things?" asked Albinus.

But the prophet Joshua answered him not a word, but ceased not to make lamentation over the city.

The governor then caused him to be scourged, even to the laying bare of his bones; but the prophet used neither entreaties nor tears.

At length, Albinus, judging the man to be mad, let him depart. So Joshua, the strange prophet, returned to the mountains; but, as we shall see, this was not the last heard of his direful cry.

This time being the Feast of Tabernacles, preparations continued in Jerusalem for the observance of all its sacred ceremonies. The services of the Day of Atonement, which preceded the Feast of Tabernacles, being over, the people gathered in the Xystus, which was the Forum, or Pnyx, of the city of Jerusalem. The Xystus was in the valley called the Valley of the Cheesemongers, or the Tyropoeon. This valley separated the Upper City on Mount Zion from the Temple on Mount Moriah, on the one hand, and from the Lower City on Mount Acre, on the other. Zion of the Holy Hill was usually spoken of as including the Temple Hill.
Jerusalem, as we all know, was built on four hills,—Zion, Moriah, Acra, and Bezetha. At the time of Christ, Bezetha was still without the walls, although the slopes were dotted with many buildings, and Calvary lay between Mount Zion and Bezetha. At the time of our story, Bezetha had been enclosed by what was called the third wall. On Zion, in the Higher, or Upper, City, rose the palace of the king. On Moriah was the Temple. Zion was the old city,—the city of David; and, in the time of Christ, included the whole of the southern part of Jerusalem.

In the Tyropoeon, or valley between these hills, was the Xystus, and Council Hall, while above was a bridge uniting the Temple Hill to the Upper City.

From Temple Hill a magnificent view of the city of Jerusalem could be obtained,—the Upper City lying to the left, and the Lower City to the right; while in front was the Tyropoeon Valley, with the great square of the Xystus crowded with the various nationalities that flocked to Jerusalem, for trade, pleasure, or on sacred pilgrimages.

As we have lingered on Temple Hill while the crowds were hurrying down to the Xystus, intent on their various occupations, we notice again the group we have already described. The Jewish maiden, Miriam, and her sister Jessica, accompanied by old Rachel, at this moment emerged from the outer courts of the Temple.

"You remember, Rachel," remarked Miriam, "that we must go to the Dove Bazaar, on the Mount of Olives, to procure our Temple offerings for to-morrow. Let us proceed thither before the shadows fall. I have here in my girdle pieces of silver which will suffice for their purchase."

"Peradventure Aziel of Arimathea will not be loath to
lend us his company over the bridge," rejoined Rachel, as she perceived the youth approaching, and was not averse to her young charges having so gallant a protector as they passed beyond the walls of the city.

As Aziel was an old friend, his family having been acknowledged by the family of the fair Jewess as intimate friends for generations, he was privileged to approach and salute the maidens.

"Thou goest not home, Miriam?" inquired Aziel, as he joined the group.

"Not yet," replied Miriam; "I must go to the Dove Bazaar beyond the Kedron."

"Let me go with thee thither," said Aziel, stepping by the side of the girl, whose soft, black eyes, needing no help of "Kohl" to add lustre to their radiance, were only partially concealed by the white gauze veil half shrouding their loveliness. Meanwhile, Jessica and Rachel followed a few paces behind.

They did not descend into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, containing the tombs, where we first beheld the prophet Joshua, but crossed the Kedron by a bridge connecting the Temple with the Mount of Olives. Along this road the priests of the Temple had opened various shops, or bazaars, the income of which belonged to the powerful family of Annas, the Sadducean. The most noted of all these shops was a bazaar erected under two magnificent cedar-trees, frequented by clouds of doves. This was the Dove Bazaar, and, according to the Talmuds, these birds sufficed to supply the pigeons for sacrifice for all Israel.

Peradventure, under these very cedar-trees, Mary, the mother of Jesus, purchased the doves which she offered in the Temple after the birth of the Divine Babe.

It was but a few minutes' walk outside the walls of
Jerusalem to the Valley of the Kedron, and by the bridge from Temple Hill the distance was even less.

As the long ceremonies in the Temple had occupied much of the day, the sun was nearing its setting, as the party, having purchased the doves, which Rachel carried in two small basket-like cages, again turned their steps towards the city.

"As the sun is not yet down, and the city gates will still be open, let us return by the valley," said Aziel to Miriam, desiring to prolong his conversation with the maiden, whom he evidently admired. It had been rumored, also, that Ananus, the father of Miriam, would ere this have proposed the betrothal of these two young friends, for the approval of the Sanhedrin, of which body he was "The Father of the House of Judgment," but that Aziel was reputed to be a Christian, while Ananus still held to the faith of his fathers, being a strict Sadducee.
CHAPTER III.

THE POOL OF SILOAM. — THE HOUSE ON ZION'S HILL. — THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

As the home of Miriam, she being the daughter of one of high rank, was in the Upper City on Mount Zion, in descending the Mount of Olives they did not pass through the Garden of Gethsemane, but entered by the Gate of the Fountain, near the beginning of the saddle-shaped projection of the Temple Hill, supposed to be the Ophel of the Bible.

As Azriel and Miriam, together with Jessica and Rachel, approached Siloam, the setting sun flooded Mount Moriah with gorgeous rays, bathing the white marble colonnades of the Temple with ruby light, touching its roof of gold with a blaze of glory so resplendent as to recall to the mind of the devout Jew the wonderful descriptions of the awesome effulgence of the marvellous Shechinah, which no longer manifested its transcendent glory in the Holy of Holies.

The Pool of Siloam was not then the ruin it now is; then, groves and gardens flourished around it. In the gardens bloomed the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, while the useful rue bordered the garden walls. Here and there in the grass near this sacred Siloam might have been seen the gorgeous scarlet lily of the east, the Lilium Chalcedonicum, while the purple lily of Palestine swayed gracefully in the evening breeze. It is supposed that one of these beautiful flowers was referred to by
Christ as the lily of the field, with which "Not even Solomon in all his glory" could be compared, for in his magnificent robes "he was not arrayed like one of these."

The Pool of Siloam was a favorite resort of the Jews. Its shady groves of willows, clustering vines, and sacred waters, together with the view of the king's luxuriant gardens, where the grape-vines were trained upon the trunks of the fig-trees, giving force to the emblem of domestic happiness, as represented by "dwelling under one's own vine and fig-tree," rendered the spot delightful; where oaks lent their grateful shade from the noonday sun, while, in the gardens near, the pistachio-trees, for which Palestine was famous, furnished their harvest of spicy nuts.

There, too, the myrtle flourished. Not the humble vine we know, but a stately shrub, with green, shining leaves, and snow-white flowers bordered with purple, emitting a fragrance more exquisite than that of the rose. The date palms waved their feathery plumage, and in the paradise of the king's gardens, the apricot, quince, and citron trees abounded, while orange groves perfumed the air with the delicious fragrance of their snowy blossoms. The pale, gray-green leaves of the olive-trees formed a fitting background to the brighter tints of the fig-trees, while the crimson flowers of the low pomegranates rose little higher than the white blossoms of the tree-myrtle.

Over the garden wall wild roses clambered; lilies clustered near the fountain; the blue-eyed flower of the flax mingled with the star-shaped blossom of the star of Bethlehem on the hillsides and in the valleys; while the many mustard-trees or shrubs furnished seeds for the linnets, goldfinches, sparrows, starlings, blackbirds, song-thrushes, corn-buntings, pipits, and green finches, which
abounded in Palestine. The solitary blue thrush, eschewing the society of its own species, flitted here and there in pairs, but shunned the noisy chatterers on the mustard-trees.

Were these the birds referred to by the Psalmist as “the sparrow that sitteth alone upon the house-top”? Solomon’s fleet had brought peacocks to Jerusalem, and these gorgeous birds paraded in stately grandeur through the various walks of the king’s gardens.

At this October season, not all these various blossoms were in bloom, but were numerous enough to fascinate the gaze, and slacken the footsteps of the wayfarer as he entered a vale of loveliness, ere he continued his walk up the hillsides leading to the Higher City.

Aziel and Miriam had seated themselves upon the upper step of the stairway leading down to the Pool of Siloam, while Jessica and Rachel stooped to gather clusters of the stars of Bethlehem,—Jessica attracted by the loveliness of the white blossoms, but prudent Rachel gathering the bulbous roots of the plant, which were sometimes used for food.

Aziel and Miriam had been speaking of the strange cry of Joshua, the prophet; and Aziel said,—

“I have been watching for some time the signs of the times; peradventure some ominous event portends. This last terrible conflagration in Rome has raised grave rumors regarding the Emperor Nero, and reports have confirmed the stories regarding Cæsar’s iniquitous burning of the Christians, whom he accused of having set fire to the city, to conceal his own connivance in the plot of wholesale destruction, which he thought necessary in order to obtain sufficient space for erecting his contemplated gorgeous structures.”
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"Thou callest the persecution of the Christians iniquitous, Aziel!" rejoined Miriam; "father declares it was a righteous punishment. I, myself, shudder with horror at the awful story, for methinks it was Christian martyrdom, not punishment; and I begin to think thou too leanest towards that belief."

"Yea, I am a Christian," replied Aziel; "nor am I afraid to avow it. Since the time of Joseph of Arimathæa, our family has lost much faith in the traditions of the fathers, though we still reverently hold the Torah as the Word of God; and I await with holy awe some great calamity upon our nation, for the sin of shedding that Holy blood."

"Yet my father," rejoined Miriam, "talks bitterly against the Nazarene, as an impostor; but Rachel tells me such wonderful stories of His marvellous deeds and holy words, that I, too, would be a Christian, if my father would allow. But a Jewish maiden is subject to her father's will."

Just then Rachel drew near, and Aziel accosted her.

"Miriam says that thou believest in the Nazarene?"

"Yea, by my life!" replied Rachel, seating herself on a moss-bank near by. "Could I doubt the evidence of my own senses?"

"Didst thou ever see the Crucified One, Rachel?"

"Several times, Master Aziel. To be sure, I was but a small child; but you remember my home was then in Bethany, near by the house of Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus. My mother was their friend; and she was one among the many Jews 'who went to comfort them,' when Lazarus, their brother, lay in the tomb."

"Didst thou behold that wondrous miracle, Rachel?" inquired Aziel.
"Yea; though I was but a child like Jessica, I went with my mother to the tomb of Lazarus; and at the word of Jesus I beheld Lazarus come forth from the grave."

"How appeared this Jesus, Rachel?"

"Oh, Master Aziel, I am not fit to find the words to tell thee of His majesty and loveliness!"

"How looked He?"

"Like no mortal man I ever beheld. His hair and beard were golden brown, and seemed to be a halo of light about his face. His eyes were full of pity, full of sorrow, and yet glowing with perfect peace."

"What was the color of His eyes?"

"I scarce can tell. Though I was then so young, I never shall forget that face. His eyes seemed sometimes a heavenly blue, deep and soft as the petals of the blue flax-flower; and as He spoke, they darkened like midnight sky; then, as He gazed towards heaven, they seemed to have caught the color of the vault above, so azure was their tint. None ever felt those holy eyes bent on them without a thrill stirring the soul. His stature was imposing; yet His manners were so gentle, He seemed a pitying woman. His words were sublime, yet simple, so that, child as I was, I could understand their loving message; and withal so profound were they, that the best-skilled doctors of the law could not match His marvellous knowledge; and yet they said He had never been taught at any of the schools."

"What was His voice like?"

"Oh, Master Aziel! how can I tell thee of that wondrous voice? It was sweet as music, tender as a mother's, persuasive as a lover's, sorrowful as a widow's, comforting as an angel's, yet awesome as the command of a God! One glance of His eye dispelled the darkness from the soul,
like the glorious rising of the sun; one word from His lips thrilled to the heart like a voice from Heaven!"

"My mother has told me much of the Nazarene, which she learned from my uncle, her brother, Joseph of Arimathea, who died before my remembrance," said Aziel; "but she could not tell me of the wondrous voice and appearance of the Christ, as my uncle had not described the Nazarene. I often go to Gethsemane and Calvary, and try to picture to my mind the memorable events once witnessed there."

"I have been once to Gethsemane with Rachel," said Miriam; "but when I told my father, and asked him of the Nazarene, he forbade me to talk of the 'impostor,' as he called him; and enjoined me to pray for the coming of the Messiah, who should prove to be the King of the Jews, and free our nation from the Roman yoke."

"But this Jesus was the King of the Jews," said Aziel.

"Yea, so I think," rejoined Miriam, "and so I told my father; but his ire was kindled, and he said that the impostor had no claim to the title, and that He blasphemed when He declared Himself to be the Son of God."

"I have studied the Prophets," said Aziel, "and I have noted carefully the prophecies concerning a coming Messiah; and I find them all fulfilled in Him; and though so few years have passed since this Sinless One was crucified, behold the spreading of His Gospel. I have heard Paul and Peter preach concerning Him, and my soul was on fire with holy zeal as I listened to their burning words."

"And yet thou still goest to the Temple feasts?" said Miriam.

"Yea, Miriam. Did not Christ Himself observe the Temple feasts? But I go more often to the Christian
Church; and though I am not yet enrolled amongst them, when my father gives consent I shall avow my faith. Thou rememberest that my father is still a Pharisee, and holds to the traditions of the fathers, though my mother is a Christian. But my father will not allow her to worship with that body of believers, who are much persecuted and despised in many places. I care naught for persecution, but until I am older, must respect my father’s command. As soon as this Feast of Tabernacles is over, my father will send me to Alexandria on important family affairs connected with our commercial interests; and then, peradventure, I may go to Rome, and I will then learn more definitely concerning this terrible burning of the Christians."

"I shall be loath to have thee go, Aziel. I like not this Rome. It seems a wicked place, and, moreover, dangerous to life, as well as to character."

"Fear not, Miriam. I have a presentiment that Jerusalem will ere long be more dangerous than Rome, to both Jews and Christians. I have noted the spirit of revolt which is waxing warm against the Roman rule. The disturbance at Cæsarea, when Felix was procurator, seems likely to be repeated at many other places. The reason of that uprising, as my father told me, was a difference between the Jews and Syrians, regarding the ownership of the city of Cæsarea: the Jews claiming that the city was theirs, as it was built by a Jew, meaning King Herod; and the Syrians claiming that it was a Grecian city, as it was adorned with statues and temples, which could not have been designed for Jews, who will not allow images to be made. And the tumult waxed so great, that the Roman soldiers were called to the assistance of the Syrians, who indeed could not altogether quell the insurrection; but as
the sedition continued, eminent men were chosen on both sides to argue before Caesar their several privileges. And in the times of Festus, who succeeded Felix, nor still at present, when Albinus is the procurator, have times been quiet, for the banditti of the caves, the ‘Sicarii,’ have become so bold that they have murdered many of repute; for they have mingled with the multitudes at our festivals, with daggers concealed under their garments, and did even slay Jonathan, the High Priest, and many others, so that no man’s life is free from danger.”

“Yea, father has spoken of these ‘Sicarii,’” said Miriam, “and rumors are afloat that they are again gathering in the caves without the city.”

“Albinus has not taken measures against these robbers, as Festus did,” rejoined Aziel; “and this, with other grave reports from Rome, fills my mind with direful forebodings.”

“Hast thou heard, Master Aziel, whether the Apostle Paul suffered in this late terrible persecution of the Christians in Rome?”

“Yea, I have letters from Rome, Rachel, stating that Paul was released from imprisonment last year, after being confined in Rome two years, and so escaped this last persecution.”

“Come, Miriam and Jessica,” said Rachel, “the shadows deepen, and we must linger no longer by this sweet Siloam, lest thy father shall be wrathful, and berate me.”

“Thou art right, Rachel,” said Miriam; “we must hasten homeward.”

“Wilt thou join in the Feast of Tabernacles, Miriam?” asked Aziel.

“In truth, I shall,” answered Miriam, “though, as women, we are not forced by Jewish law to dwell in
booths; but I hold all religious rites as sacred duties; and Rachel and I will prepare the fragrant myrtle boughs to twine with the weeping-willow and olive branches, which our men-servants will gather to construct the booth, beside the Temple Court, where we shall dwell until the last and great day of this solemn festival."

They had now reached the home of Miriam on Zion's Hill, and at the outer gate young Aziel made his parting "Shalôm" to the sisters, while they, with Rachel, passed within the interior court, which, in the houses of the rich, formed a centre square, along the four sides of which ran a portico outside an outer court enclosed by a wall.

The house was entered by a two-leaved wooden door, working on hinges. The bolts, locks, and keys were all of wood. Only the gates of a city had metal hinges. The house of Ananus, he being of rank and wealth, was large. The house proper was raised upon the columns of the portico, and was of two stories. The palace of Solomon had three stories, but the ordinary dwellings were seldom so high. The apartment for the feasts was large and sumptuous, but the sleeping apartments small. None of the houses had a room where the inmates could retire for quiet and meditation; for this, it was necessary to ascend to the roof, which was almost flat. Upon this roof an upper chamber was often constructed. This terrace-chamber was large, and protected from the rain and noon-day sun, and was a delightful place of resort, especially in the evening. This pavilion on the roof was also used as a guest-chamber, and as a place of prayer. It was in such an upper chamber that Jesus met with His disciples when He instituted the Supper.

As Ananus belonged to a famous family of priests, and would, ere long, himself be chosen High Priest of the
Temple, his daughters were lodged sumptuously. His home was luxurious. The rooms were adorned with beautiful furniture, and lighted with costly candelabra. Eastern carpets of gorgeous hues were spread upon the tiled floors. In the sleeping apartments were perfumed couches of cedar-wood, with soft pillows, and with coverlets of silk and embroidered linen. In the dining-room were luxurious divans covered with costly tapestries; and the palatable viands and luscious fruits were served in dishes of delicate earthenware, or in rare and valuable glass vessels. Such luxurious belongings were for the rich only. The poor and humble in those days lived in small dwellings without windows, furnished only with the barest necessities, consisting of a single lamp, a bushel, a few skins for wine, a broom, and a mill for grinding corn. Sometimes this lamp-stand was tall, and stood upon the ground; sometimes the lamp was placed upon a stone projecting from the wall. The poor man’s lamp was made of clay, filled with oil, and provided with one or more burners. The bushel was an indispensable article in the dwellings of the poor. It was used as a measure; then again, turned upside down, and placed upon the floor, it served as a table, and the lamp was placed upon it. This makes clear the words of Jesus: “Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel.”

Every Jewish house, whether belonging to the rich or poor, was provided with the “Mezuzzah,” — a small oblong box, in which was a roll of parchment. This manuscript contained, in twenty-two lines, the two portions from Deuteronomy on love to God, and on the blessings attached to the obedience to the Commandments. This “Mezuzzah” was hung above the door of the house.

At the hour of evening prayer, Aziel, who had returned
to his father's house, which also was in the Upper City, though the family was from Arimathæa, ascended the outer stairway, which in all dwellings led to the upper chamber, and stood upon the uncovered portion of the terrace, paved with brick tiles, and ornamented with large vases filled with blooming plants. His face was towards the Temple, according to the Jewish law, and his head bowed. Then he repeated the prayer called "Shemâ," which every morning and evening every Jew was commanded to recite, women, children, and slaves alone being excepted.

It mattered not where a Jew might happen to be when the prayer hour arrived,—in the market-place, in the streets, in the synagogues, in the houses; even a man surprised by the hour of prayer while in a tree gathering fruit, must forthwith say his "Shemâ." Although Aziel was in faith a Christian, he still observed those rites of the Jewish ceremonial law which did not interfere with his Christian belief.

Now as the moon rose over the brow of the Mount of Olives, Aziel devoutly repeated aloud the evening prayer.

The Jew rarely knelt to pray, but stood with head bowed; and before commencing to pray, turned towards Jerusalem if out of the City, towards the Temple if out of the Sanctuary, towards the Holy of Holies when in the Temple at the daily hour of prayer.

Rachel, Miriam, and Jessica had also retired to the upper chamber of the house of Ananus for their evening devotions. Though women were exempt from the repetition of the "Shemâ," every Israelitish man, woman, child, and slave was bound to recite, three times each day, the "Shemonâh 'esrêh," or eighteen thanksgivings. This prayer was said in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.
As Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel knelt with bowed heads, they reverently chanted fragments of phrases taken from the Psalms and the Prophets; sublime apostrophes, expressing adoration, faith, humiliation, and hope.

As the low voices of the devout women fell upon the responsive evening air, a nightingale, in the orange grove not far distant, thrilled the ether with its exquisite song, and seemed to waft to heaven with its own glad hymn of praise the words of prayer uttered by the reverent voices of the kneeling women.

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the autumn, and commemorated the journeyings of the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness. The Feast of the Passover, the great feast of the Jews, was celebrated in the month Nisan, corresponding to our March and April. The great feasts were all celebrated in the Temple; hence the Israelites went up to Jerusalem from all parts of Palæstine. The Passover Feast especially drew people from many countries; even the Gentiles made it a custom to visit Jerusalem at this time. The Feast of Tabernacles also marked the beginning of the Jewish civil year, their New Year being the 1st Tishri. The Day of Atonement, which we have already described, occurred on the 10th Tishri. On the 11th, 12th, and 13th Tishri, the people gathered together, and prepared the booths of branches of willow, palm, pine, olive, and myrtle; and on the 15th began the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the eight days of the feast, every family dwelt in a leafy tabernacle formed of these fragrant boughs. This feast was marked by great demonstrations of joy. Hosannahs were sung, palm-branches waved; and each day a libation of wine was poured over the altar from two silver vessels, and water, drawn in a golden pitcher from
the fountain of Siloam, was brought by a priest to the Temple, and as he ascended the altar steps, the people said,—

"Lift up thy hand!"

And the sacred water was thereupon poured over the altar, the priests taking care that the water be poured towards the west, as the wine had been towards the east.

In the evening two lamps were lighted in the Court of the Women, where there was a sacred dance to the sound of music.

On the seventh day of this feast, Miriam stood at the door of the leafy bower, where dwelt the family of Ananus during the sacred week. On this day the leaves would be stripped from the willow boughs with which the booths had been covered. The Pharisees attached so much importance to this ceremony that they permitted it to be done on the Sabbath, when the seventh of the feast fell upon that day. The dwelling in booths ended on the evening of the seventh day, but the eighth was observed as an additional holy day.

As Miriam stood holding in her hand a branch of myrtle, upon which the fragrant white blossoms had given place to the aromatic seeds, Aziel approached the booth, and saluted her gracefully.

"As the willows of my father's tent have been already stripped of their leaves, I thought, perchance, I might aid thee, as thou hast no brother, and thy father Ananus is engaged in Temple services."

"Thou art indeed kind," said Miriam, "though we need not thy proffered help, as my father's men-servants are numerous. As this booth will soon be taken down, I was preparing to depart with Jessica and Rachel to my father's house. But this myrtle is so pretty, with its fragrant
spicy seeds, I fain would carry some of it to the roof-pavilion, to place in vases there."

"Let me bear for thee an armful thither," exclaimed Aziel, delighted to avail himself of this opportunity of converse with the maiden.

"I will accept that offer gladly," answered Miriam.

At this moment Rachel and Jessica appeared, bearing some of the small articles of personal use, which a week's residence in the booth of willows had rendered necessary. Thereupon, Miriam also went into the tent to gather her own especial part of a fair woman's trinkets, while the maid and men servants carried the weightier articles of household comfort.

By this time Aziel had collected a sufficient number of myrtle boughs, and joined Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel, as they left the booth to walk over the bridge connecting Mount Moriah with Zion's Hill.

Aziel and Miriam were a little in advance of the others, and reached the house of Ananus first; and ascending the outer stairway, were soon within the roof pavilion, which was spacious enough to contain the covered apartment, and still leave room for an upper garden, over the balustrades of which vines and flowers clambered, making it a bower of beauty in the summer time. This bright October weather had not robbed it of much of its floral beauty, for many plants were still in blossom, and growing shrubs still rendered the spot delightful at the time of noonday rest, as well as in the evening hours, when the moon flooded the court with her silvery light. It was now the time between the morning and the evening services, and so Miriam and Aziel were free to spend a little time in friendly conversation.

Just then Jessica and Rachel joined them on the roof-
terrace, and Rachel had brought some cooling drink, and baskets of ripe fruits, and costly glass dishes filled with the rich sweetmeats to which women of the Orient are so partial.

"I must depart on the 22d Tishri for Alexandria," said Aziel, glancing with unusual attention towards Miriam. "My father desires," he added, perceiving with pleasure that her color deepened, and her eyes grew sad, betokening that she was not indifferent to his actions, "that I should have a year's study at Alexandria and at Athens, and I shall then proceed to Rome."

"My father will miss thy presence in our household greatly," said Miriam, endeavoring to assume a calm manner, which did not entirely conceal her evident regrets.

"Why dost thou not say we shall all miss him, Miriam?" interjected Jessica, being at that more unconscious age when maidens can be frank, and not be, peradventure, misunderstood, as displaying too forward an address. "I shall miss thee, Aziel, whether Miriam does or not. Who will gather my flowers, train my birds, untangle my vexing skeins of flax, or bring the news of the latest pretty pet offered in the market-place?"

"I thank thee, Jessica. I did not know that I was accounted by thee as such a very useful personage," answered Aziel, tossing an apricot to the bright young girl, but looking meantime at Miriam.

"Yea, we shall all miss thee, Aziel," said Miriam, thus challenged by her sportive sister, and seemingly nothing loath to have this fitting opportunity to express her personal regrets. As Jewish youth and maiden, it would not have been becoming that warmer interest should be manifested between them, until Ananus, Miriam's father, had spoken either to the young man or to his father.
“Well, Master Aziel,” said Rachel, “no doubt thou wilt see strange things at Rome. I would fear much for thee, but that thou art a Christian, and that faith guards our souls from many worldly dangers. Mayest thou never hesitate to avow thy faith, Aziel, for I am sure the help of the Christ will be with thee, to keep thee from all harm; or, if needs be, to give thee the courage to suffer for His sake.”

“May the Christ guard also this household!” said Aziel, as he rose to depart. “Miriam, trust the Nazarene, for He is indeed the Divine Messiah promised to our people,” continued the youth, with reverent voice. “I have a fear that this nation must suffer much tribulation, and, perchance, Jerusalem shall be destroyed, as the Crucified One did foretell; for even the Holy Temple was marked by the power of God, when the sacred veil was rent before the Holy of Holies, when the Divine One hung upon the Cross. That rent veil is a solemn witness to me of the Divinity of the Nazarene. Perchance the Temple also must fall in token of the will of God, that we should worship the Christ, and rely no longer on the ceremonials of the Jewish worship.”

“I believe with thee, Aziel,” responded Miriam, giving him a parting glance of more than friendly interest; for his words had so moved her soul that she laid aside for a moment her usual reserve. “Perchance we also may be called upon to suffer for the Christian faith.”

“Should that day come, Miriam, may the power of the Crucified One sustain us!” said Aziel, with deep emotion.

“Call the Nazarene no longer the Crucified One, but the Risen Lord!” exclaimed Rachel; “for I am as confident of His Resurrection as I am of the miracle I beheld Him perform at the tomb of Lazarus. Moreover, my mother
met the women coming from the empty sepulchre after
they had seen the angel who declared the Lord was risen;
and I myself have talked with one of the disciples who
was among those gathered in that room when Christ
appeared in the midst of them, and said, 'Peace be unto
you!'"

"I doubt not His resurrection," rejoined Aziel, "for that
is to my mind the great proof of His Divinity. I hope
yet to question Paul or Peter on this subject. But I do
bid thee farewell, Miriam," he continued; "the hour for
evening service in the Temple draws nigh. To the
'Shalôm' of the Talmuds I will add the Christian bene-
diction, 'May the Lord be with thee! The grace of
our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit!' And so,
farewell!"

After these parting words, Aziel returned to the Temple;
and Miriam sat for a time in silence, while Jessica and
Rachel accompanied Aziel to the gate. Miriam preferred
to be alone, as she realized for the first time how much
the companionship of Aziel had been to her through the
years of her past life; and to her own heart she acknowl-
edged, with tears and sighs, the pain this absence would
bring to her.
CHAPTER IV.

RAMBLES IN ROME IN THE FIRST CENTURY. — AZIEL VISITS ROME. — AZIEL AND PLACIDUS AMIDST THE TEMPLES OF THE IMPERIAL CITY. — THE ROMAN FORUM.

It was the year of our Lord, 66. After spending a year in Alexandria, Aziel had now been for several months in Athens.

In the Augustan era, Athens might still claim to be the most illustrious city in the world. Although her political power had been overthrown three hundred years before, her conquerors had respected her sacred site, and many rulers had contributed to the adornment of her temples, the erection of magnificent edifices, and the replanting of those famous groves, partly laid waste during the siege of Sulla.

Antiochus Epiphanes, Attalus, King of Pergamus, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Julius and Augustus, Agrippa and Appius Claudius, all aided in the embellishment of the “City of Minerva.”

The imposing Temple of Zeus Olympius, the statues adorning the walls of the Acropolis, the Groves of Academus, the portico dedicated to Minerva, with costly gymnasiaums and splendid fanes, testified to the munificence of her conquerors.

Though the walls of Athens lay in ruins, her fame and glory were still her irresistible defence, and the magic wand of the Muses her royal sceptre of power, before
which even her foreign foes bowed in admiring deference. None were more enthusiastic worshippers at her classic shrine than the sons of her Italian conquerors.

In the summer days of this year, Aziel turned his face towards Rome.

Before the conquests of Cæsar and Pompey, the map of the Empire was little more than a chart of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Cicero had said, regarding the states and colonies of Greece throughout the world, “They are a fringe on the skirts of barbarism.” And Plato had written: “We, who dwell from the Phasis to the Pillars of Hercules, inhabit only a small portion of the earth, in which we have settled round the sea, like ants and frogs around a marsh;” for the Roman power had not penetrated far beyond sight of the friendly waves of the Mediterranean, until the conquest of Gaul, Spain, and Lesser Asia.

The consolidation of the Roman Empire over the several coasts of the Mediterranean made this sea the common highway of all civilized nations; and a summer day’s sail of twenty-four hours was often 1,300 stadia, or 162 Roman miles.

Vessels sometimes reached the coast of Africa from the mouth of the Tiber in two days, Massilia in three, Tarrace in four, and the Pillars of Hercules in seven. From Puteoli, the transit to Alexandria, with moderate winds, had been accomplished in nine days. But only in the spring and summer months was the navigation of the Mediterranean thus easy and rapid.

From Alexandria came the corn-fleets of Egypt. From India the products were conveyed direct from the mouth of the Indus, and the coast of Malabar, to the ports of Cleopatris or Berenice, taking advantage of the periodical
trade-winds. Ivory and tortoise-shell, fabrics of silk and cotton, pearls and diamonds, gums and spices, were the precious freights brought from India and exchanged for gold and silver, to the amount of 100,000,000 sesterces, or 800,000 pounds yearly. To these were added the papyrus from the Nile, woollens from Miletus and Laodicea, Asiatic and Greek wines, gold and silver from the Spanish mines, wild animals from Africa, and marbles from the choicest quarries of Greece and Asia.

In this year of our Lord, 66, Rome was in the zenith of her glory. She was the proud mistress of the world, and the Roman Campagna was then as Pliny describes it: —

"Its fertile plains, sunny hills, healthy woods, thick groves, rich varieties of trees, breezy mountains, fertility in fruits, vines, and olives; its noble flocks of sheep, and abundant herds of cattle; its numerous lakes, and wealth of rivers and streams flowing in upon its many seaports in whose lap the commerce of the world lies: such is the happy and beautiful amenity of the Campagna, that it seems to be the work of a rejoicing nature."

And the city itself was no less attractive than the smiling landscape surrounding it. Magnificent temples, spacious Forums, gorgeous palaces, glittering circuses, enormous amphitheatres, triumphal arches, imperial statues, Grecian, Roman, Oriental, and barbaric grandeur, all met in this marvellous spot.

It was, in truth, the centre of the world's traffic. Every one rushed to Rome. Those engaged in the arts and sciences, those who desired to appeal to Cæsar for the adjustment of personal or family rights, those who would fawn and flatter those in power, those who desired to seek fortunes through legitimate avenues of trade, as well as those who cared only for the coveted gold, even though it
might be seized through adventure and fraud, those who wished to revel in pleasures and luxuries,—all went to Rome, where one met on the streets the highly cultured Greek, the uneducated provincial, the wealthy Alexandrian corn-merchant, the half savage African, who had brought to Rome royal lions for the gladiatorial combats to honor the triumph of a Cæsar; or one saw the wily Syrian selling amulets and charms, or the proud Gaul, exulting in his newly secured rights of Roman citizenship, and the ever present Jew, intent on his silver shekels. The picturesque Hindoo, the then barbaric German, and the Saxon-haired Briton were also there, while the Illyrian and Thracian soldier, the Arab archer, and the members of the Prætorian Guards, forced to bear the Roman eagles in the wars, might often be seen mingling with the surging crowds. The conquests of Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey had extended the dominion of the Romans over the then known world; and Roman and Grecian orators and writers were boastful in asserting her imperial sway.

The Greeks, seeking to excuse their own defeat, lauded the power and glory of their conquerors, and Roman orators were swift to repeat the eulogistic strains; for Cicero declared "that the whole globe was shaken by the convulsion of the civil wars;" and though Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, and Propertius touched this tempting theme with moderation, the facetious Ovid laid aside all reserve of expression, and in asserting the irresistible power of Rome, defied Jove himself to descry, from his Olympian Mount, any object upon this terrestrial sphere which was not Roman; while Seneca declared that if Rome did not possess the entire world, she at least was mistress of all realms worth having.

The long period of peace following the exhausting wars
of Germanicus, enabled the inhabitants of the Roman provinces to develop their resources, and to enlarge and adorn their cities. Splendid edifices, temples, theatres, schools, aqueducts, and gymnasiums were rapidly reared, while military posts were converted into commercial stations, where the wine and oil, gold and silver of Spain and Gaul, were exchanged for the fur and amber of the German provinces.

At the time of our story, there were in Rome two men of wide diversity of character,—Nero, disgracing his royal crown, and Paul of Tarsus, transforming his Mamertine prison-cell into a throne of glory: the one the incarnation of evil, the other the manifestation of the glorious power of a spiritual inspiration; the one the impersonation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the other the sublime illustration of the Light, the Truth, and the Spirit.

From the Forum, where the Emperor Augustus had erected a golden milestone, a network of magnificent highways spread throughout the vast Roman empire, connecting the conquered world with the Imperial City.

Over these numerous ways, spreading through Spain, France, Italy, and from the green banks of the Nile to the blue waters of the Danube, Roman legions marched with their victorious eagles, while swift couriers bore the edicts of the Emperors, and vast caravans carried the commerce of the world.

On these roads Paul had made his missionary tours through Syria, Cilicia, Phrygia, Galatia, Macedonia, and Greece. The churches in Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome had already been founded, while the believers in Jerusalem, at this time, held a prominent place among the early Christian churches.
Judaism and heathenism were skilful and active foes, waging hot warfare against Christianity. Roman victors, Grecian stoics, Jewish ritualists, Alexandrian philosophers, and Oriental dreamers combined against the meek and lowly messengers of the much despised Gospel, which inculcated the strange doctrine of a universal love. "Wit, sarcasm, reverence for the past, the pride of human reason, the cunning of covetousness, the accumulated resources of human wisdom and human depravity, were all marshalled against Christianity."

The Christians had suffered bitter persecutions. The hand refuses to describe, and the mind shrinks back in horror from the pictures which the imagination suggests of the diabolical orgies of Nero's spectacular scenes of enforced Christian martyrdom. The Roman populace invited to Nero's gardens were furnished with brutal exhibitions of human cruelty, and exquisitely designed acmes of mental and physical torture. For here Nero, "The Beast from the Abyss," as he was symbolized by John, in the Apocalypse of Revelations, the infamous anti-Christ, calling himself a god, drove his chariot, with fiendish delight, by the glare of that awful illumination, when he made human torches of hundreds of Christians, by wrapping them in pitchy garments, and burning them at the stake; while, in a neighboring amphitheatre, he had prepared for twenty thousand spectators the bloody spectacle of witnessing Christian men, women, and children being torn to pieces by wild beasts; and Paul was soon to be beheaded by the order of this same emperor, while Peter would ere long suffer martyrdom upon the cross.

And yet the Roman Empire was to be the agency of advancing the Christian Church; for here, for the first
time, all the nations of the world became united. Rome’s geographical position made her the fitting centre of all the cultivated people of that time. From this point, as another has said: ¹ "The world was conquered and controlled. For this were the Romans endowed. They were not a people of peace, but of war; not a nation of thinkers, but of deeds; not rich in arts, but great in bravery and political sagacity, equipped with a rare power of assimilation, a marvellous gift for organization, and a strong instinct for legislation and government." Their empire, brought together by reckless violence, was constrained, by a Divine Providence, to advance the kingdom of Eternal Love.

Latin was the popular language in the Western provinces, and was known in Palestine and on the Nile. But the Greek tongue was lifted to the rank of a universal language; it was understood alike in the East and the West. This was a great factor in the extension of Christianity. A missionary activity like that of Paul was possible only in an empire like the Roman.

The Roman legions were established in Spain, Gaul, North Africa, Syria, on the Rhine and Danube, and in farther Britain; but in Greece, though Rome was the conqueror, she found herself also the conquered. By force she had subjugated the country externally; but internally the higher culture of the Greeks ruled through the superior power of the mind.

Through the universal intercourse and interchange of the Roman Empire, national characteristics lost their distinctive peculiarities. "The styles of art commingled; Grecian finish and Oriental massiveness met in the colossal

¹ The Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism, Dr. Gerhard Uhlhorn.
edifices of the Empire." The world has never before nor since been so rich in famous works of art. Not only Rome, but many of the provincial cities abounded in the finest specimens of both architectural and ornamental art. Exquisite works of sculpture and imposing edifices adorned many Roman colonial cities, and even among barbarous nations might be found imitations of works of Grecian art, the originals of which graced the palaces of the Cæsars in Rome.

All the utensils of daily life were fashioned after models of art, and in manufactures of earthenware in the countries bordering on the Rhine and Danube, Grecian patterns were faithfully copied, so that the entire environments of men's houses were permeated with the influence of Grecian art.

Culture tended to become universal. Numerous schools were founded. Books were widely diffused; and so speedily were copies made of them by slaves, who had acquired the skill of rapid writing, that scrolls of numerous works were as cheap as the modern books. Pliny expressed pleasure that his books were sold in Lyons. Public libraries were opened in Rome. The educated were expected to be well informed upon all subjects. Foreign plants and animals were acclimated in Roman gardens. Those who had not seen Athens and Alexandria, were scarcely recognized among persons of liberal education.

Thus, while the Roman eagles conquered the world, Grecian culture held the ascendancy over men's minds. Thus was originated the Græco-Roman culture, to which must be added the Oriental influence. "While the Roman spirit ruled in the domain of government and law, and the Greek in that of art and science, the Oriental impressed itself upon the religious life." Thus, until the founding
of the vast Roman Empire, comprising all nations and peoples, the thought of a universal religion would have been entirely unintelligible, and though still strange to the Roman of the age of the Emperors, it was no longer incomprehensible, for he beheld an empire formed of diverse nationalities; and in Rome all religious beliefs were tolerated. "The Universalism of the Roman Empire was the first step towards the Universalism of Christianity."

This general diffusion of art, though a progress as regards the world, by this general expansion of knowledge, made individual notoriety less prominent. "Neither a Sophocles nor a Phidias, neither a Pericles nor a Scipio, could then have arisen." But the world, passing out from its ancient narrowness of thought and life, became capable of understanding the universalism of Christianity. The Roman Empire, notwithstanding its universalism, was not able to produce from itself a Christian universalism; for it lacked the thought of humanity, and therefore failed to rightly cultivate and appreciate true national unity, which does not prevent diversity, but is only possible where the rights of humanity are upheld by a common Christianity.

It was on a bright summer morning that Aziel, having landed in Brundusium, was approaching Rome; for from whichever side of Italy one approached the city, he emerged from the defiles of an amphitheatre of hills, upon a wide, open plain, forming the Campagna, near the centre of which rose the Seven Hills,—the Palatine, the Aventine, the Capitoline, the Esquiline, the Quirinal, the Viminal, and the Cælian, to which may be added the extra-mural eminence of the Pincian. Of these hills, the Aventine alone was a distinct eminence separated from the others. The Palatine was connected with the Esquiline by the low ridge of the Velia, and the Capitoline was in
like manner attached to the northern extremity of the Quirinal, till severed by an artificial cutting a century after Augustus. The other hills were, in fact, merely tongues, or spurs, projecting inwards from a common base.

There were two main routes from the provinces to the Capitol, — the Appian Way, from Greece and Africa, and the Flaminian, from Gaul. The approach to the city was also indicated by the great aqueducts, the most imposing in their character of any of the Roman constructions. In the time of Augustus, seven aqueducts brought water from different sources to Rome. Some of these streams were conveyed underground in leaden pipes; others, like the Aqua Marcia, which was drawn from the Volscian mountains, was conducted on a succession of stone arches, for a distance of 7000 paces, to the Esquiline.

The famous Appian Way was begun b. c. 312, by Appius Claudius the Blind. It started at the Porta Capena and was crossed by the Appian Aqueduct, and thence was carried by Claudius over the Pontine marshes as far as Capua, and afterwards extended to Brundusium. Its breadth was such that two chariots might meet and pass upon it. It was paved with smooth and polished stones throughout, and the road was lined with temples, villas, and tombs, for it was against the Roman law to bury within the city walls.

The bases of the mountains around Rome were clustered with the villas and gardens of wealthy citizens. After passing Lanuvium, the Appian Way crossed a valley where was Aricia, an easy stage from the Imperial City. Ancient Rome had neither cupola nor bell-tower, nor any of the lofty spires which adorn the modern city. When viewed from the site of Aricia, it seemed a wide-spread collection of buildings, blended into an indiscriminate
mass; for the distance concealed the contrasts between the
tenements of the poor and the golden-roofed palaces,
marble colonnades, gorgeous baths, magnificent temples,
costly monuments, and imposing theatres, which a nearer
view spread out before the enchanted eye of the beholder.
From Aricia could be seen the blue Sabine mountains,
which walled in the Campagna, with Soracte in the dis-
tance; from thence the Campagna stretched round the base
of the Alban Hills, far across to the sea.

As one approached Rome by the Appian Way, "The
Queen," as it was proudly termed, of all Ways, the oldest
and longest and most frequented, that led to the Imperial
City from the south, the stranger was greatly impressed
by the wayside spectacle, characteristically Roman, of the
memorials of the dead. The sepulchres of twenty gener-
tions lined the highroad for many miles. Each patrician
family had its own mausoleum, where the ashes of its
departed members, and often of its slaves and freedmen,
reposed beneath a common roof. Marble columns, shaded
by funereal cypresses, guarding the approach to massive
tombs, met the eye on every side.

To traverse the Appian Way is a five days’ journey for a
good walker. Aziel, accompanied by the Roman soldier
Placidus, whom we saw in Jerusalem on the Day of Atone-
ment, and who had been sent to Rome on military affairs,
had arrived within five miles of the walls of the Imperial
City.

"What are these monuments I see here to the right?" asked Aziel.

"This is the famous plain where the Horatii decided the
fate of the young Republic," answered Placidus, who was
a native of Rome. "These are to commemorate the Roman
and Sabine champions who fell here."
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

As the young men approached the first milestone, as measured from the Servian gates, they passed under the Arch of Drusus, and the road thence descended a gentle slope into the hollow of the Aqua Crabra. Here the monuments of the dead were clustered more closely together.

"Whose are these sepulchres?" inquired Aziel. "I perceive that, like our custom in Jerusalem, ye Romans bury the dead without the city."

"These mausoleums are those of illustrious families," answered Placidus, pleased to enumerate the famous names of Rome's past heroes. "Here repose the ashes of the Scipios, the Furii, the Manilii, the Servilii, Calatini, and Marcelli. And hard by is the tomb where the ashes of the slaves of Augustus and Livia were placed under a common dome."

"I see a solitary tomb yonder," remarked Aziel, as the travellers advanced.

"Yea; that is the tomb of Horatia, slain by her patriot brother because she wept for her foreign lover. There, beside that rivulet, the Almo, on the southern slope of the Celian Hill, is the famous grotto of Egeria. That is the Valley of the Muses, and there is the Fountain of Egeria, where Numa Pompilius is described as having his mysterious meetings with the Nymph Egeria."

As the young men came nearer to the city gate, a temple crowned the eminence which fronted the Porta Capena, one of the most famous gates of the city.

"To whose honor was this building reared?" asked Aziel, evincing a growing interest with every step towards the Imperial City, of which he had heard so much; though, as a Jew, he could not acknowledge that any other city was to be compared with Jerusalem The Beautiful.

"That is the Temple of Mars," replied Placidus, "erected
during the Gallic war. From this spot the Roman knights are accustomed to ride to the Temple of Castor, in the Forum, on the anniversary of the Battle of Lake Regillus. On the Ides of Julius, these knights, clothed in their richest attire, crowned with olive wreaths, and wearing all their badges of honor, start from this Temple of Mars, ride through the Via Appia to the Sacra Via, and thence to the Temple of Castor, where costly sacrifices are made. It is one of our most gorgeous processions, next to the great triumphs of victorious generals. Still nearer to the gate, on the right side of the road,” Placidus continued, “thou beholdest the twin Temples of Honor and Virtue, erected by the great Marcellus after his conquest of Syracuse. He adorned these temples with the earliest spoils of foreign painting. It was from the steps of these temples that the Roman populace greeted Cicero upon his return from exile.”

Aziel and Placidus now entered the Porta Capena, a spot of much interest. This arch was continually dripping with the water of the aqueduct passing over it, and all who travelled by the Appian Way entered the city through this memorable gateway. Illustrious generals, at the head of their victorious legions, proudly bearing aloft Rome’s irresistible eagles, entering this ancient Porta, proceeded on their triumphal march through the city, usually taking the route between the Cælian and Palatine Hills, over the ridge known as the Velia, where afterwards stood the Arch of Titus, and thence descending by the Via Sacra into that centre of imperial power, the famous Forum. What the imposing Acropolis was to Athens, the Forum was to Rome. Surrounded by stately edifices, it contained the “Milliarium Aureum,” or golden milestone, to which all the highways of the known world led.
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

Although we have mentioned only Aziel and Placidus, they had not been solitary pedestrians along the Appian Way. As it was commonly the practice among the Romans to travel by carriages at night, there were not many vehicles on this great highway; but crowds of all nationalities, and from all climes, speaking all the known dialects of the world, were observed by Aziel with curious interest. As Jerusalem was also the centre of much traffic, this feature was not novel to Aziel, and did not divert his attention from the famous villas, palaces, and stately temples which surrounded him on all sides.

Aziel and Placidus had moved with the swaying multitudes, not between the Cælian and Palatine Hills, following the path of the victorious Cæsar, but had taken the course, though not the most direct one, which led through the Circus Maximus, which lay in the area between the Palatine and Aventine Hills. This superb circus, constructed by Tarquinius Drusus, had been extended by Julius Cæsar, who surrounded it with a canal ten feet deep, and as many broad, to protect the spectators from the chariots during the races.

Claudius rebuilt the carceres with marble, and gilded the metae, or goals. Two hundred and sixty thousand spectators could assemble within its enclosure.

In the Circus Maximus rose the flame-shaped obelisk, symbol of the sun, transplanted from Heliopolis, and placed here by the Emperor Augustus in honor of Apollo.

The Circus Maximus was a vast amphitheatre surrounded by three rows of seats called caveæ. A spina, or low wall, at each end of which were the metae, or goals, was erected in the centre of the area, enclosing the obelisk. At regular distances between the goals were columns supporting egg-shaped balls, termed ova, and dolphins, or delphinae.
One of these was put up for each circuit made in the race. The dolphinus and balls were each seven in number. The carceres, or stalls for horses and chariots, were at the extremity of the Circus, at the end forming a square, termed the Oppidum, from its external resemblance to a city having walls and towers. The Ædiles usually furnished the money for the expense of the games, and this was often so onerous that Cæsar was obliged to sell his Tiberine Villa to meet the great cost of the entertainments given to the populace during his ædileship. On account of the many myrtle-trees abounding in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine Hills, the vale was originally called Vallis Murcia, from an altar erected to the Dea Murcia (Venus).

At the western extremity stood the Temples of Ceres, Liber, and Libera. Near by was the famous ox-market, “Forum Boarium.” In the centre there stood a brazen bull, brought from Egina, and commemorating the story of the oxen of Geryon, left by Hercules to pasture on this site, and which afterwards were stolen by Cacus. Livy describes this place as a market for oxen. Near here stood the Temple of Fortune, and the Temple of Hercules Victor, erected by Pompey. Not far distant was the Arch of Janus, with its four equal sides and arches turned to the four points of the compass. It was ornamented with bas-reliefs. Those engaged in traffic in the Forum used this arch as a shelter from the sun and rain. On the left of the arch was an alley spanned by the arch of the celebrated Cloaca Maxima, the famous drain made by Tarquinius Priscus, fifth king of Rome, to dry the marshy land of the Velabrum. The Cloaca extended from the Forum to the Tiber. Pliny was filled with wonder, that after seven hundred years, it had withstood the earthquakes and inundations. Agrippa navigated its entire length in a boat.
On the right bank of the Tiber was the Temple of Vesta, supposed by some to have been the Æmilian Temple of Hercules, mentioned in the tenth book of Livy. It is known to have existed in the time of Vespasian, although it suffered injury in the fire, A. D. 64; it was surrounded by twenty graceful and slender Corinthian columns. It was in front of the Temple of Vesta that the body of Julius Cæsar was burned, and was nearly opposite to his own house, and the Julian Rostra.

Not far from this Temple stood the Temple of Fortuna, built by Servius Tullius, and rebuilt during the republic. It was surrounded by Doric pilasters covered with hard stucco, and supporting an entablature adorned with figures of children, oxen, and candelabra. The Roman matrons esteemed this goddess most highly, for she was supposed to have the power of concealing their personal imperfections from the eyes of men.

Not far away was the Pons Lapideus, built B. C. 142. It was then the only stone bridge in Rome. From this bridge was a fine view of the Temple of Vesta and the Arch of the Cloaca Maxima. It was from the Pons Lapideus that the body of the Emperor Heliogabalus was thrown into the Tiber.

On the west side of the Tiber was the "Trastevere," the "city across the Tiber," — that portion of Rome which is most unchanged from mediæval times, whose narrow streets are overlooked by many ancient towers, Gothic windows, and curious fragments of sculpture.

The Porta Carmentalis was connected with the Forum by the Vicus Jugarius. It was by this route that the Fabii went forth to meet their doom in the valley of the Cremera.

Having passed through the Circus Maximus, and around
the northwestern slope of the Palatine Hill, by way of the Via Nova, Aziel and Placidus had reached that part of the Via Sacra from which can be had the finest view of the Forum and Capitoline Hill. They stood at the highest point of the road, where the Arch of Titus was afterwards erected, and the Capitol, with all its glories, suddenly burst upon their view.

The magnificent Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus crowns the Capitoline Hill. It stands now before Aziel and Placidus, with its columns of Pentelic marble, brought by Sulla from the Temple of Jupiter Olympius at Athens. But it is destined soon to be laid in ruins by the soldiers of Vitellius, to be afterwards rebuilt by Vespasian, to celebrate the triumph of himself and Titus over Jerusalem.

Up the stone steps of this temple Claudius had climbed on his knees, as an act of humility in the eyes of Rome, over which empire he had reluctantly consented to reign after the assassination of his nephew, Caligula. This same Cæsar had received the name Caligula as a title given him by the Roman soldiers, when in his infancy he had been arrayed in military uniform, and was particularly proud of his "little boots," which is the meaning of the word Caligula. This Emperor was himself prone to give odd names to those about him in his youth, and had called the Empress Livia "Ulysses in petticoats."

"Truly, this Rome is full of temples," said Aziel. "In Jerusalem we have but one, where all must worship."

"Yea, Rome is indeed a Babel of religions," answered Placidus; "the gods of the known earth are gathered here in this chieftest city of the world. Every one may worship his own god. The Athenians can worship their Athene in Rome; the Syrians, their Syrian goddess; and ye Jews, your Jehovah. The temples of the gods may be
found in all places, cities, suburbs, and provinces of the Roman Empire. 'Our country is so peopled with gods,' says Petronius, 'that it is easier to find a god than a man.'"

"Religion is a political adjunct, is it not?"

"Yea. In Rome the State is everything; therefore religion is interwoven with public life in a great degree. Cicero has said, 'Our ancestors were never wiser, never more inspired by the gods, than when they determined that the same persons should preside over the rites and ceremonies of religion and the government of the State.' The priest, who holds so high a rank in Jerusalem and the East, is in Rome completely overshadowed by the statesman. Our consuls offered sacrifices, and our emperors officiate as high priests. In the time of the Republic, the State was represented by the Capitoline Jupiter. Now that the emperors have become the representatives of the State, the transition has become easy for the emperors to have themselves proclaimed as gods. Nero counts himself a god, and dares to place his own image among the statues of the gods."

"What thinkest thou of this Nero?"

"Hist, man! remember we are in a public place, where there are many eavesdroppers. The emperors hold their office by aid of delators, or false accusers of their enemies, and no man's neck is safe."

"Believest thou in the Roman faith?"

"Verily; it were hard indeed to say in what the Roman faith consists," replied Placidus. "The Roman religion consists not of articles of faith, but of ceremonies, which are little more than dead forms. The minds of the educated have become atheistic or nihilistic. But though there is little faith in the gods, every important event is
celebrated with religious services. No act of the State is performed without consulting numerous oracles, watching omens, scanning of the stars and winds, and noting the flying of a bird, or the falling of a stone. Roman emperors build sanctuaries for Egypt's Isis, and other gods, side by side with the Temples of Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta. Noble Roman ladies walk in solemn processions, shaking the costly golden sistra, and clad in linen robes, with bare feet. As a sign of penitence, they spend nights of watching in the Temples of Isis, hoping thereby to obtain the favor of the goddess. Even the sacred treasures of the Palladium, and the eternal fire, are borne into the recently erected temple of an obscure god, brought from some far-off place in the East; for the Romans have so lost faith in their old gods, that they worship each new deity with the hope that peradventure they may obtain the help for which they have sought heretofore in vain. Nero himself holds all religious rites in contempt, save those of the Syrian goddess, who is supposed to be Semiramis deified. But of late, Caesar has abandoned her worship for the image of an obscure little plebeian girl, whose effigy he received as an amulet against plots; and having immediately after discovered a conspiracy against himself, he now worships his imaginary protectress as the greatest among the gods, offering at her shrine three sacrifices daily."

"How many gods are there in Rome?"

"There are gods for everything," replied Placidus. "The goddess Lucina watches over the birth of a child, at which time candles are lighted in honor of the goddess Candelifera; Rumina attends to the nursing of the child; Nundina is invoked on the ninth day, when the babe is named; Potina and Educa look after its food and drink; Statina directs its first steps, and Abeona teaches it to walk."
Farinus whispers to it the first word it lisps, and Locutinus aids it to talk; Cunina wards off evils from the cradle. Forculus is the god of the door, Limentinus god of the threshold, and Cardea a goddess of hinges. Caeculus is the god for the blind, Orbana a goddess for the childless. Even the brothels and cook-shops and prisons have their gods. Epona, the goddess of horses, looks down from a niche in the rafter into the stable; Neptune guards the ships; Mercury is implored for successful bargains; and sacrifices are made to Ceres, goddess of the harvest, while a forest is never felled until prayer has been offered to the unknown gods, who, perchance, may inhabit it.”

“Surely it requires a good memory to forget none of these myriad gods,” said Aziel.

“By Jupiter himself, in troth it does!” replied Placidus. “The easiest way is to imagine a god everywhere, and in everything, and render homage to every tree beside the path, every shrub upon the hillside, and every object in the city. And then there are our gods of rank; for though Rome receives within her bounds the gods of every conquered nation, and bids them welcome, she yet reserves the right of precedence for her own deities. But now Olympian and Roman gods are interchangeable; and Zeus and Jupiter, Here and Juno, are alike worshipped. The Roman bargains with his gods — so many prayers, so much reward.”

“We are taught to pray to Jehovah, irrespective of any reward,” rejoined Aziel, astonished by these revelations of Rome’s many religions; “for all men have sinned, and it is only of God’s great mercy that we may hope for blessing.”

“My calling being that of war, not of religion,” said Placidus, “I have made no great study of the subject. I
perceive that the Orientals degrade their deities to the level of nature; and that the Greeks idealize nature through their gods; and that the Romans buy and sell their prayers and sacrifices, as they would barter for corn or gold. I verily think that the Nazarene ye Jews put to death as an impostor, was more godlike than either Roman, Grecian, or Oriental deities."

"And so think I," assented Aziel; "I believe Jehovah to be the One True, Almighty God, and that Jesus Christ was indeed His Divine Son."

"Thou art a Christian, then?"

"In my belief I am a Christian, though I am not yet identified with that body of believers."

"Peradventure persecution, and wild beasts, and fiery illuminations of living torches have deterred thee from avowing thy faith?"

"Nay, verily; it is not cowardice, but the command of my father, who is a strict Pharisee of the Pharisees, that has prevented me," replied Aziel, with ardent. "Persecutions shall not make me flinch when I am free to declare my faith," he continued, with reverent fervor.

"Well, my friend, I do like thee much, Jew though thou art, and I a Roman born; but I would give thee warning not to select Rome as the place of thy Christian avowal, unless thou dost thirst much for a speedy trial of the pangs of persecution; for Nero has given recent signs of novel inventions for the torture of those professing that faith. But to be frank with thee, I also have a leaning towards that faith, and shrink not to make public this fact; but wait, not from cowardice, for I am a Roman soldier who knows no fear, and would welcome even death, if glory led that way; but I tarry in this avowal because I do not wholly know the truth. If thy Jehovah is indeed
God, and if the Nazarene was in truth His Divine Son, peradventure some sign will be sent me to verify the fact."

"Thou lookest for miracles without," responded Aziel, "but the power of the Gospel is manifested within the soul."

"My father, who was the Centurion at the Cross," rejoined Placidus, "declared the Crucified One to be the Son of God, and died believing in the Nazarene; and I would fain lend the service of my arm in Christian warfare, but it appears that these believers do not fight for their faith, but employ prayers instead of swords in defence of the truths taught by the Nazarene."

"If reports be true," declared Aziel, "there is even now in this Rome, proud of its power, and ruled by tyrant emperors, a population unheeded, unreckoned, thought of but vaguely, and held in contempt as something of little strength; and yet this seemingly invisible band is strong-hearted enough, nerved to suffer and to die, if needs be, and has resolution, numbers, and physical force sufficient to hurl their oppressors from the throne of the world; but that they deem it their duty to 'kiss the rod, to love their enemies, to bless those who curse them, and to submit, for their Redeemer's sake, to the powers that be.'"

"Perchance thou mayest be right," ejaculated Placidus. "I was in Rome during that persecution of the Christians, less than two years ago; and neither wild beasts, nor fiery flames, nor Roman swords, nor butchery which would make even a Roman soldier shudder, inured as he is to scenes of bloodshed, could force these Christians to deny their faith. I asked then, if these should take the sword, what Roman legion could withstand their bravery? I wondered then why they fought not for their lives; but, as
thou sayest, the Nazarene forbade the sword and taught them love."

"Yea, verily, this wonderful power of love which the Nazarene imparts to his followers, is to me one of the great signs of His Divinity," exclaimed Aziel. "What soldiers of Pompey, or of Cæsar, would thus die for them, as the Christian calmly suffers martyrdom for Christ? What spirit of patriotism ever so held the bands of Roman legions, as this power of love unites these bands of Christians? What other god ever ruled the minds and souls of men, as the Divine Christ rules the hearts of His disciples? This dominion of the soul is a vaster realm than the Roman Empire, and will yet, methinks, extend over the known world, and countries yet undiscovered."

"But ye Jews already worshipped the Father of this Divine Son as Jehovah; how did thy nation come to reject the Nazarene, if He be in truth the Son of that same Jehovah?"

"It was because of the blindness of my people," affirmed Aziel; "because they did not rightly interpret the prophecies of the coming Messiah, foretold in the Law and the Prophets. They looked for an earthly King, who should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and perceived not that the Kingdom of the Christ was to be a spiritual kingdom in the souls of men. My people," he continued, "though blessed with the knowledge that Jehovah, the Almighty and Perfect God, who changeth not, is the King of all the earth, Creator of the universe, and Lord of all, had, nevertheless, through disregard of the eternal attributes of their God, sunk into depths of unrighteousness. They had grievously rebelled against His rule of truth and justice; and while thus living in a state of antagonism to the Divine Will, heartlessly and superstitiously worship-
ping the God of their fathers, how could they recognize their Messiah, or form any higher conception than that their expected King would be a man of sovereign will and imperious passions like their own, endowed with almighty power to crush out all other nations of the earth? And when Jesus of Nazareth came, meek and lowly of heart, going about doing good among the poor, receiving the very outcasts of misery, and denouncing none but the self-righteous Pharisees, it was little wonder that such a people as the Jews had become, failed to recognize their promised Messiah."

"I would be pleased to learn more of this matter," said Placidus, "but the hour of noon draws nigh, and I have business in the Forum before that hour; for in Rome all matters pertaining to trade, commerce, or politics, cease at mid-day, and often business transacted after the shadow of the sun-dial denotes the passing of the sun beyond the meridian, has been held as illegal in the Roman courts."

Whereupon Aziel and Placidus, who had been standing for a time upon the Via Sacra, gazing upon the splendid scene spread out before them, resumed their walk towards the Forum. Many people had passed and repassed, as they lingered, but in their earnest talk they had noted them not. Now a Roman soldier, approaching Placidus, exclaimed, —

"Hail, Placidus! Dost thou keep company with the dog of a Jew? Methinks thy stay in Palestine has vitiated thy Roman manners."

Upon hearing himself called a dog, Aziel had at first evinced his ire by flushed cheeks and angry eyes; but quickly remembering that, were the place Jerusalem, his countrymen would have probably asked why he kept company with a dog of a Roman, he turned to Placidus, who
had not deigned to reply to the rude greeting of his acquaintance, and asked him concerning the temple which stood upon the left of the way.

"That is the Temple of Castor, of which I spoke to thee when we passed the Temple of Mars, without the gate. Just beyond is the Basilica Julia, begun by Julius Cæsar. You see there, at the corner of this Basilica, the Arch of Tiberius, erected A.D. 16, in commemoration of the recovery by Germanicus of the military ensigns lost by Varus. The arch spans the Vicus Jugarius, leading into the Sacra Via and the Forum at this spot. This part of the Forum is now set apart by the demagogues for their harangues, and you perceive the crowd already gathering round yonder rostrum. Some young orator is about to try his powers."

"I believe ye make much of oratory in Rome, is it not so?"

"Yea, much of oratory, not always so much of choice of theme," replied Placidus; for, being a soldier, he rather treated with contempt the persuasion of words, instead of swords. "Behold yonder stripling!" he continued; "indeed he has learned his lesson well at the schools of the Rhetoricians, though it is evident that but a few years have passed since he laid aside his toga prætexta for the toga virilis of manhood. It matters not whether the debate were only moonshine; there are rules for an arrangement of the hair, management of the voice and gestures, while the locks must be carefully coifed. Minute directions are given for the use of the handkerchief; the steps which the orator shall take to the right or the left are numbered; he must rest so many moments on each foot alternately; he must advance one so many inches before the other; his elbow must not be raised above a certain angle; his fingers
may be ornamented with rings, but they must not be too many, nor too large; and in elevating his hand to exhibit his jewels, he must take care not to disarrange his head-dress. Every emotion has its appropriate gesture; in short, these young orators care little what they say, but lay great stress on how they say it; and do, forsooth, prate mere folly with so sonorous a voice and impassioned manner, that the crowds, overawed by their grandiloquence, listen to their bombastic harangues, and deem them weighty wisdom. And perchance a mere stripling, be it so that his declamation has been well schooled, may be able to sway the verdict of the crowd against the pleading of some aged and learned man, who has not his tricks of voice and manner."

"Justice is, then, ill-administered at Rome?"

"Our laws are well enough; indeed, the Romans excel in making laws, — laws so admirable that they shall, forsooth, be models for the coming nations; but when it comes to justice — well, under Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, the people have ceased to look for justice."

Of all the public places in the Imperial City, the Roman Forum was alone designed with any approach to regularity. The open space within the Forum was three hundred yards in length, the width varying from fifty to one hundred yards. This area was enclosed by smoothly paved roads especially intended for processions. Magnificent temples and public edifices adorned the outer edge of these roads as they approached the bases of the surrounding hills. The Forum lay at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, upon which the famous Temple of Jupiter was erected. On the opposite height the Temple of Julius stood. The Sacra Via, descending from the Velia, under the Arch of Fabius, skirted the Forum on the right, and was bordered
by imposing buildings and statues, among which were the Temple of the Penates, the Temples of Romulus and Remus, and the hall of Paullus Àemilius. The Shrine of Vesta, where the sacred fire was kept ever burning, and the Temple of the twin gods, Castor and Pollux, with the Basilica of Julius Cæsar, stood upon the left. This Sacra Via, passing before the Temples of Concord and Saturn, ascended by a gradual slope to the Capitol, the road being ornamented with lines of stately columns surmounted by statues of gods and emperors.

The Temple of Concord was founded by Camillus, in memory of the peace made between the Senate and the Commons, when the office of Consul was opened to the plebeian order. In the Temple of Saturn were deposited the state treasures under the guardianship of the god Saturnus,—a deity revered as a more just god than even Jupiter. The one portion of the Forum more elevated than the other, and called the Comitium, was originally the place of honor assigned to the Populus as distinguished from the Plebs. But the Comitium soon lost its political significance, and though the senators transacted their affairs in halls and temples, the mighty multitude of the Roman people occupied the entire space included in the Forum, between the Sacra Via and the Via Nova, and crowded, without distinction of place, around the orator in the "Political pulpit."

As Aziel and Placidus drew nearer the Rostrum, Placidus remarked,—

"It was in this spot that the head of Cicero was brought to Antony, while seated in the Forum, administering justice. By the command of Antony, the head of Cicero was nailed to this Rostrum, and left to moulder there. These Roman rulers like not those who speak too plainly."
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Tiberius banished Ovid to Tomi; and only last year Nero forced his former tutor, the learned and aged Seneca, to kill himself. Such is the justice meted out by the Caesars! But my business takes me to the quarters of the Praetorian Guard, on the Palatine,” continued Placidus. “As the Emperor is Praetor, or commander-in-chief of all the troops, the Praetorium is connected with the palace of the Caesars. Meet me there after the mid-day siesta, and I will show you Nero’s famous Golden House. Though but two years ago occurred that terrible conflagration, so rapid has been the work of rebuilding, that nearly all the quarters of Rome demolished by the fire have arisen in new glory, and such temples as were injured have been reconstructed according to the original plans, so that the new appear as the old. In two years more no trace of the fire will be shown. Nero has a passion for building, and his demands for money to reconstruct Rome, which rumor says he intends to call Neropolis, are unceasing.”

“How is he regarded by the Romans?”

“With a general odium, for his brutal murders, and for his atrocious orgies, which even in immoral Rome make the citizens blush for very shame, and for his exorbitant extravagance, which is impoverishing the Empire. His avarice and cruelty, luxury, lewdness, and vanity, have exceeded all bounds, and he is even now execrated as the Monster of the World. He has no ambition to extend the frontiers of the Empire. Only twice has he planned a foreign expedition,—one to Alexandria, abandoned on the eve of starting, being deterred by supposed evil omens, and he now proposes a journey to Greece, the avowed object of this expedition into Achaia being mainly to exhibit his boasted musical powers, and to take part in the Olympic games; for he prides himself more on the prizes which are
perforce adjudged to him, than his position as Emperor of Rome. Indeed, he will himself perform in the royal theatre this very afternoon. If so be thou dost meet me in time, we may behold him on the stage, of which he is so fond that he guards carefully his much-prized voice, lest it be injured, and has always at his side a 'voice-master,' to warn him if he speaks too much or too boisterously, that he strain not his delicate vocal organs. When he thinks fit to appear in our midst, he never addresses the soldiers himself, but his messages to us are delivered for him. Verily, the Roman soldiers, remembering the wars of Pompey and of Julius Cæsar, despise an emperor who aims only to be thought a play-actor and a tragic singer."

"As I have business in the Ghetto of the Jews, I will depart thither, and rejoin thee at the time appointed," replied Aziel, taking leave of the kindly Roman soldier, who added in parting, —

"It were better that thou shouldst leave that purple mantle of thine in the Ghetto, for Nero has forbidden the use of the colors of amethyst and Tyrian purple, which he reserves for himself alone. And but the other day, when singing in the theatre, and observing a lady dressed in the prohibited color, he pointed her out to his procurators. She was dragged from her seat, stripped of her robes, and afterwards deprived of her property."

"I thank thee for thy warning," responded Aziel, "and while in Rome, will wear robes of other tints."

"Forsooth, I would like thee in the red mantle of the warrior, and think the golden helmet and this golden armor would suit well with thy golden locks; though, in that case, they must be sacrificed as well as the purple mantle, for the Romans wear not thy woman's hair; but I must allow it well becomes thee. The Jews have not
often eyes of blue and locks of gold, but rather, swarthy skin, coarser hair, and black in color."

"As a Christian, I may not wear the red mantle of war," rejoined Aziel; "though, as affairs threaten in Jerusalem, I may be called thither to bear arms. The Jewish nation has been valiant in past times in warfare, and the armies of Jehovah have conquered many heathen nations. But the Gospel teacheth peace, not war; and the Nazarene proclaimed love, and not the sword."

Here the young men parted, Aziel for the Ghetto, and Placidus, the soldier, for the Prætorian camp upon the Palatine.
CHAPTER V.

THE GHETTO. — THE PALATINE PALACES OF THE CAESARS.
— NERO’S GOLDEN HOUSE. — NERO IN THE THEATRE POMPEIUS.

The Ghetto, or Vicus Judæorum, as it was first called, stood on the east bank of the Tiber, and was afterwards enclosed in walls, reaching from the Ponte Quattro Capi to the Piazza del Pianto, or “Place of Weeping.” Ghetto, derived from the Hebrew word Chat, signified broken, destroyed, shaven, cut down, cast off, abandoned. The first Jewish slaves were brought to Rome by Pompey the Great, after his conquest of Jerusalem. He had indeed profaned the Temple by entering into the Holy of Holies, yet had respect for the sacred articles he found there, and commanded that the Temple be purified after this desecration, and the Temple service be restored. The treasures of the Temple were not plundered by Pompey, but afterwards by Crassus.

Since that time many of the Jews had lived in wealth at Rome, and their princes, Herod and Agrippa, had been received with kindness by the Roman emperors, and treated with royal distinction in the Palace of the Caesars.

In imperial times, though the chief Jewish settlement in Rome was in the Ghetto, the Jews were not forced to confine themselves to that site, and there was a Jewish colony in the patrician quarters of the Trastevere, where, according to tradition, Saint Peter dwelt with Aquila and
Priscilla, on the slopes of the Aventine, during part of his stay in Rome.

Julius Cæsar, Augustus, and Tiberius treated the Jews with kindness; but Caligula, being incensed because they would not yield to him divine honors, and had successfully resisted an attempt to place his statue in the Holy of Holies, in the Temple at Jerusalem, treated them with harshness. Nero’s wrath seemed not so much kindled against the Jews as against the Christians.

Opposite to the gate of the Ghetto, near the Ponte Quattro Capi, a converted Jew afterwards erected a Christian church, with a painting of the crucifixion on its outside wall, upon which every Jew must look as he came out of the Ghetto; and underneath the painting was an inscription in Hebrew and Latin,—

“All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

Aziel, having entered the Ghetto, walked down the Fiumara, the street lying lowest, and nearest the Tiber, and thence past a street corner called Argumille, meaning “unleavened bread.” Here he was accosted by a Jewish shop-keeper, the owner of one of the many little shops in the Ghetto, devoted to the odds and ends of all the known articles of merchandise. Everything known to those times could be purchased in the Ghetto,—precious stones, furniture of every description, rich embroideries from the Orient, striped stuffs from Spain, furs from the Baltic, tapestries from Persia, gold fringes, scraps of Eastern silks,—red, blue, orange, yellow, black, white, scarlet, and purple bits and patches; in short, all the varied rubbish of the world. From this mass of incongruous heaps might be brought, peradventure, a gem of priceless value,
some fabric of costly tapestry, or marvellous scrap of
golden tissue; and one could learn from the voluble seller
the history of every fashion from the time of Solomon,
and perchance procure a bit of attire which had really
adorned the persons of Romulus, Scipio Africanus, Han-
nibal, Augustus, Pericles, or Cleopatra.

But as Aziel cared naught for such things, he passed
hurriedly through this quarter of the Ghetto to the house
of one of the wealthy Roman Jews. We will not now fol-
low him, as our present interest lies in other parts of Rome.

The mid-day siesta was over, and the Roman citizens
now came forth, not for business, but for pleasure. The
discontent occasioned by Nero’s brutality and monstrous
iniquities was every day growing more intense; as yet it
was as an undertone rapidly swelling.

In Nero’s youth even the learned Seneca had deigned to
flatter him extravagantly; and upon the death of Claudius,
and the accession of Nero to the throne, even the grave
Seneca had sung thus gayly of his former pupil. After a
scornful satire upon the dead Claudius, that his eulogy of
Nero might be all the greater, Seneca declared:—

“At last, the life-thread of the stolid Claudius had been
severed by the fatal shears; but Lachesis, at that moment,
had taken in her hands another skein of dazzling white-
ness, and as it glided nimbly through her fingers, the com-
mon wool of life was changed into a precious tissue,—
a golden age untwined from the spindle. The Sisters ply
their work in gladness, and glory in their blessed task;
and far, far away stretches the glittering thread, beyond
the years of Nestor and Tithonus. Phœbus stands by
their side, and sings to them as they spin,—Phœbus, the
god of song and the god of prophecy: ‘Stay not, oh, stay
not, gentle sisters! he shall transcend the limits of human
life; he shall be like me in face, like me in beauty;
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neither in song nor in eloquence behind me. He shall restore a blissful age to wearied men, and break again the long silence of the Laws. Yea, as, when Lucifer drives the stars before him, and morning dissipates the clouds, the bright sun gazes on the world, and starts his chariot on its daily race, so Cæsar breaks upon the earth; such is the Nero whom Rome now beholds; beams his bright countenance with tempered rays, and glistens his fair neck beneath its floating curls.'"

Such was Seneca's flattering prophecy of Nero; and what was the Nero now Emperor of Rome? So monstrous his crimes, so numerous his brutal murders, so infamous his orgies, that his historians cannot pass them in silence, nor stoop to describe them. He spared neither the people of Rome nor the capital of his country. When some one, conversing with him, remarked, --

"When I am dead, let fire devour the world!"

"Nay," Nero replied, "let it be while I am living!"

And while Rome blazed, and the lurid flames swept onward, and the midnight sky reflected the light of the myriad tongues of fire, Nero gloated upon the scene, viewed from the tower of his palace, "being greatly delighted," as he said, "with the beautiful effects of the conflagration;" and, attired in the tragic dress he wore upon the stage, he sang, to the music of his lyre, a poem composed by himself upon the ruin of Troy.

Upon the ruins of Rome rose the famous Golden House of Nero. The palaces of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius were not entirely destroyed by this conflagration, and Nero restored the injured portions, and connected them by the gorgeous porticos, gardens, and groves of his Golden House. "Now I have a dwelling fit for a man!" he exclaimed, when this magnificent palace was dedicated.

Lakes, groves, and gardens adorned the slopes of the
hills surrounding this gorgeous Golden House. Gilded boats glided over the smooth waters which reflected the fleecy clouds above, while picturesque edifices dotting the banks were mirrored in the placid lakes. A triple colonnade enclosed an area in front of the palace, where stood a statue of gold and silver bronze, one hundred and twenty feet high, representing Nero as Apollo, while within the Golden House the walls were ornamented with artistic frescos, or inlaid with gold, mother of pearl, and precious stones. The floors were formed of the costliest of mosaics, and the ceilings covered with plates of ivory, from between which perfumes and roses were showered upon the guests. In the large banqueting-hall the ceiling in the rotunda, adorned with representations of the sun, moon, and stars, moved night and day at an equal pace with the vault of heaven. So great was the area covered by the Golden House, that Pliny declared "that the city was encompassed by the Palace of Nero;" and a pasquinade of the day was as follows:

"Rome will be reduced to a single house; migrate, O Romans, to Veii, like your ancestors before you—if Veii indeed itself be not also embraced by that single house."

Aziel had now left the Ghetto, and was on the way to keep his engagement with Placidus on the Palatine. Crossing the Tiber by the bridge Pons Æmilius, he passed through the Velabrum and onward to the southwestern slope of the Palatine, near which rose the famous Temple of "Cybele, the Mother of the Gods," rebuilt by Augustus, A. D. 2.

He did not pause at this point, but when he came to the splendid Temple of Apollo, he tarried a while to admire its graceful proportions and construction; yet to a Jew of Jerusalem, no temple could for a moment be compared with the magnificent sanctuary on Mount Moriah.
This temple, before which Aziel now lingered in silent admiration, was a stately structure of white marble. The columns of the portico were of African marble, the rare and costly yellow *giallo-antico*, while the cornice of the portico was gilded. The columns were fifty-two in number, and between them were the fifty Danaids, and the statue of their father, brandishing a naked sword. Aziel looked with wonder upon an imposing statue of Apollo sounding his lyre. The statue was in truth a likeness of Augustus himself, whose great youthful beauty might, in the eyes of the Romans, entitle him to counterfeit a god.

Around the altar were the images of four oxen, the work of the famous Myron, and so beautiful and so real, that they seemed almost to live and breathe. The temple rose from the middle of the graceful portico of yellow marble, like a sculptured hill of snow. Over the pediment was the chariot of the sun. The gates were of ivory, marvelously carved, one of them representing the story of the Gauls being hurled down from the heights of Parnassus, the other the destruction of the Niobids. Passing within, Aziel saw a statue of Apollo, attired in a *tunica talaris*, standing between the statues of his mother Latona and his sister Diana.

Here Aziel was joined by Placidus.

"These Roman images seem most strange to a Jew," said Aziel.

"And thou mayest, forsooth, conjecture how strange Jerusalem appears to a Roman, with no images to be found within its borders," replied Placidus.

"Ye Romans also consult oracles and sibyls, do ye not?"

"Yea; the Roman ever seeks for good omens; and here, under the base of this statue of Apollo, Augustus caused to be buried certain Sibylline books which he had selected"
and placed in gilt chests. Vesta and Apollo were the favorite gods of Augustus."

Attached to this temple was a famous library. Only the choicest works in Greek and Latin were allowed a place here. Placidus conducted Aziel thither, where he beheld another bronze statue of Apollo, fifty feet in height, so lofty was the dome of this apartment. Here were already gathered several young poets, orators, and Roman philosophers.

As Placidus and Aziel entered, a group was standing about one of the Roman orators, who was entertaining them with the latest bits of city news. The speaker was Petronius, a Roman noble. He had formerly governed Bithynia, and subsequently held the office of consul, and had shown great activity and vigilance in the discharge of the duties of his office. But now, released from public cares, he gave himself up to a life of luxury and ease, spending the greater portion of his days in slumber, and his nights in dissipation. He was reputed a model by aspiring Roman youths, and his every word and act were repeated with evident admiration by all those who would fawn and flatter Nero's tastes, and, to borrow a term from Petronius himself, the "curious felicity" of his deeds and sayings was admitted by the would-be courtiers; and thus he received the title of "Arbiter of the Imperial Pleasures."

"What is the news in the Golden House, Petronius?" asked a Roman youth, who wore the golden helmet, and the armor of a soldier above his short white tunic bordered with red. "I have but just returned to Rome from Syria, on a mission from Cestius, governor of that province."

"Ah, Cæsar amuses himself as usual," replied Petronius. "One day we must perforce applaud his singing and cithera-playing in the theatre; the next, watch his chariot-driving
at the Circus Maximus; or, perchance, listen to his tragic muse, as he sings in the mask of a god or a hero. Sometimes he gives us 'Hercules Mad,' and were he a little more a Hercules in stature and appearance, it might not be so far out of the way; for the madness seems not so much assumed as real."

"Yea, in truth!" exclaimed a bystander; "with his small stature, foul and spotted skin, thick neck, thin legs, prominent corporosity, yellow hair, and gray, dull eyes, he looks not very like a Hercules, in spite of a hero's mask and stage attire."

"Thou art not far wrong there," rejoined a Roman noble, "but we must be wary; though Nero resents not scurrilous language, and allows lampoons to be posted in the city, yet one never knows at what he may at length take offence. It is indeed rumored, Petronius, that thy rival, Tigellinus, being craftier than thou, is planning thy downfall."

"Perchance it may prove to be the turn of Tigellinus to fall," responded Petronius, with unconcern.

"Well, Placidus," said Petronius, as the soldier joined the group, "didst thou see anything in Jerusalem as amusing as Nero's pastimes? After rivalling Apollo in song, and Phœbus in charioteering, he now aspires to display, forsooth, the courage and strength of Hercules; and with great parade of heroic bravery, he gloriously strangles in his arms a young lion, duly prepared by drugs and overfeeding, to restrain the natural proclivities of the beast, and lie in harmless stupor, while gallant Cæsar, before the eyes of applauding Rome, with his mighty arm uplifted, bearing a formidable club, doth perform the dauntless feat of braining the stupid beast, and thereby covering himself with immortal glory."

"It must indeed have been a goodly sight for Roman
soldiers," quoth Placidus, with scornful looks, while Aziel listened with amazement to such a recital of great Cæsar's prowess.

"And more," continued Petronius; "this mighty Nero would fain become a woman, and so he attires his manly limbs in the finery of a maiden, and assumes her voice and gestures; and not content with this imposing spectacle, he puts on a wedding-dress and veil, and goes through the form of marriage, with one of his male associates as the groom, while he personates the blushing bride. The affairs of State are left to crafty Tigellinus, while Cæsar's chief concern is sparing his melodious voice from too great strain, lest his warblings in the theatre might be less impressive."

"His warblings! There thou speakest with satire, per-adventure," ejaculated a young poet. "Verily, my stars of destiny are propitious, that Cæsar takes not a fancy to warble my verses, instead of his own tragedies, lest were I truly made immortal among the singers of Greece, by such marvellous condescension in so gifted a royal singer."

"Thy head would pay the penalty of such sarcasm," cried Placidus, "did Nero not think it were good policy to ignore all criticism uttered in puns, and jests, and satires, having enough to be wary of in plots and conspiracies. And it is well for thee also that thou confinest thy wit to satires, and dost not seek to plot, else would thy fate resemble that of Lucan the poet, who, with the learned Seneca, his uncle, was driven by Nero to suicide."

"Ah, list!" cried Petronius. "By the uproar I wot 'tis Cæsar now going to the theatre, attended by his fawning followers."

"Rumor hath it that thou thyself art in close intimacy with Nero, Petronius."
“Rumor hath many arrows, and sometimes rumor hits the mark,” laughed Petronius, hastening into the Via Appia, followed by the others, to join in the procession now bound for the Forum.

Placidus and Aziel turned their steps in the same direction, for Aziel was curious to behold great Cæsar, and Placidus, though scornful of such follies, must needs follow a Roman crowd.

Nero was nothing loath to show himself to the Roman populace. He often supped in public, in the Naumachia, with the sluices shut, or in the Campus Martius, or in the Circus Maximus, being waited on at table by a disreputable crowd of women. It was often his custom to invite himself to dine with friends, at which time one of his entertainers spent four millions of sesterces in chaplets, and another, something more in roses to adorn the feast.

On one occasion a table was spread for the Emperor and his guests on a raft in the large basin of the Thermae Agrippae, and numerous vessels, decked with gold, silver, and ivory, floated also in the huge basin of this famous bath, containing the rich viands for a sumptuous repast. The colonnades which encircled the water were filled with spectators, invited to an ostentatious and vulgar display of wealth and power.

Now, as Nero is borne in his royal litter, surrounded by his fawning but trembling slaves, and hired flatterers, the rabble greet him with seeming delight, which the impious monster, with an insane vanity, receives with smiles, as one deserving the homage of his people.

“Where is the Emperor to be escorted this afternoon?” asked Aziel of Placidus, as they joined the crowd lining the road, and which thus far had concealed from Aziel’s sight a view of the Emperor.
"Nero seeks to give a grand spectacle to the Roman people in honor of Tiridates, King of Armenia, who comes to Rome to be crowned by the Emperor."

Aziel and Placidus followed the multitudes to the Forum, and there Aziel beheld Nero, the Infamous, seated on a curule chair on the Rostrum, clothed in a triumphal dress, amidst the military standards and ensigns of several cohorts drawn up under arms about the temples in the Forum.

Tiridates advanced towards Nero, on a shelving stage, and prostrated himself at the feet of Cæsar, who thereupon raised him with his right hand, and kissed him. Then the Emperor took the turban from the head of the king and replaced it with a crown, whilst a prætor proclaimed in Latin the words in which the prince addressed the Emperor as a suppliant. After this ceremony the king was conducted to the Theatre Pompeius, where Nero placed him on his right hand. The Emperor was then greeted with universal acclamation, and sending his laurel crown to the Capitol, he ordered the two-faced temple of Janus to be shut, as though he had thus secured universal peace throughout the Empire.

Nero had in one day covered this Theatre of Pompeius with gilding, that he might exhibit it to his royal visitor, Tiridates. It was in the portico of a hundred columns, attached to this theatre, that Brutus sat as prætor on the morning of the murder of Julius Cæsar; and close by was the Senate House, where great Cæsar fell at the base of the pillar on which stood Pompey's statue.

"So that is Cæsar!" said Aziel to Placidus, as they left the theatre at the end of this imposing ceremony.

"Yea, verily, that is Cæsar, noble Cæsar! who makes the world tremble; equips his actors with masks or wands
covered with genuine and costly pearls; stakes four hundred thousand sestertes on a single cast of the dice; bathes in perfumes; expects his friends to spend four millions on the flowers for a supper in his honor; never travels with less than a thousand carriages in his train; who, when he shaved his precious beard for the first time, put the royal hairs in a casket of gold studded with pearls of great price, and consecrated it to Jupiter Capitolinus; Nero, who invites the Vestal Virgins to see the wrestlers perform, because at Olympia the priestesses of Ceres are allowed to witness that exhibition, while in his Juvenal and Circensian games, thousands of articles are daily thrown among the people, that this mighty Cæsar may be amused to see them scramble for them,—fowls, clothes, gold and silver, gems, pearls, pictures, slaves, beasts of burden, tamed wild animals, and at last, ships, houses, and lands were offered as prizes in a lottery."

"Such is your Nero?"

"Yea, more! When mighty Nero himself condescends to perform at the theatre, five thousand youths, who have been taught various methods of applause, called *Bombi, Imbrices*, and *Testae*, are stationed in places in the theatres to give him proper applause. These youths are remarkable for their fine heads of hair, and they are richly dressed, with rings on their hands, their leaders receiving as pay for their hire forty thousand sestertes. This Nero has given to his courtiers and freedmen, in the space of the twelve years of his reign, twenty-two hundred millions of sestertes, and rumor has it that he spends eight hundred thousand sestertes a day in entertaining his royal guest, Tiridates. And this Cæsar burns Christians for torches, to illumine his chariot-races; fires Rome, that he may gorgeously illustrate his own tragedy on the Fall of Troy;
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builds a palace which encircles the city of Rome; murders all his kindred for pastime, then shrieks in his dreams for fear of their ghosts; turns the Imperial City into a brothel; is one day an actor, next, a musician, then a prize charioteer; and wears with condescension the empty title of Emperor of the World. Such is this Caesar, this Nero, Monster of Vanity and Crime!"
CHAPTER VI.

THE ROMAN GAMES. — THE PANTHEON. — THE CAMPUS MARTIUS. — THE MAMERTINE PRISON.

Life in Rome, at the time of our story, cannot be shown without a more detailed description of the games and amusements of the Imperial City.

The ingenious Tribune Curio was the first to construct the double hemicycle,—an immense wooden structure, with a mechanical contrivance, by which two theatres, after the usual performances of dramatic representations, could be wheeled front to front, and combined into a single amphitheatre for gladiatorial shows. "There can be no doubt that this extraordinary edifice was adapted to contain many thousands of spectators, and there are few, perhaps, even of our own engineers, who build tubular bridges and suspend acres of iron network over our heads, who would not shrink from the problem of moving the population of a great city on a single pair of pivots."

Statilius Taurus, the legate of Augustus, was the first to construct an amphitheatre in stone, which was erected in the Campus Martius. It was not until the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, when the magnificent Coliseum was upreared, that a spacious amphitheatre was built in the centre of the city.

There were, however, many circuses and theatres within the city limits. The dramatic representations of the Romans were mostly conducted in pantomime, two of the famous actors in the time of Augustus being Bathyllus
and Pylades; and the rivalry of these two favorites of the people waxed so hot, that at last the contention occasioned the interference of the Emperor. And when Augustus suggested to the partisans of one of the factions that the tranquillity of the city was imperilled by these uproars, he was answered,—

"It is better that the citizens should quarrel about a Pylades and a Bathyllus, than about a Pompeius and a Cæsar."

The entire religious cultus of Rome and Greece had a theatrical tendency. The Greeks of the first century, as well as the Romans, would have found no pleasure in such creations of genius as the "Œdipus" and "Antigone." "The tall figures in the cothurn and the mask, with solemn step and solemn speech, had disappeared from the stage. Buffoonery and pantomime became popular. The Atellana, a sort of Punchinello comedy with grotesque drollery and coarse jokes; the Mimus, a loosely connected representation of characters in common life, with jesters and much stage art, rich decorations and astonishing scene-shiftings, were now the favorite amusements. The lofty deeds of heroes were no longer held up for imitation. Virtue was made a mock of, and the gods scoffed at; everything sacred and worthy of veneration was dragged in the mire."

"Bread and games!" was the demand of the Roman people; and emperors catered to the lowest tastes and depraved natures, in order to sit undisturbed upon the throne. The emperors, good and bad, without distinction, expended vast sums upon the amusements of the populace, thinking thereby to secure a longer safety.

In the time of Augustus, games were continued for sixty-six days, and Titus gave the people, at the dedication of the Coliseum, a festival which lasted a hundred
days. Often they were feasted at the games, and servants of the Emperor carried amongst the crowds baskets of fruits, nuts, and vessels of wine, while roasted fowls and pheasants were thrown in their midst to be scrambled for.

The greatest enthusiasm was manifested for the chariot races in the circus. Green, blue, red, and white were the colors worn by horses and drivers. "Does the green lose?" says Juvenal; "then is Rome struck aghast, as after the defeat at Cannae." "Whether a Nero governed the Empire, or a Marcus Aurelius," writes one who has vividly represented Roman life; "whether the Empire was at peace or aflame with civil war, or the barbarians stormed at the frontiers, in Rome the question of chief moment for freemen and slaves, for senators, knights, and people, for men and women, was, whether the blue would win or the green."

Religious services introduced the sports. A great procession moved from the Capitol to the sound of trumpets and flutes, led by the magistrate whose bounty provided the games, the donor standing on a chariot as a triumphator, followed by images of the gods and emperors, borne on gorgeously covered litters, accompanied by bands of priests arrayed in their sacerdotal robes. This whole pompa diaboli, as it was termed by Tertullian, entered the Circus through the chief gate, and moved with stately step over the course; while the people, carried away by their enthusiasm, rose to their feet, waving flags and handkerchiefs, and giving loud applause.

All eyes were fixed with breathless suspense upon the pretor, who, from his balcony, should flutter the white cloth to signal that the race was to begin. "Misit! Misit!" (He has thrown it!) they cry, and the rope is removed from across the track, and the chariots sweep...
into line, while, as this or that faction gains a temporary advantage, the shouts of delighted partisans ring in the air, and the drivers are cheered with applause, or greeted with curses, as their prospects of success waver; and they lash their horses till the clashing chariots often dash against the turning-post, and horses and drivers roll upon the ground in confused heaps, as the excitement grows more wild, and the frenzy reaches its highest pitch as the victor arrives at the goal, and is greeted with thunders of rapturous applause.

Then the air is filled with flying ribbons, garlands, and favors, thrown by the friends of the triumphant faction, as the victor bows before the seat of the Emperor, and receives the prize,—a purse filled with gold, and the palm-branch of victory; then, amidst the loud shouts of the admiring populace, he passes slowly along the course to the "Porta Triumphalis," and retires a hero, in the estimation of admiring hosts.

Through the circuses passed also the triumphal processions of victorious generals, to whom Rome had decreed a Triumph. Horses and chariots, wild animals from the conquered provinces, the spoils of captured cities, with bands of chained captives, elephants, and camels gorgeously caparisoned, bearing personages of note, or heaps of priceless tapestries, or platforms representing by painting or sculpture the details of the siege or battles, pass before the eyes of the delighted people.

In the amphitheatres other kinds of spectacles were furnished. In those too spacious to be entirely covered with awnings, fountains of perfumed water threw their jets d’eau to the height of the buildings. In the podium was the Emperor with his suite; next, in the seat of honor, were the Vestal Virgins in their sacred garb, while near them
sat senators in their purple striped togas; knights in military uniforms, with armor of gold and shining helmets, while over the shoulder was thrown the red military robe; ladies magnificently attired, with silken tunics and mantles of gold and silver tissues, or wools of glowing tints, while diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other gems, flashed and sparkled in bewildering profusion, and pearls lent their softer lustre, and gold and silver ornaments were so numerous as to scarcely occasion notice; and fans of the feathers of gorgeous birds of the Orient were waved to and fro in dainty hands glittering with jewels. Swords hung in gem-encrusted scabbards; plumes fluttered in the summer breezes, which played with languid sport amidst the arches open to the glowing light of Italy's azure sky. Crimson awnings were stretched between supports gay with banners, while rainbow-tinted tapestries covered the balustrades and parapets of the imperial balconies; and festoons of roses linked pillar to pillar, while glittering statues of the gods occupied the intervening spaces, before whose shrines stood tripods filled with fragrant incense.

Upon the higher benches sat the common people, country-folk, soldiers, and house-slaves.

But see! an imposing procession of gladiators in full armor enters the arena. They proceed around the course until they reach the Emperor, to whom they lower their arms, and cry,—

"Hail, Imperator! they who are about to die, salute thee!"

At first the various manoeuvres of the gladiators is only a sham; but soon the dismal tones of the Tubae give the signal for more bloody conflicts. The Retiarii come forward without armor, their only weapons a dagger and a trident; and the endeavors of the combatants are to throw
nets over the heads of their antagonists, in order to inflict the death-thrust. Then Samnites, with short, straight swords and large shields, contest with Thracians, armed with curved swords, and carrying small round shields. Next fight combatants clad in complete armor, and knights tilt at each other with long lances, and Britons fight, standing in chariots of war.

These are no sham contests, but cruel realities. Should one fall alive into the hands of his opponent, the giver of the spectacle leaves his doom to the decision of the spectators. If life is granted, handkerchiefs are waved; if the condemnation is death, thumbs are turned up. Women, even, with as little hesitation as men, give the sign that commands the fatal stroke. Those who hesitate to die, are driven into the fight with scourges and red-hot irons. "Kill! lash! burn!" scream the frenzied populace. "Why does he take the death-blow with so little bravery? Why does he die so reluctantly?" Officials in masks, representing the demons of the lower world, drag the still palpitating body with metal hooks into the death-chamber, while the victors proudly wave their palm branches, and the multitudes shout with applause. Moorish slaves then turn over with shovels the blood-saturated soil of the arena, and new contests begin.

Pliny, who usually manifests a humane spirit, praises these games, "which do not enervate the minds of men, but on the contrary inflame them to honorable wounds and contempt of death, as they perceive even in slaves and criminals the love of praise and desire for victory." Thus, though we turn away with horror from such scenes of bloody sacrifice, the ancients looked upon them only with admiration and satisfaction. Though Seneca condemns these games, and thus eloquently answers the plea made in their
behalf, that the victims were criminals: "They deserve to die, I know," he writes; "but what crime have you committed to deserve to be a spectator of their punishment?"

But Ovid looks upon such scenes with different emotions, and suggests to the young that they improve such occasions as suitable opportunities for love-making. While men in the arena were engaged in deadly combats, and blood flowed in streams, and the imperfectly suppressed groans of the dying mingled with the thoughtless words of gallantry spoken by their admirers, women sat wreathed in smiles, listening with delight to the ardent declarations of flatterers, thinking only of their own vanity, totally indifferent to the death-agonies of mortals like themselves, whom they regarded as beings beneath their slightest pity.

Condemned criminals were bound to stakes and exposed to famished beasts; other victims appeared tricked out in the finery of a theatrical spectacle, in garments interwoven with gold threads, and crowns on their heads, simulating characters in legends, or mythological fable, when suddenly flames would burst forth from their clothing, and they were quickly consumed. Others were forced to ascend funeral piles and be burned alive, or were hung on crosses, or were torn limb from limb by bears; or, like Dirce, if the victim were a woman, as happened in the persecution of the Christians, she was, perchance, bound to a raging bull and dragged to death, as representing the story of Dirce. And while such brutal scenes were enacted, Roman women flirted and smiled, and men wooed, and the populace shouted for joy. Such was heathenism; not heathenism rude and uneducated, but at the zenith of its culture.

Thus the Romans feasted their eyes on murder and bloodshed, excusing themselves with the plea that those
who died amid the awful tortures of the arena were not entitled to sympathy, being only barbarians, foreigners, prisoners of war, slaves, criminals, and outcasts of the human race. Humanity, as understood by Christian nations, was undreamt of by the Greeks and Romans.

Together with these gladiatorial shows in the amphitheatres, were fights between wild beasts, and the naval battles. Hippopotami were transported from Egypt, wild boars from the Rhine, elephants from India, and lions from Africa. Rhinoceroses, giraffes, and ostriches were also procured. Six hundred bears and five hundred lions are mentioned as at one festival. At the games given by Trajan, eleven thousand animals fought in the arena. Now the wild beasts contested with one another, then with dogs trained for the purpose, or again with men on foot or mounted.

The naval battles were still more imposing. The arenas were flooded, or lakes specially excavated for this display. Claudius exhibited on Lake Fucinus a sea-fight between vessels of three and four benches of oars, in which battle there were nineteen thousand combatants. Domitian had a still larger lake dug, where battles were fought by fleets as large as those employed in war. These were real combats, in which thousands were killed or drowned.

"One may imagine the frantic excess to which the taste for gladiatorial combats was carried in Rome," from the preventive law of Augustus that gladiators should no more combat without permission of the Senate; the prætors should not give these spectacles more than twice a year; that more than sixty couples should not engage at the same time, and that neither knights nor senators should ever contend in the arena.

1 "Life in Rome."
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"The gladiators were classified according to the national manner of fighting which they imitated. Thus were distinguished the Gothic, Dacian, Thracian, and Samnite combatants; the Retiarii, who entangled their opponents in nets thrown with the left hand, defending themselves with tridents in the right; Secutores, whose special skill was in pursuit; the Laqueatores, who threw slings against their adversaries; the Dimachæ, armed with a short sword in each hand; the Hoplomachi, armed at all points; the Myrmillones, so called from the figure of a fish at the crest of the Gallic helmet they wore; the Bustuarii, who fought at funeral games; the Bestiarii, who only assailed animals; other classes who fought on horseback, called Andabates, and those combating in chariots drawn by two horses, known as Essedarii.

"Gladiators were originally slaves or prisoners of war; but the armies who contended in the Roman arena at later epochs were divided into compulsory and voluntary combatants, the former alone composed of slaves or condemned criminals. The latter went through a laborious education in the art, supported at the public cost, and instructed by masters, called lanistæ, resident in colleges, called Ludi. To the eternal disgrace of the morals of Imperial Rome, it is recorded that women sometimes fought in the arena, without more modesty than hired gladiators. Commodus degraded the imperial dignity by appearing in the arena, as Nero had disgraced it by his theatrical performances."

Leaving the Theatre Pompeius, Placidus and Aziel soon passed the Thermæ Agrippæ, or baths of Agrippa. Subsequently many more gorgeous structures of this kind were erected in Rome, but Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus, was the first to establish public baths in the Imperial City. Connected with these baths were Gym-
nasia, or halls appropriated to athletic exercises, together with apartments for philosophical discussions, lectures, and poetical recitations. Agrippa had constructed the aqueduct called the Aqua Virgo, to conduct the necessary water-supply for his baths. The Aqua Virgo started in the Via Collatina, eight miles from Rome, and passed over the Pincian Hill, whence it was carried upon arches to the baths. Near here stood the famous Pantheon, built also by Agrippa.

The Pantheon was at this time the most perfect pagan building in Rome. Agrippa built it 27 B.C.

"Another temple!" exclaimed Aziel, as they paused to behold the grace and beauty of the structure.

"Yea, another temple," assented Placidus; "and this a temple for all gods. Were it not that I have seen the magnificent sanctuary on Moriah's brow, I would ask thee if this is not a king of temples."

The young men approached the Pantheon by the five steps leading to the portico, and entered the corridor, one hundred and ten feet long, forty-four feet deep, and supported by sixteen grand columns of Oriental granite, each thirty-six feet in height,—the earliest examples of the Corinthian architecture in Rome.

They passed within the imposing bronze doors, on either side of which stood the colossal statues of Augustus and Agrippa. The interior of the temple was a rotunda, one hundred and forty-three feet in diameter, covered by a dome coffered or panelled on the inner surface. The golden light of the afternoon sun streamed through the central aperture, twenty-eight feet in diameter. Thus was the temple lighted. Seven large niches in the walls contained the statues of the different gods and goddesses here honored with a place, Jupiter occupying the central
niches. All of the surrounding columns were of *giallo-antico*, save four, which were of *pavonazetto*, painted yellow.

"Why are not those four columns also of the shining yellow *giallo-antico*?" asked Aziel, gazing in wonder at the images about him.

"It was impossible to obtain enough of this beautiful African marble to complete the set," replied Placidus; "so you may judge how rare and costly is this much-prized material."

"Well, as thou sayest, having looked upon the incomparable Temple of Jehovah, in Jerusalem the Beautiful," remarked Aziel, "I can only say that the Pantheon is stately, graceful, and imposing; but such a company of deities perplexes me much. That the pagans so multiply their gods, proves how little any one of their deities can influence their souls."

"'T is not strange that men at length cease to reverence any god, and try to solace themselves with the belief of annihilation after death," said Placidus. "The belief in an immortality is openly ridiculed," he continued. "Cicero says, 'that in his time hardly an old woman can be found who trembles at the fables about the infernal regions;' and Juvenal declares, 'even boys disbelieve in the world of spirits;' and the spirit of paganism is thus described: 'For the Roman, the immortality of his family and of his country replaced the immortality of his own soul.'"

"Ah, how hopeless such a doctrine!" exclaimed Aziel; "and to what does it lead?"

"To Stoicism, Epicureanism, or to suicide," responded Placidus. "The doctrines of Zeno, transplanted to Rome, have fascinated many. It is the boast of the sage to fear neither god nor man. 'To feel pain at the misfortunes of
others,' says Seneca, 'is a weakness unworthy of the wise man... Only weak eyes become inflamed at the sight of ophthalmia in other men.' Feeling is despised, while the intellect is enthroned in the seat of divinity. The masses, who are ignorant of philosophy, are classed as slaves and madmen, and the sage looks down upon them with unfeeling pride, and stoical indifference. But while the stoic disdains to help his fellow-men, he looks out with keen cunning for his own profit, as one of our satirists well says: 'The business of a philosopher is to declaim in praise of poverty, with two million sesterces out at usury; to meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury in gardens which move the envy of sovereigns; to rant about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered freedmen of a tyrant; to celebrate the divine beauty of virtue, with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son.'"

"Thou speakest with bitterness, Placidus."

"Yea, verily. It raises my ire, as a Roman soldier, to remember the incorruptible Fabricius, the high-minded Regulus, the frugal Cincinnatus, as examples of what Rome once deemed the highest virtues in a citizen; and when I think of Julius Caesar and Pompey, and their conquests, these modern laggards make me groan. As the alliance of religion with patriotism is now fast being dissolved, nothing remains but lifeless forms and absurd superstitions; and Roman paganism has now become a thing of puerile scanning of the entrails of sacrificial victims, or watching for other foolish omens, or going over to utter unbelief. 'The man of pleasure always hates ideas, and the man of the world generally despises arts which do not tend to tangible advantage;' and our rhetoricians attack our philosophers, and shams and humbugs are
even everywhere apparent. Even our wars are now only sham shows in Nero's train; and Petronius, whom you heard just now, speaks often bitter truth in raillery; and, caricaturing this present Roman rage for legacy-hunting, or Capatio, which turns every man into a fawning hanger-on to every childless possessor of wealth, Petronius declared the other day: 'The whole town is divided into those who throw the bait and those who take it. No one acknowledges children, for the man who has heirs is never invited to any festive gathering, but is left to associate with the dregs of society. On the other hand, the childless man is covered with honors, and passes for a model of all the virtues: Rome is like a field outside a plague-stricken city, in which you can see nothing but carcasses, and crows which feed upon them.'"

"A Jew glories in his children," cried Aziel, "for in them he beholds the continued power of his people; and naught is so dear to a Jew as his nation and his God."

"While Nero persecutes and kills his nearest friends, if they be possessed of the gold upon which his eager hands can clutch, it cannot be expected that his Roman imitators will cease from such nefarious pursuits," sighed Placidus.

"What weighty matters do ye so soberly discuss?" cried a passing youth, noting the earnest manner of Placidus and Aziel,—a novelty in Rome, where no one is in earnest, save to outstrip his neighbor in pleasure or in vice. "Come to the Campus Martius," continued the youth; "Caesar himself wrestles to-day for a laurel wreath, not being content with the crown of the Roman Empire."

"If Nero wrestles, it were a brave sight indeed," sneered Placidus. "Nevertheless, Aziel, perchance it will amuse thee, as thou art not a Roman soldier."
Whereupon the two followed the youth along the Via Flaminia, towards which crowds were coming from all directions of the city. Placidus and Aziel had approached the Via Flaminia through the Forum Piscatorium, where the fishermen from the Tiber found a market for their fish. On the other side of the Campus Martius, bordered on the west by the Tiber, were the Narvalia, or stations of the war-galleys. By the side of this "play-ground" of the Roman people, if one strolled along the river bank, the light skiff might be seen descending the stream, while the barge, heavily laden with its precious freight of gold and silver or merchandise, or the more necessary corn, was being slowly towed up the river to the landing.

Not far from the Pantheon, as Placidus and Aziel passed the fountain in the Piazza della Rotonda, they had observed a number of bird fanciers surrounded by numerous cages, containing living birds for sale. Among the feathery tribes one noted the Java sparrows, parrots and paroquets, gray thrushes, and the beautiful and tiny sweet singers, the cardellini; also the warblers of the night, the bul-bul, or Persian nightingales; while near by were the petti Rossi, or red-breasts, and yellow canary-birds, swelling their golden throats to fill the sunlit air with strains of melody; and also the gentle ring-doves, cooing softly to their mates, while magpies chattered together to the music of the flashing fountain. Great owls perched on stands glared wisely out of their large, sleepy yellow eyes. There were all sorts of owls, from the solemn barbigiani, and white-tufted owl, to the quaint and petite civetta, which gives its name to all sharp-witted and heartless flirts; and there, too, was the aziola, so celebrated in song.

Aziel glanced at the pretty songsters with a feeling of
relief after his morning with the false gods. His heart turned to the house on Zion's Hill, in his loved Jerusalem, and he sighed to think how long had been his absence from the city, and how much he had missed a certain dark-eyed maiden. Not among the Greek maids nor Alexandrian beauties, nor to-day in the streets of Rome, though many noble Roman ladies had been abroad to watch the royal pageants, had there appeared to Aziel so fair a face as Miriam's. Then he had remembered Jessica, and had wished to purchase for her a queer little civetta; not that the child was on the way to become a heartless flirt, for there are no flirts among modest Jewish maidens, but that her sharp-witted sayings had often amused him greatly. But Jerusalem was far away, and owls are not comely travelling companions; and so the civetta waited a Roman purchaser, and Aziel only wafted his thoughts from Rome to Miriam and Jessica upon Zion's Holy Hill.

Placidus and Aziel had now reached the famous Campus Martius. This Campus Martius was used for the exercises and evolutions of the military troops, as well as for athletic sports; and when a victorious general was waiting outside the walls of Rome, until his triumph should have been decreed him by the senate, this camp presented a gorgeous and martial array. Here also, twice a year, were the Equiria, or horse-races, said to have been instituted by Romulus, now celebrated in this Campus in the month dedicated to Mars.

And now all Rome had flocked thither to see brave Cæsar perform his exercises, which he called wrestling-matches, but which Placidus named puppet-shows. Upon the field were many noble youths of manly build and athletic frames.

"A goodly sight they are," quoth Placidus; "'t were a
pity to waste such fine physiques in court luxuries, instead of sending them to martial fields, where they might win a general’s triumph. Look, Aziel,” he continued; “now they wrestle with each other, they evince much grace and prowess; but see!” he added with disdain, “behold, great Cæsar joins them in his purple tunic, with his lean legs and wabbling gait; he makes, in truth, a royal spectacle. Now that he joins in the games, all the youths, forsooth, must favor mighty Cæsar, nor dare to lay his sacred body in the dust; and so they cringe and play the puppet for his royal diversion, and allow his unskilled limbs to seemingly gain him the victory. They suffer him to fell them to the earth, and take the laurel wreath as victor in the match. Come, Aziel,” he continued, “the puppet-show is over. Great Cæsar will now bathe in perfumes, anoint his sacred locks, and sup before the world. Forsooth, a glorious sight for gods and mortals!”

“Thou likest not this Nero, ’t is plain,” exclaimed Aziel; “and bad as our Herods have been, thy Nero hath surpassed them.”

“But I like thee, Jew as thou art!” rejoined Placidus; “and I would fain bear thee to my mother’s house as my guest, during thy stay in Rome.”

“But being a Jew, such courtesy might embarrass thee,” responded Aziel; “though, much as I esteem thy invitation, we Jews, being somewhat restricted as regards our diet, are sometimes inconvenient guests to Gentiles. I am of the opinion that I had best return for lodging to my friend’s house in the Ghetto, where I shall not cause inconvenience in the setting of repasts.”

“Nay, nay!” cried Placidus, “I will not have it so! I have been long enough in Jerusalem to know thy national prejudices, and they shall be respected; and as thou art
a Christian, my mother will be glad to welcome thee, for she leans to that faith, as does also my sister.”

Leaving the Campus, Placidus and Aziel returned by the Via Flaminia to the Forum. Between the Capitoline Hill and the Theatre of Pompeius were the Circus Flaminius, Porticus of Octavius, Portico of Octavia, Theatre of Balbus, and the Theatre of Marcellus. Near the Circus Flaminius, on the eastern side of the Temple of Hercules Musarum, was the Porticus Metelli, which enclosed two temples,—that of Jupiter Stator and of Juno. Before these temples Metellus placed the famous group of twenty-five bronze statues, which he had brought from Greece. These statues, executed by Lysippus for Alexander the Great, represented that conqueror and the twenty-four horsemen of his troop, who had fallen at the Granicus.

The home of Placidus being on the Cælian Hill, Aziel saw several portions of Rome still new to him; and, as Placidus was proud to point out the objects of note in his native city, the walk from the Campus Martius to the Cælian Hill was full of interest to Aziel.

As they passed round the Capitoline Hill to the Forum, Placidus showed Aziel the site of the famous Mamertine prison, where it is supposed Saint Paul and Saint Peter were imprisoned at that very time.
CHAPTER VII.

FAMOUS VILLAS ON THE QUIRINAL, ESQUILINE, AND PINCIAN HILLS. — VIRGILIA AND MYRTILLA.

To the north and northeast of the Forum were the Quirinal and Esquiline hills, divided by the spur of the Viminal Hill, and nearer, towards the Forum, was the thickly populated district known as the Suburra. To the north of the Quirinal lay the Pincian, on which stood the famous Villa of Lucullus, filled with paintings, statues, and other works of art, collected at an immense expense. Here, in his Pincian villa, Lucullus gave his celebrated feast to Cicero and Pompey, when, by a remark to his slave, "that he should sup in the Hall of Apollo," it was immediately understood by his servants that a feast of the greatest magnificence must be prepared. This noted villa afterwards belonged to Valerius Asiaticus, in the reign of Claudius, and was so coveted by the Emperor's wife, Messalina, that she procured by false accusation the condemnation to death of Valerius, and the villa became hers; and in its beautiful gardens she was afterwards put to death for her own foul crimes.

In the region beyond the Porto Salaria, on the north-eastern slopes of the Pincian Hill, were many catacombs, — one of them being that of Saint Priscilla, supposed to have been the mother of Pudens, and a contemporary of the Apostles.

On the Quirinal Hill, then united by an isthmus of land to the Capitoline Hill, stood the Temple dedicated to
Romulus, who received after his death the name of the god of the Sabines,—Quirinus. This temple was adorned with a sun-dial, the first set up in Rome. In front of it grew the celebrated myrtle-trees, called Patricia and Plebeia, said to flourish or fade, according to the fortunes of their respective parties. Among the great families who dwelt on the Quirinal was that of the Flavii, who were of Sabine origin.

The southern side of the Quirinal Hill formed the famous Mons Tarpeia, or Tarpeian Rock, where, in a cave beneath, tradition stationed the beautiful Tarpeia, sparkling with gold and jewels, enchanted and motionless, as a punishment for opening the gate of the fortress to the Sabians, she having been bribed by the golden bracelets of the warriors.

On the northeastern slope of the Quirinal were the gardens of Sallust, Horti Pretiosissimi, purchased for the emperors after the death of the historian. This villa was a favorite resort of Vespasian, Nerva, and Aurelian. This house, made afterwards into a palace, contained superb baths, and a portico, called Milliarenis, one thousand feet long. Part of the grounds are supposed to have formed the Campus Sceleratus, where the Vestal Virgins who had broken their vestal vows suffered. "When condemned by the college of pontifices, the vestal was stripped of her vittae, and other badges of office; then scourged; then attired like a corpse, and, attended by her weeping kindred, with all the ceremonies of a real funeral, taken to the Campus Sceleratus, within the city walls, close to the Colline gate. There a small vault underground had previously been prepared, containing a couch, a lamp, and a table with a little food. The Pontifex Maximus, having lifted his hands to heaven, and uttered a secret prayer,
opened the litter, led forth the culprit, and placing her on the steps of the ladder which gave access to the subterranean cell, delivered her over to the common executioner and his assistants, who conducted her down, then drew up the ladder, and having filled the pit with earth, until the surface was level with the surrounding ground, left her to perish. In every case the paramour was publicly scourged to death in the Forum."

Viewing from a distance the objects on the Pincian and Quirinal hills, Aziel and Placidus, passing to the northeastern side of the Palatine, approached the "Mons Esquiline." "The Esquiline, which is the largest of the seven hills of Rome, is not a distinct hill, but a projection of the Campagna. The Quirinial, Viminal, Esquiline, and Cælian stretch out towards the Tiber like four fingers of a hand, of which the plain, whence they detach themselves, represents the vast palm. 'This hand has seized the world.' The name Esquiline was derived from the word *Excultus*, because of the ornamental groves planted here by Servius Tullius. The sacred wood of the Argiletum long remained on the lower slope of the hill."

On this hill were altars to Juno, Venus, and the Sabine sun-god, Janus. The most important buildings in republican and imperial times were on the slope of the hill behind the Forum, near to the spot where afterwards stood the Coliseum.

"Thou beholdest that temple on the rise yonder," said Placidus; "that is the Temple of Tellus, and the quarter surrounding it has received the name of 'In tellure.' It is a very noted neighborhood, and has many famous villas. In the part called Carinae, the popular residence of Roman knights, lived the father of Cicero."

"What is that quaint villa adorned with curious rostra?" asked Aziel.
"That was the palace of Pompey, and he ordered it to be thus ornamented in memory of his naval victories. The rooms within are painted to resemble forests, with trees and birds, similar to the chambers discovered in the villa of Livia. Here the wife of Pompey, the daughter of Julius Caesar, died. This palace was afterwards possessed by the luxurious Antony."

"It would seem to be a famous neighborhood," said Aziel.

"Yea, there are many other houses of note here. You behold that row of arches, richly ornamented; that is the portico of Livia, built by Augustus. And, strangely enough, this fashionable Carinæ, at its opposite extremity, is united to the plebeian Suburra, which occupies the valley formed by the convergence of the Esquiline, Quirinal, and Viminal hills. Several poets have dwelt on the Esquiline; among them were Horace and Virgil."

"I have been informed that Propertius, the Latin poet, also had a villa here," said Aziel.

"Yea; you see there to the right the house where he is said to have lived," replied Placidus. "On this hill also is the house of Mæcenas, the great patron of poets in the Augustan age. He bequeathed this villa to Augustus, and Tiberius afterward dwelt in it. It was from the tower of the house of Mæcenas, then the royal palace of the Caesars, that Nero beheld the burning of Rome, in July, A.D. 64."

"How did that terrible conflagration originate?" asked Aziel.

"It started in the stalls near the Circus Maximus, in which many of the Jews carried on their trades, and where many combustible materials were collected. Then it seized the wooden stagings and seats in the Circus, and
swept onwards until it was finally conquered at the wall of Servius Tullius near the gardens of Mæcenas. The fire broke out anew in another quarter of the city, near the gardens of Tigellinus, who was reported to have ordered this conflagration to please Nero. The fire raged in all nine days and nights, and of the fourteen regions of the city, only four entirely escaped. Three regions were completely destroyed. The day of the outburst of the fire was the same day of the year when Rome had been fired by the Gauls. Of the famous temples and monuments destroyed in this conflagration of 64 A.D., those definitely known to have been demolished were the Temple of Diana, erected by Servius Tullius; the Shrine and Altar of Hercules; the Romulean Temple of Jupiter Stator; the Little Regia of Numa; while the Temple of Vesta, with the Palladium and the Penates, were injured, but not wholly destroyed."

"This region looks not as though it had been swept with such destruction," said Aziel, gazing with admiration on the magnificent Golden House of Nero, which began at the house of Mæcenas.

"Thou art right, indeed," replied Placidus; "these gorgeous porticos and gardens and villas, comprising the wonderful Golden House, covering this side of the Esquiline, and taking in part of the Cælian and Palatine, have rebuilt Rome with more than its former grandeur."

The young men now drew near to a fountain, and perceiving its classic adornment, Aziel remarked it.

"That is the 'Lacus Orphei,'" said Placidus. "You observe the rock in the centre of the fountain, surmounted with the statue of Orpheus, with the enchanted beasts around him; it was near this spot that Pliny lived."

Placidus and Aziel had taken their way from the Forum
by the Via Sacra, to the north of the Palatine Hill, and to the southwest of the Quirinal and Esquiline hills, on towards the Cælian. The Via Sacra, at this time, was bordered with shops; Ovid mentions some of the various articles which could be purchased there in his time. Placidus and Aziel stopped for a moment in that part of the Via, at the market for fruits and honey. Having procured a basket of purple figs, the young men resumed their walk. Near this place was the famous fountain called "Meta Sudans," where the crowds came to drink; and Seneca, who lived in this neighborhood, complained of the noise of the showman who blew his trumpet close by this fountain, to announce the beginning of the performances in the theatres and circus. At this point of the Via Sacra the Via Triumphalis leads to the Via Appia. "The line of the Triumphant Way seems to have run from the Porta Carmentalis along the Vicus Jugarius, up one side of the Velabrum, and down the other again by the Via Nova, thence through the Circus, making a complete circuit of the original city on the Palatine."

Placidus conducted Aziel round to the western corner of the Palatine Hill, where was still standing a portion of the wall of Romulus, the earliest wall of the Palatine. It was constructed of oblong blocks of the brown tufa, without mortar or cement. Close under the northern side of the wall of Romulus ran the Via Nova. In this part of the Palatine were the chambers of the Praetorian Guards and Placidus led Aziel into some of the apartments, and pointed out to him a number of sketches, termed Graffiti, some of them being caricatures of the Crucifixion, supposed to have been made by the pagan soldiers, in ridicule of a Christian fellow-soldier. Placidus showed Aziel one chamber in which it was said Paul had been confined.
"As I was in Syria during Paul's previous imprisonment in Rome, I can only give you common rumor on these things," remarked Placidus; "but as you express admiration for him, I thought this might be of interest to you."

"Would it be possible to obtain access to him in the Mamertine Prison, thinkest thou?" inquired Aziel. "I have a great desire to see him again; I heard him preach at Jerusalem some years since."

"I doubt if I could obtain for thee this favor; the prisoners in the Mamertine Prison are closely guarded, and Nero is growing suspicious of all interest manifested in the Christians."

Ascending the hillside by a path running through an orange garden, the young men reached the Stadium for foot-races, and Placidus pointed out the ruins of the house of Cicero, and the villa of Clodius, the favorite lover of Pompeia, the wife of Julius Cæsar. They now passed down the slope of the Palatine leading to the valley at the foot of the Cælian.

The home of Placidus was on the southeastern slope of the Cælian Hill. Here, too, were the gardens of Plautius Lateranus, whose estates were confiscated by Nero, while Plautius himself was condemned to death, having been accused of taking part in a conspiracy of Piso. The famous statues of the Niobides, thought to be the work of Scopas, were found in these gardens.

From this part of the Cælian Hill, where stood the villa of Placidus, a magnificent view was obtained. On one side were the Alban Hills, now purple in the deepening twilight, dotted with villages; on the other side were the Sabine Mountains, snow-tipped, while in the nearer distance the golden-hued lines of the long aqueducts stretched
away over the plains, till they were lost against the glowing sunset sky. Nearer still, groves of trees led to an ancient basilica, while on the left were fruit gardens, interspersed with fragments of massive brickwork, the remains of the old walls of the city. The road below this picturesque villa was the Via Appia Nuova.

The stately brick arches, forming the portico of the villa, were laden with a wealth of laurustinus, cytisus, and other flowering shrubs, standing out with delicate beauty against the soft hues of the distant Campagna. Beneath the terrace was a range of lofty chambers on arches, framing exquisite glimpses of the Alban Hills.

Running lengthwise through the garden were the ruins of an aqueduct, the arches of which, ivy-mantled, were adorned here and there with statues; while myriads of roses clambered over the ruined walls, forming arbors and hedges of glowing fragrance, and clinging with picturesque poetry to the dark cypress-trees; while aloes, Indian fig-trees, and palms threw their graceful shadows between ancient columns, and huge vases, filled with luxuriant bloom, stood amidst fragments of the ruined brickwork, which added enchantment to the glowing beauty of the life of nature, radiant on all sides.

Here and there clusters of the beautiful rock-rose shed their white, pink-flushed petals, like delicate snow-flakes touched with the sunset blush, on the green sward below, while the star-eyed anemones winked like laughing children of nature, nodding their graceful heads in the summer breezes which sang their nightly lullaby.

The mother of Placidus was of a noble family of Roman knights, and this villa was her ancestral home. Aziel entered the stately mansion, preceded by Placidus, and
followed his friend into the atrium, paved with the tiles of the famous Opus Alexandrinum, and its crimson and violet hues tempered the white and gold of the walls.

Here Placidus was welcomed by his mother and sister, who received Aziel as the guest of their son and brother with refined courtesy.

As Aziel glanced at the handsome Roman matron Virgilia, and then scanned for a moment the fair features of the slender and graceful Myrtilla, it was easy to account for the many noble impulses evinced by his soldier friend in their various conversations; and Aziel immediately felt that here was a Roman home untainted by the vices of the court of the infamous Nero.

The mother of Placidus, whose very presence and courteous manners evinced her noble patrician blood, was attired in a rich robe of crimson, with golden girdle, and sandals set with gems.

Myrtilla, who seemed the same age as Miriam, was as lovely as a dream. She wore the Greek rather than the Roman dress. Her costume was of white wool, hanging in the graceful folds of the Grecian tunic, fastened at the shoulder with antique cameos carved by some Greek artist. Her girdle was of silver links curiously wrought, and her dark hair banded by silver fillets. Her throat and arms were clasped with strings of pearls, while her silver sandals were set with the same pure jewels. She was indeed beautiful, and as she welcomed Aziel, her dark eyes softened, and her cheeks flushed like the delicate bloom of the blush roses she wore in her silver girdle.

“My sister delights in Grecian poetry,” said Placidus, as he presented his friend, “and therefore often assumes the costume of the heroines she admires.”

“Nor could be found so fitting a personification of the
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

Greek Muse, on any page of Homer,” gallantly rejoined Aziel.

“Thou art very welcome as the friend of my son,” said Virgilia; “and as he tells me thou art also a Christian, and from Jerusalem, thou art doubly welcome. I would gladly learn more about the Nazarene, of whom my husband used to speak.”

“Didst thou behold the royal procession to-day?” inquired Aziel. “I beheld many Roman ladies viewing the gorgeous spectacle.”

“Nay,” answered Virgilia; “Myrtilla and I go not often beyond our gardens here. Indeed, since Nero sat upon the throne of the Empire, modest Roman ladies were best at home. I guard well my daughter, for if, peradventure, Cæsar should find her face fair, she might be commanded to join the ladies at the Imperial Court, as have been many others from patrician families; and that would mean infamy, though in many quarters in Rome it is esteemed an honor. Myrtilla and I go rarely from our villa, unless it be in closed litters borne by our pedisequi, and attended by our higher slaves, the atriensis, our trusted steward, and secretaries and pages, as our guard, when Placidus is absent at the wars. Thus we sometimes venture forth to attend Christian service in the Catacombs, the only safe places of worship, since Nero’s persecutions of the Christians.”

Placidus and Aziel soon retired to prepare themselves for the cæna, or Roman dinner, which at Rome was regarded as the great event of the day. Three hours was the shortest time that a rich man took over this formal dinner. It sometimes began at three o’clock in the afternoon, and lasted until midnight. The ordinary number at a dinner-party was nine, three reclining on each of the
three couches, that the number might accord with that of
the Muses; nor must the number be less than three, the
number of the Graces. But often the guests were very
numerous, where the triclinium, or dining-hall, would
admit of many tables and couches. The place of honor
at the feast was "Imus in medio," the right-hand corner of
the middle couch, while the host occupied the adjoining
place, "Summus in imo."

The gradation of places was a very important part of
the etiquette of the table. A spoon was the only imple-
ment used by the guests, the knife being only employed
by the slave-carver. Forks were unknown. The invita-
tions to dinner were sent by the hands of a slave, called
vocator; the guests came dressed in festive attire, in the
style termed synthesis, their costumes being often of bril-
liant colors, — purple, green, blue, scarlet, and crimson;
and some of the guests changed their dress several times
during the evening.

The banquet consisted of three parts, the promulgis and
gustatio, intended to whet the appetite, and the caena
proper.

A banquet was not considered successful unless it became
the talk of the city. The more absurd the extravagance of
the feast, the more certain was the host of gaining the
coveted notoriety.

"A king of the wine, or arbiter of drinking, was chosen
for his convivial qualities by the Bacchanalian crew about
him," and pantomimes, rope-dancers, dwarfs, jesters, and
even gladiators were introduced between the courses, for
the amusement of the guests. The attendants and cup-
bearers were slaves chosen for their beauty, and purchased
at great price.

"Excessive drinking was a common vice at Rome, though
the wines of the ancients seem not to have produced such degrading effects as modern beer and spirits. Pliny the elder tells about the devices which were adopted to excite thirst. Some drank hemlock, that they might be obliged to drink wine to save their lives; others took pumice-stone powdered, or like doses. Tiberius went to see a man of Mediolanum, who could swallow seventeen pints at a draught, and Tiberius and his son, Drusus, were notorious wine-drinkers.”

Rare dishes obtained a fictitious value, and the costliness of the banquet was the chief ambition. A mullet, when of unusual weight, cost 6,000 sesterces. Wild boars were served up whole; peacocks were placed upon the table with their gorgeous tails full spread; the brains of rare birds commanded an exorbitant price; the tongues of nightingales was a dish fit even for a Cæsar. The Romans were well supplied with fruit. They had several varieties of apples, many kinds of pears and plums, pomegranates, cherries, peaches, figs, dates, medlars, quinces, mulberries, strawberries, chestnuts, almonds, and various other nuts. Winter grapes and melons were grown under glass; and greenhouses and hothouses for flowers and fruits were common. Roses, lilies, and violets were largely cultivated, and their feasts and banqueting-halls were lavishly adorned with vines and blossoms. Fountains played in the porticoed nymphaeum, opening from the triclinium, and the latter blazed with gilded beams, supported by pillars of African marble, and often contained statues in silver and in bronze, the work, perchance, of the famous Myron.

Never, perhaps, except in the palaces of the Incas, has gold been so lavishly employed in the decoration of walls and in ceilings, as in the palaces and villas of the knights and senators of Rome; and the richest marbles ornamented
the halls and grand apartments. Ivory and jewels were mingled with gold and silver in rare and curiously wrought vases and cups. Ornaments in silver plate, executed by famous artists, tables of African citrus-wood, vessels of Murrha, and Corinthian bronzes, brought fabulous prices, and were the ambition of the rich.

Nero paid a million sesterces for a cup of Murrha, and Cicero the same sum for a table of citrus-wood; and Seneca possessed five hundred of these tables. The citrus-wood was admired for its fine and beautiful grain, which resembled a tiger's or a panther's skin, or a peacock's tail. As an instance of the cost of furniture in Roman villas, the incident is given of the burning of the house of the millionnaire, Scaurus, by which fire he was said to have lost a hundred million sesterces.

The glass and colored crystal work of the Romans was superior, and delicate glass cups and vases were numerous. Their bed-rooms were also lavishly adorned, the beds often having gilt and silver legs; their mattresses were stuffed with eider-down; the pillows covered with silk, and the purple coverlets richly embroidered with pictures. With this slight digression to give a picture of Roman society, we will now return to the home of Placidus.

The *triclinium*, or dining-hall, into which Aziel was now escorted, was large, and richly ornamented. Upon the walls were frescoed the nine Muses,—there Urania, in azure robe crowned with stars, floated through the snowy clouds; Terpsichore, draped in rose-color, balanced her dainty foot upon a sunset cloud, and held her arms aloft in the graceful attitude of a festive dance; Polyhymnia, clothed and veiled in white, bore lilies in her hands; while Erato, crowned with roses and myrtle, and draped in pale pink, reclined upon a moss-bank; Euterpe, with robe of
gold, and golden lyre, played in the sylvan grove; while Melpomene and Thalia, accompanied by Calliope and Clio, with scroll and golden trumpet, completed the band of mystic sisters.

Roman villas were often decorated with graceful wall-paintings, representing figures, scenes, flowers, fruit, or ornamental patterns. Many famous pictures were copied on house walls, or worked into fine mosaics upon the floors. Rome was full of pictures, both decorative and monumental. Pictorial representations were used as pla-cards or votive tablets.

Behind the couch where Myrtilla sat, vases of violets and lilies added their charms to her fair beauty, while glowing roses seemed appropriate adjuncts to the stately Virgilia. The tables were adorned with glistening vessels of glass and cups of silver, while golden goblets were filled with ruby and amber wines. The attendant slaves and adornments of the apartment bespoke wealth, but not vulgar ostentation; and the graceful and flowing conversa-tion of Virgilia and her children conformed with the famous saying of Varro: "People at supper should neither be loquacious nor mute; eloquence is for the Forum, silence for the bed-chamber."

The table-talk of the higher classes at Rome was usually terse and epigrammatic. They seem to have cultivated a dry, sententious style, while their remarks on life and manners were conveyed in solemn and caustic aphorisms, scorning an abundance of words. This applies, of course, only to the more sedate and scholarly men, who had not become so tainted with the profligacy of the times, as to delight in coarse jests and vulgar satires. But the truly refined and elegant, like Virgilia and Myrtilla, added the smooth, flowing style of Greek culture to their conversa-
tions, which imparted to their language a peculiar charm. As Romans of high rank were accustomed to educate their daughters equally with their sons, girls were instructed in music, painting, and literature, and often became proficient in these accomplishments.

"Thou hast lately come from Greece, hast thou not?" Virgilia inquired of Aziel.

"Yea; I was several months in Athens, and went also to Corinth," he answered.

"Thou hast, then, doubtless heard of the 'Praise of Julius,' and of his restoration of Corinth, after its desecration by the ruthless Mummius," said Placidus.

"Yea," replied Aziel; "that was one of the noblest works of Julius Cæsar; for the position of Corinth, at the head of two almost commingling gulfs, and commanding by them the commerce of Italy and Asia, gives her a position not less admirable than that of Alexandria or Byzantium; and Cæsar also displayed his good sense by establishing a colony there of enfranchised slaves, rather than from the sons of Rome's lazy plebeians."

"I agree with thee," assented Placidus. "No such mercantile community as the present Corinth could have sprung from the enervated descendants of Cæsar's veterans. Corinth has now taken the lead among the cities of European Hellas, and there is established the seat of the Roman government of Achaia, and its population probably exceeds that of any other Grecian rival. The beauty of its situation, the florid graces of its architecture, the charms of its parks and pleasure-grounds, delight the stranger; and the light and airy arcades, which connect the city with its harbor at Lechæum, may be advantageously contrasted with the monotonous length of wall which extends from Athens to the Piræus."
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"But that which interested me most in my visit to Corinth," remarked Aziel, "was the treasure I obtained while there."

"Doubtless some of that priceless Corinthian bronze buried in the ruins of the former city, which is now and then discovered, and commands large prices," said Placidus.

"Nay, thou art wrong," laughed Aziel; "my prize is worth more than Corinthian bronze, valuable as that may be, and will interest thy mother greatly, for it is a copy of the First and Second Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, which I obtained from the Christians while at Corinth."

"Thou hast indeed a treasure," affirmed Virgilia. "I have often desired to read those Epistles, especially the First, which I am informed so strongly proves the Resurrection of the Christ. I have a copy of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and a copy of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, obtained from the Christian Church here. Wilt thou remain long enough in Rome to allow my secretaries to copy thy precious scroll?"

"I shall be in Rome a month, but must then hasten back to Jerusalem, for I have grave news concerning matters there, and already there are serious disturbances which may portend a war in Judæa, if not in Jerusalem itself."

"Ah, well, if thou wilt grant me the loan of that scroll, I have many slaves who can write rapidly, and in that length of time I may secure a copy of this precious document," said Virgilia; while Placidus exclaimed,—

"That events point to war between Rome and Jerusalem, I admit; but, remember, Placidus and Aziel are always friends, though one be a Jew, and one a Roman; and though we find ourselves in hostile camps, if Aziel suffers, Placidus will seek his relief."
"I thank thee, noble Roman," cried Aziel; "and while Aziel lives, in peace or war, the name of Placidus will always gain all aid within my power."

"In truth, that was nobly said by both of you," declared the Roman matron, while the beautiful Myrtilia gazed from brother to friend with pride and emotion, dropping her downcast eyes as the glance of Aziel sought her face.

"Remember, Placidus," said his mother, "the name of war to woman is ever a terrible theme, even though she be the mother or the sister of a Roman soldier. I would not hold thee back, my son, from that profession of a knight, followed so worthily by thy revered father; but still, my mother’s heart grows faint at sound of war, and in thy absence Myrtilia and I grow very sad."

"Thou art a model wife and mother of a soldier," replied Placidus, "and thou hast never shown a craven heart when duty called thy son or husband to the field. If war again calls me, I know that both thou and my sister will display a true Roman courage and patriotism, though I must confess there is little of such valor now in vogue in Nero’s Rome. But, mother, we will talk on themes more grateful to thy loving heart. Aziel has told me much of this wondrous Nazarene, of whom my father spoke, and if it will calm thy troubled spirit, I will avow that I also have a great leaning towards that faith; for in these times, the marvellous life of Christ, and His holy teachings, appear, forsooth, the only inspiration for a soul groping blindly through the many superstitions of this age."

"Thy father died believing in the Christ," faltered Virgilia, her voice trembling with emotion; "and I have no greater hope for my children or myself, than that we also should accept this Christ as the Redeemer of the world, even though it leads to a Christian martyr’s fate.
But I am straitened, young Aziel," she continued, "until I read thy precious scroll. Canst thou lend it to me this eve, that I may peruse it in the hours of the night, and not encroach upon the short days which must suffice for my secretaries to obtain a copy of it? Forsooth, I cannot rest until I read the words of Paul upon the Resurrection; for methinks upon the truth of that event hangs largely the Christian hope of immortality."

Thereupon Aziel gladly removed the carefully guarded scroll from the folds of his embroidered girdle, and handing it to Virgilia, he departed with Placidus to the Praetorian camp, where the Roman soldier was summoned by military affairs.
CHAPTER VIII.

THE THERMÆ AGRIPPÆ. — THE SUICIDE OF PETRONIUS. —
THE ROMAN SENATOR. — SHOCKING SPECTACLES IN NERO'S
CIRCUS GARDENS.

About a month after the events narrated in our last
chapter, Placidus and Aziel were seated in one of the
apartments of the Thermæ Agrippæ, where the Roman
patrician youths were wont to gather together with the
strangers visiting Rome, to hear the latest news from the
court, or the more important facts concerning the politics
or commerce of the Empire.

"Nero is now in Campania, I hear," remarked an
Egyptian corn-merchant, lately arrived from Alexandria,
who reclined on one of the low couches, displaying by the
richness of his dress the prosperity of his business. He
was clothed in a long white linen tunic, with full sleeves,
and girdled with a wide belt of Persian colors, richly
blended. His outer robe was of silk with blue and golden
stripes, fringed at the hem, but without sleeves. His
turban was of scarlet silk roped with cords of gold, which
held it in place above his swarthy brow. He still adhered
to the ancient Egyptian custom of shaving the entire head,
and wearing a wig of plaited black hair, which was partly
visible beneath the voluminous folds of his turban. Also
his face was closely shaven, for the Egyptians abhorred
an unshaven face; but he followed the curious custom of
fastening a false beard in the place of the natural growth,
which was trimmed according to his rank, — none but
kings, and the statues of the gods, being allowed a certain cut of beard. As he spoke, he toyed with a cane of Almug-wood, carved upon the head with a lotus blossom. The wood was glowing in color as a garnet, and hard of grain, and very costly, being mostly used in making musical instruments, and ornaments of rare value.

"In truth, Rome is well rid of his royal presence," boldly asserted Placidus.

"Beware!" exclaimed a Grecian youth, clad in the loose Greek chlamys adopted by Nero, much to the offence of the decorum of patriot Romans, who adhered to the long toga, and deemed this Grecian cloak effeminate and vulgar; "peradventure these walls may hide some delator, spying treason against Cæsar, that he may thereby line well his money-belt, by reporting such free-spoken criticisms of mighty Nero."

"And though a man be mum, that may not always save his head," rejoined an Arab, lazily sunning himself in the open window, "as we sons of Ishmael know too well, to our sorrow." And his dark eyes gleamed with anger beneath his white turban, and his sun-bronzed cheek glowed with a more ruddy tint than even desert winds had implanted there; and his long, yellow hands clutched the short sword sheathed in the folds of the scarlet sash, which held in place a voluminous white wool bournouse, which half concealed a yellow cotton tunic. He had brought to Rome a cargo of gums and spices from Arabia.

"Thou mayest well be wary of Nero's smiles," quoth a Hindoo diamond-merchant from far India. "He stretches his hands even to our sacred Indus, and grasps our milky pearls and costly ivory to make resplendent his Golden House, and clothes his spotted skin in our silken fabrics, hoping thereby to conceal his puny ugliness." And the
lithe Hindoo drew up his graceful form in proud disdain, as he toyed with a magnificent gem upon his tapering finger, and then stroked with complacency his long white beard, knowing full well how picturesque he appeared in his robe of scarlet silk, and turban of cloth of gold. His white tunic was shorter than that worn by Aziel, and full trousers were visible beneath it, while his feet were covered with yellow pointed-toed slippers.

"Methinks Nero's ears must tingle," laughed Aziel, who leaned in graceful pose against a column, and made a pleasing picture with his golden locks falling upon his bright blue talith, which had replaced his silken robe of Tyrian purple, interdicted by Nero's command in Rome, but which he wore in Jerusalem, as becoming to his rank. And, in truth, amongst those swarthy men, with eyes and brows dark with sullen frowns and desert winds, Aziel, with his violet eyes and locks of gold, appeared indeed fair and ruddy of countenance, as Solomon of old.

Just then there entered a Roman youth, clad in a white woollen tunic, bordered with red, while a scarlet lacerna was thrown carelessly over one shoulder, and who showed much excitement, as he exclaimed,—

"What ho! do ye know the news? Petronius at last is sacrificed to the jealousy of Tigellinus."

"Art thou sure?" cried the Greek.

"Would I were not," sorrowfully continued the Roman youth. "But can one's own eyes deceive when he is forced to witness the death of his dearest friend?"

"Wert thou there?" questioned Placidus, looking every inch a Roman soldier in his golden armor, shining helmet, and scarlet military toga. "Give us the details of the direful news with greater plainness. We can ill spare Petronius from our Roman feasts, for though he fawned
on Cæsar, which I liked not, he still was keen of wit, and often did hurl some bantering jest e’en at the royal head, which well I liked.”

“Thus it came to pass,” responded the Roman youth; “and ere I am done my sad recital, I wot that thou, soldier as thou art, must perforce acknowledge that Petronius died no coward, but as became a Roman knight of patrician rank. Thou knowest Nero is in Campania, and Tigellinus, the rival of Petronius for the favor of Cæsar, was with the Emperor, and therefore had his ear, and being craftier than our delightful Petronius, took this time to accuse his rival of an intimacy with the traitor Scævinus, having suborned a slave to depose against him, and, moreover, deprived Petronius by an adroit trick of the means of defence. For Petronius, when accused, started straight-way for Campania, that there he might plead his innocence; but, through the connivance of Tigellinus, was detained at Cumæ. I, with four other friends of Petronius, had accompanied him thither. He thereupon summoned us to his presence, and declared that he would anticipate trial and sentence by suicide, for none accused have escaped Nero’s brutal cruelty; and Petronius declared he would not give his former royal friend, now the perfidious Cæsar, the satisfaction of sentencing him to death.”

“I like that spirit well,” cried Placidus. “If a Roman cannot die honorably on the battle-field, or peacefully in his bed, he need not die ignobly at the command of a cruel tyrant.”

“I agree not with thee there,” said Aziel. “Whosoever killeth himself is a murderer, and that is forbidden by our law.”

“Forsooth, Aziel, Roman honor is not according to Jewish law or custom, I admit, but Roman belief mostly agrees with Pliny, when he says:—
"There is nothing certain, save that nothing is certain; and there is no more wretched and yet arrogant being than man. The best thing which has been given to man amid the many torments of this life is, that he can take his own life.' Or, as Sophocles says:

"'Happiest beyond compare
Never to taste of life;
Happiest in order next,
Being born, with quickest speed
Thither again to turn
From whence we came.'"

"But let us know how Petronius died," persisted the Arab. "We Arabs also believe in never submitting to a tyrant. A dagger-thrust and a grave in the desert is our recourse when our steeds, swift as the wind, can carry us no farther in a flight for life."

"I have already recounted how Petronius summoned us to his side," resumed the Roman youth; "and then in our presence he bravely opened his veins, preparing to bleed to death. And, that he might display his courage and disdain of Nero's sentence, he spake with us in lively manner, now binding up his veins, if the talk became of interest, then opening them again, if wit and jest languished. He even improvised verses with his usual aptness, and smiled when we grew sad; then called his slaves, and gave them presents; and, to enliven our spirits, caused some to receive punishment for trifling faults, thus playing the Caesar for our amusement."

"Forsooth, that was a sorry amusement," ejaculated Aziel.

"It was, in truth," continued the young man; "but Roman youths affect Epicureanism while in life, and Stoicism in death. Over our sepulchres are inscribed: 'To eternal sleep.' 'I was not, and became; I was, and
am no more.' 'We all, whom death has laid low, are decaying bones and ashes, nothing else.' 'I was nought, and am nought. Thou who readest this, eat, drink, make merry, come.'"

"The Romans are, then, worse than the Egyptians," protested the Alexandrian corn-merchant. "We believe in immortality, and therefore build famous pyramids, and embalm the bodies of our dead, that they may bide the time of awakening."

"Surely, the Gospel of the Nazarene is indeed needed in Rome!" exclaimed Aziel, shocked at such hopeless doctrines.

"How ended Petronius?" inquired the Hindoo. "Buddha would have taught him better than that."

"He then called for his will," resumed the Roman youth, "and instead of bequeathing his estates to Nero, as so many do, hoping thereby to gain pardon for themselves, or freedom from persecution for their families, Petronius wrote a codicil, with an indignant recital of the cruelties of Nero and his myrmidons, then signed, sealed, and transmitted the document to the tyrant. He then broke his signet, that it might never be again used to bring the guiltless into peril, and he dashed in pieces a costly vase of the much prized Murrha, to deprive Nero of a relic which he knew he greatly coveted. Petronius then partook of his last meal with his usual grace, amid luxurious environments, and then composed himself to sleep, that his death might have the semblance of a natural end. The end was speedy. Thus perished Petronius, the former Arbiter of the Imperial Pleasures!"

"But according to Roman custom, Caesar may still inflict posthumous infamy, termed Damnatio Memoriae, upon his memory," remarked the Greek; "for thus is the law if
the accused commit suicide before the execution of the sentence."

"It were a sad end indeed," murmured an aged Roman senator, who had heretofore been silent, sitting with bowed head, wrapped in a white toga, the broad purple border of which, together with his black sandals adorned with silver crescents, attested his senatorial rank. "But these aged eyes have beheld more harrowing sights. What think ye?" he continued, with growing excitement, throwing aside his toga, and standing tall and stately in his white woollen tunic, purple-striped, as became his order, which purple was not the shade of the tint reserved for Cæsar. "What think ye," he again cried, clasping his thin hands tightly together, "if ye had been forced to stand by and see an only son and daughter bound to the stake in Nero's circus gardens on that direful August night, and behold them burning in horrible tortures before your very eyes, and you helpless to move hand or foot for their deliverance? Such was my awful fate," he exclaimed, his face writhing with agony at the remembered spectacle of revolting anguish. "My son and daughter had avowed their Christian faith, and when the infamous Nero accused the Christians of the crime of firing Rome, my cherished children were seized, because spies had reported their presence at the places of Christian worship in the Catacombs; and my only son, a young man of thirty, already bearing his senatorial honors with dignity and great promise, and my daughter, beautiful as a goddess, pure as a lily, docile as a dove, tender as a violet, was dragged forth with her brother from the Catacombs, where they had gone to worship, and were bound and carried to those circus gardens, where I, not knowing of their sad fate, but obliged, by my office, to attend the Emperor, first
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beheld them, after they were wrapped in pitchy winding-sheets and tied to stakes, were lighted as human torches, to delight the diabolical brutality of that monster. Are ye not amazed that I lived, and kept my reason?” he cried, with hot tears streaming down his cheeks. “I would have caught the instigator of this blood-curdling spectacle, and torn him limb from limb, even there in his own gardens. I was rushing towards the chariot, where the monster sat and smiled, — nay laughed with demon leer at all this woe! —would have jumped upon him, as I would have fought a wild beast, bare though my hands were of weapon; but what stayed me? Listen! and then say if the power of this Christian faith is not wonderful, amazing, past all comprehending, save that it be direct from the Almighty God Himself, — a God greater than Jupiter, more powerful than legions of Roman hosts. I was just springing upon the tyrant, when lo! my son, tied there to a burning stake, the flames then reaching his noble head, seeing my intent, called aloud to me. Instantly I was beside him, and he murmured through the rising fire, with half-smothered breath,—

“‘My father, avenge not our deaths! We perish because we would not renounce our faith in Jesus the Christ. Mourn not for us; to-day we shall be with Him in Paradise!’

“He ceased. The fire had done its awful work; and as I turned with wild frenzy towards my idolized daughter, bound also to a burning stake, she lifted her lovely head and smiled, then looked toward heaven, and closed her dove-like eyes, and still smiled, as the tongues of fire caught her luxuriant locks; and while the flame-halo shone round her angel face, looked once more with love upon me. Then the horrid, red, writhing mass of fire enveloped her,
and I fell senseless and raving upon the ground, and was borne by my servants from that dreadful spot."

"Oh!" cried Aziel, running to the side of the old Roman noble, and clasping his trembling hands with sympathetic fervor, "my God!" he continued, "and Nero yet lives!"

"Yea, Nero lives!" gasped the weeping father; "but the Almighty God will yet be my avenger. I have read my children's Gospel; I have learned of the Christ, and, if needs be, I am ready for my turn at the stake, or for my last wrestle with the wild beasts with which Nero delights himself, by feeding them with Christian flesh." And the grand old senator wrapped his toga about his tearful face, and slowly retired from the apartment. In the next persecution of the Christians, he, too, was torn in pieces by famished beasts in the amphitheatre, and his believing soul joined his martyred children in Paradise.

As the senator withdrew, Placidus exclaimed, —

"A thousand curses on that monster, Nero! Forsooth, Roman as I am, I long to turn my sword against the tyrant!"

"Hist, man!" cried the Roman youth. "I agree with thee; but though Nero be in Campania, there are spies at Rome, and unless one could redden his sword in the tyrant's blood, it were not worth while to lose one's head for useless curses."

"It is well said, young Roman," interjected the Egyptian; "and as curses will avail nothing, I would meanwhile ask the Jew certain questions pertaining to his faith, for I perceive that he is not only a Jew, but a Christian, which is verily a stranger combination than a Gentile believer. For if I mistake not, the Jews persecute the Christians with almost the ferocity of Nero. Why thinkest thou,
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young man," he continued, "that thy Jehovah, or indeed this Christ, was more a God than Ammon-Ra, or our great Osiris, god of the sun?"

"I know not all the legends of thy gods," replied Aziel; "but this I know,—the Jehovah-Religion is the only true religion of the world, and is the oldest of all religions."

"How makest thou that fact plain?" rejoined the Egyptian; "Ammon is called 'The King of gods,' 'the Eldest of the gods.'"

"I would briefly explain the Jehovah-Religion thus," replied Aziel:

"At the time of man's creation, God, called in the Hebrew tongue Elohim, revealed Himself to man by direct communication. This revelation may be termed Elohim-Religion. Through all the wickedness and idolatry of the descendants of Adam, traces of this Elohim-Religion remained, as we see by Noah, of whom it is recorded, 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' And with Noah, again God held more direct communication. After the deluge, when the descendants of Noah were scattered, the Egyptian dynasty of the Pharоahs, commencing with Mizraim, the son of Ham; the Chinese Empire, being founded by Fohi, supposed to be the Noah of the Bible; the Babylonians, originating in Belus, supposed to be Nimrod, the grandson of Ham; and the Assyrians, being descendants from Asshur, the son of Shem,—these oldest nations of the world, through Noah and his sons and grandsons, were possessed of traditions of the Elohim-Religion, which accounts for the golden gleams of truth shining here and there through all the darkness of their false and idolatrous beliefs, and also for the traditions of the deluge, which are found in all these heathen religions.
"Now again, in the history of the world, God more directly communicated with mankind in the calling of Abraham, whose family was a branch of the descendants of Shem; and from Abraham rose the Jewish nation. In the calling of Moses, God declared Himself to be Jehovah; 'And God said unto Moses, I am that I am, — the Jehovah!'

"Thus the Elohim-Religion was the forerunner of the Jehovah-Religion, afterwards the Jewish Religion, and the Jewish Religion was the forerunner of Christianity proper, for it was the continued revelation of God to man.

"'Christianity was not a patch or amendment upon Judaism,'" continued Aziel, "'though it is no new religion from a new God; but it is a new system of religious teaching, based upon a New Covenant made between God and man by Christ the Mediator, whose blood sealed that new covenant and made it operative.'"

"And why may not our Buddha, whom we worship, be as much a god as your Christ?" interposed the Hindoo.

"Buddhism was never heard of," replied Aziel, "until about six hundred years before Christ, when, as you know, it was originated by a prince in Central India. Meanwhile the Jews had been taken captive again and again: by the Egyptians 1729 B.C., by the Assyrians, 721 B.C., by the Babylonians, 693 B.C. With the Jews went their religion into all these countries. At the date 693 B.C., the Jews were possessed of the books of the Old Testament, down to Nahum. They thus had the Torah, or books of Moses, the Psalms of David, and many of the prophets, including Isaiah; and thus the prophecies regarding a coming Messiah were well known to them, so that it is not unlikely that the idea of Buddha originated in the prophecies of a coming Christ. More than that, your
Buddha never claimed to be a god; it is only his followers who have deified him, and all descriptions of Buddha fall so far short of the marvellous accounts of this Jesus Christ, that there is no comparison between Buddha, lovely as he is represented as a human being, and this matchless life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Divine Christ, who also declared Himself to be the Divine Son of Jehovah, and challenged the world to refute His claims to perfect holiness, and proved His Divinity by His miraculous Resurrection, of the truth of which marvellous fact many are still living who were witnesses of that wonderful event. I have just found in Corinth a copy of the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, in which he declares as truth the stupendous fact of the Resurrection of Christ, and challenges living witnesses to deny, if they can, this event which took place before their own eyes."

"How dost thou explain," asked the Egyptian, "if this Christ actually performed such a mighty miracle as this Resurrection thou speakest of, that such a marvellous fact should have apparently made so little stir in the world?"

"I conjecture," rejoined Aziel, "that one great reason of this surprising apathy, in view of such an astonishing fact, is because all the pagan beliefs are made up of a collection of impossible myths and legends, in which your deities are represented in connection with such fabulous tales, that this stupendous, simple fact of the Resurrection fails to excite your wonder. And the Jews reject it because they are not willing to acknowledge the Messiahship of One whose kingdom is not of earth, but in the domain of spirit; and the reason why Christians do not continually reiterate the truth of this miracle, is because it is to them as evident a fact as that Nero sits upon the throne of Rome, for those are still living who were wit-
nesses of the event, and they do not rise in vindication of
the truth of what they feel is as well authenticated as is
the fact of Nero's burning of the Christians."

"And from what my father said, who was the Roman
Centurion at the Cross on Calvary," exclaimed Placidus,
"I conjecture none of those living witnesses will dare deny
the evidence of their own senses."

"Art thou turning Christian, also?" asked the Arab.

"Peradventure," replied Placidus.

"I would ask the Jew," continued the Arab, "if he has
heard aught of those people he mentioned as the Chinese;
for in my wanderings I have heard strange rumors of a
mighty people dwelling in central Asia, who keep them-
selves aloof from the world, only disposing of a certain
amount of raw silk to other countries, since it was by
accident made known that they were the discoverers of
the valuable products of the silk-worm. I hear also that
they worship one Confucius; but whether he be a god or
not is vague to me."

"The Jews, who are widely scattered over the earth,"
replied Aziel, "have traces of this nation, who are said
to have been first known to history about one hundred and
twenty-nine years before Christ. The Chinese aided the
Scythians, and ravaged the coasts of the Caspian; and
fifteen years before Christ it is said the religion of Laot-se
began among the Chinese; but both Confucius and Laot-se
were only philosophers, and did not claim to be gods, and
were only deified by their followers. This Jesus, the
Christ, is the only man in history who has ever claimed to
be Divine."

"I believe thou art right there," interposed the Greek;
"none of our heroes claimed to be divine, though our
legends gave some of them descent from the Olympian
deities; but ye Jews claim perfection for thy Jehovah, whereas we Greeks acknowledge that even Zeus is not exempt from foibles like ourselves. When it comes to a claim of absolute perfection, I am free to admit thy Jehovah stands alone on that ground."

"But we initiated among the Egyptians," said the Alexandrian, "claim also but one god, and declare that these lesser deities, worshipped in Egypt by the masses, are but different forms or attributes under which this one god manifests himself. Where the initiated, who are instructed in the highest mysteries of religion, hold a lofty and abstract idea pertaining to the Deity, the uneducated people substitute a gross material form of religion, descending to idolatry."

"Ye then worship not idols?" interjected Aziel. "I had thought the Egyptians were all idol-worshippers."

"And thou art right, regarding the mass of the Egyptians; but the Egyptian religion has two phases,—one, that in which it is presented to the vast mass of the population, the other, that aspect which it bears in the minds of the learned and the initiated. To the populace it is a Polytheism of a multitudinous, and, in many respects, of a gross character; to the initiated, it is a strict Monotheism, with a metaphysical speculative philosophy on the two great subjects,—the nature of God and the destiny of man."

"But nowhere are the forms of idol-worship more gross than in Egypt," said the Greek.

"I acknowledge that is so among the masses," confessed the Egyptian.

Turning to Aziel, the Greek remarked,—

"But your Christ was not the first to enunciate the Golden Rule. In the writings of Confucius, and in the
sacred books of Buddha, are to be found formulæ very similar to what ye call the Gospel Golden Rule."

"I dispute not that fact," replied Aziel; "but the stupendous difference lies in this: Confucius and Buddha, while inculcating the brotherly love which is the essence of the Golden Rule, imparted no spiritual power to their followers to enable them to overcome human selfishness as to obey the command given; whereas Christ not only proclaims the command, but at the same time imparts to man's spiritual nature a distinct and divine power, which transforms the minds of men from self love to brotherly love. The followers of the Christ 'by nature have wills as stubborn as the rest of the froward sons of Adam; but when the day of Christ's power comes to them, and grace displays its omnipotence, they become willing to repent and believe in Jesus the Christ. None are saved unwillingly, but the will is made sweetly to yield itself. What a wondrous power is this which never violates man's free will, and yet rules it! God does not break the lock, but He opens it by a master key, which He alone can handle.'"

"Have ye as many gods in Egypt as we Romans have?" asked Placidus of the Alexandrian; "as we import the gods of every conquered nation to Rome, we are well supplied, and if numbers of deities insure greater prosperity, we are of all nations most secure."

"Egypt counts her gods by scores," answered the Egyptian.

"What are the thoughts of the Egyptians concerning evil?" inquired Aziel.

"One account is, that Set, the original spirit of evil, was always present with Osiris, the spirit of good, but that after a time the spirit of good overcame the spirit of evil, and Set was banished from his place by Osiris. In this
connection it was not a personality of evil, but the abstract idea of evil, which must necessarily accompany the idea of good, as our idea of darkness is connected with light. The personal spirit of evil is represented by Apophis, the great serpent, and serves to personify sin."

"I have heard it said," rejoined Aziel, "that in the prayers of the Egyptians, as they have been recorded, there is the absence of any confession of sin on the part of the suppliant; but his prayers are mostly boastful assertions of his good deeds and many excellencies, whereas our Psalms are many of them petitions for forgiveness for transgressions, and Paul declares that all men 'have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'"

"As we hold that most of our deities have like passions with ourselves," interposed the Greek, "I suppose men pride themselves upon being as good as their gods, if they may not be so powerful. I have studied that remarkable scroll, the 'Egyptian Book of the Dead,' and have been much interested in the ideas there recorded."

"And our hymns to Ammon-Ra are equally impressive," assented the Alexandrian.

"I now see," rejoined Aziel, "more clearly the difficulties Moses had to encounter in his endeavors to instil into the minds of the Jewish people the simple and holy truths concerning Jehovah, the One Everlasting God, who forbade all kinds of idol-worship. When the Jews had become contaminated with idolatry, through their long bondage in Egypt, the one thread of truth which I discover among these tangled threads of error, and which gives me a new glimpse of God's providence in that age of religious darkness, is the idea of One God, above all gods. Not even the black darkness of superstition and idolatry could entirely obliterate the light revealed to man by Jehovah,
but it has continued to shine into the hearts of even those misguided souls, who, blinded by ignorance and sin, have failed to catch a glimpse of His Holy Nature, and have pitifully substituted for His all-wise love, and attributes of perfection and power, their own poor conceptions of His great and Infinite Being."

"Methinks thou art very liberal in thy opinions for a Jew," averred Placidus. "Thy nation does not usually admit that any Gentiles, or barbarians, as they term them, can, forsooth, be worth the saving of their Jehovah, who has made the Jews His chosen people, and reserved salvation for the descendants of Abraham alone."

"Thou art not far wrong there, my friend, concerning the belief of the self-satisfied and hypocritical Pharisee, whose religion consists mainly in the breadth of the tephillim, or phylacteries, bound upon their foreheads, or the length of the ṭīqqūṭ, or fringes upon the four corners of their robes," confessed Aziel. "But many of the Jews are not thus blinded; and those who have faith in the Christ, must acknowledge that God is no respecter of persons, but desires that all men should come unto Him, and be saved. I would answer the Egyptian," he continued, "as Paul said to the Athenians:—

"'For as I passed by and beheld your devotion, I found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.

"'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands:

"'Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things:
"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us:

"For in Him we live and move and have our being: as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

"Where dost thou find those words of Paul?" asked Placidus, with interest, being struck with their wonderful force as applied to the remarks of the Egyptian.

"They are in the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke about three years ago, here in Rome; probably during Paul's first imprisonment here, when Luke was with him. I obtained the scroll from thy mother a few days ago, and have been deeply impressed by the wonderful account there given of the missionary journeys of Paul and Peter."

"I have often wondered," remarked Placidus, "why Christ did not answer that question of Pilate: 'What is Truth?'"

"In times past I, too, questioned thus," rejoined Aziel; "but deeper reflection convinces me that Christ did answer Pilate most fully. He stood before Pilate as the most
perfect manifestation of Truth which has, or ever will be, vouchsafed to mortal vision; He was the visible manifestation of Truth, not only to the soul or spirit of man, but to man's material vision, as manifested in the flesh. Truth is spiritual; it is divine. Truth is the manifestation of God. All of Truth has never been known to man; all of truth may never be known, even throughout eternity, to the spirit of man. God, and Christ His Son, who was the visible manifestation of truth, alone know all truth."

"How thinkest thou we can know of truth?" asked the Egyptian.

"Through one method only," replied Aziel, — "the Inspired Word of God, and the illumination of the Spirit of God within the spirit or soul of man. All other search is fruitless. We may obtain so-called earth-knowledge through other sources; but Christ declared: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me!'

"Is more of truth known to the spirit of man in this age than in past ages?" inquired the Hindoo.

"Yea, verily," responded Aziel, in reverent tones; "else were the government of this world under a perfect God a failure, which is a supposition absurd, granting the goodness, the perfection, and all-power of God. 'That which moveth God to work is goodness, and that which ordereth His work is wisdom; and that which perfecteth His work is power.'"

"Dost thou think truth is progressive?" asked the Hindoo.

"Not in its essence," answered Aziel, "which was complete from the beginning; but our apprehension of truth is progressive."
"Why has man's search for truth so often proved unavailing?" rejoined the Hindoo.

"The mistake frequently made in the search for truth, is in the mistaken method of man's devising," replied Aziel. "Men search for truth in human opinions and traditions, and find themselves struggling in the sea of doubt. Truth cannot be limited by man's idea of progression; truth being all-perfect from the beginning,—co-existent with God, the Fountain of all truth. Earth-language is of itself a limitation, not of truth, but a limitation of our clear apprehension of the truth. The difficulty with most men in searching after truth is, that the mind of man anchors itself upon some human opinion or tradition, and then endeavors to make his glimpse of truth fit that opinion, or the traditions of his forefathers; and when, by the progression of the thought of the age, he is torn from his anchorage of human tradition, he finds himself sinking in the turbulent sea of false belief, floundering between the rocks of agnosticism and blind credulity; clinging now to one as truth, now to the other, only to be cast back into the black waters of hopeless despair."

"In such case it were better, peradventure, to cease this hopeless search," rejoined the Egyptian.

"Nay, nay!" responded Aziel, while the light of faith illumined his glowing face, and flashed in his blue eyes. "If the soul of the searcher for truth is anchored upon the Rock of Jehovah's Word," he continued, "and God's Holy Spirit enlightens his conscience, then, though he search here and there through human interpretations of Scripture declarations, seeking clearer apprehension of the truth, he shall not flounder in a sea of doubt, but shall have his conscience more and more illumined by the light of the
Spirit of God, who will reveal to him more and more of truth, and will clarify his spiritual vision so that he shall more clearly discern the shrouding mists of error which human opinions and traditions have hung as a mask before the shining face of truth."

"I would converse with thee again upon this subject," remarked the Egyptian to Aziel, as the hour of the mid-day siesta drew nigh, and the various groups in the different apartments of the Baths prepared to retire for the usual noon seclusion.

"I would speak with thee farther regarding Petronius," said Placidus, to the Roman youth who had brought the news of the death of that Roman favorite. "From the murmurs I hear in the legions of Rome, Nero will not go on much longer in his career of crime; the troops are already looking towards Galba with serious intentions regarding the downfall of Nero; but this is only whispered under one's breath," he added, warningly.

Whereupon Placidus and Aziel departed for the villa on the Cælian Hill.
CHAPTER IX.

THE VILLA ON THE CÆLIAN HILL. — THE CATACOMBS OF ROME. — A PICTURE OF THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ROME.

Placidus and Aziel, leaving the Thermae Agrippae, proceeded to the Via Lata, of which the Via Flaminia is the continuation.

"One of the most famous mausoleums of Rome," remarked Placidus, "is situated to the north of this spot, on the east bank of the Tiber, near the Via Flaminia. We can just catch a faint glimpse of it there in the distance; it is the Mausoleum of Augustus, a lofty marble tower in the midst of three terraced slopes, covered with earth and planted with cypress-trees. This mausoleum was constructed in imitation of the Temple of Belus, in Babylon. The terraces are pierced with numerous chambers, rising story upon story, and destined to receive the remains of the Imperial family. The first to be interred there was Marcellus, son of Octavia, sister of Augustus. At the present time, there lie buried there the ashes of Agrippa, Octavia, Drusus, and Augustus Cæsar, whose body was burnt A. D. 14, on a funeral pile so gigantic, that the weeping Livia and Roman senators were obliged to keep watch for five days and nights before the flames were so far extinguished as to enable them to obtain the sacred ashes. Germanicus, nephew of Tiberius, was interred there A. D. 19, and then followed Drusus, son of Tiberius, the Empress Livia, Agrippina, widow of Germanicus, and her two sons, then the Emperors Tiberius,
Caligula, and Claudius, and lastly, Britannicus, the son of Claudius, murdered by Nero, A. D. 55.”

“It were a pity that Nero himself is not reduced to ashes and deposited there, for the peace of Rome,” said Aziel.

“Thou art not far wrong in that,” rejoined Placidus; “but methinks his evil days are numbered. There are rumors of revolts in Gaul and Spain, and many murmurs nearer home, and Nero may well see ghosts at night, and fly from room to room in his grand palace, crying out that the furies are after him. There will be more ghosts than that of his murdered mother to torment his dreams. And if there is a Hades, where the spirits of the wicked shall suffer, verily, the lowest depths of fire await this infamous Nero; and he may there himself experience the exquisite sensations of being used as a burning torch for the illumination of the circus gardens of the devil.”

The young men then moved round the northeastern side of the Capitoline Hill to the Forum; thence through the Via Sacra to the Via Appia, and reaching the Via Scænari, which crossed the Cælian Hill, they at length entered the luxurious gardens of the villa, the home of the family of Placidus.

Here they found Myrtilla gathering roses; she greeted her brother and his friend with evident pleasure, and the three seated themselves for a time in the grateful shade of an orange grove.

“Aziel tells me that he must start to-morrow for Jerusalem,” remarked Placidus to his sister. As he noted the shade of regret which overshadowed her face at this announcement, he wondered how deep was the impression made by this Jewish friend on the youthful heart of his beloved Myrtilla.
"My mother will be sad at such news," rejoined Myrtilla; then, turning to Aziel, she continued, "My mother and I keep ourselves so closely secluded in our own home, that the friends of my brother are doubly welcome, not only for his sake, but because of the delightful variety it lends to our lives; and especially when they are like thyself, fitted by education and travel to impart to us such instructive knowledge."

"I perceive that the fair Roman maids know also how to flatter our masculine vanity," laughed Aziel, being well pleased the while to have seemingly gained the good wishes of this fair daughter of Italy, who, had Miriam been less fair, and Aziel more fickle, might have caused him to have left his heart there in Rome, when his steps were again turned towards Jerusalem.

"Have you visited the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris since you have been in Rome?" inquired Myrtilla of Aziel. "It is a deeply interesting spot," she continued, "because connected with such an impressive historical incident."

"I have not had time to show that temple to Aziel," interposed Placidus; "and, verily, I have taken him to so many temples already, that he will remember Rome as a confused mass of heathen fanes, I fear; though I do not wonder that ye women are particularly interested in that monument of woman's power."

"Where is this Temple of Fortune situated?" asked Aziel of Myrtilla; "and what is its history?" he added, thinking that the recital would be all the more impressive falling from lips which combined the witchery of perfect curves with the more elevated attraction of a sensitive refinement.

"The Temple of Fortuna Muliebris," said Myrtilla,
pleased to comply with his request, "is situated about three and a half miles from Rome, on the rising ground between the Claudian Aqueduct and the road leading to Albano, which village you can just discern in the dim distance. This temple was built and dedicated to 'Woman's Fortune' at the time when Coriolanus was encamped upon that site, with the army of the Volscians, who had threatened to attack Rome. As Valeria, sister of Publicola, was sitting in the Temple of Jupiter as a suppliant before the shrine of that god, the story goes, Jupiter himself seemed to inspire her with a sudden thought. She therefore rose, and called upon all the other noble Roman ladies who were in the temple to accompany her to the house of Veturia, the mother of Coriolanus. There they found Volumnia, the wife of Coriolanus, with his mother, and also his little children. Thereupon Valeria thus addressed Veturia and Volumnia, —

"'Our coming here to you is our own doing; neither the senate nor any mortal man has sent us; but the god in whose temple we were sitting as suppliants, put it into our hearts that we should come and ask you to join us, women with women, without any aid of man, to win for our country a great deliverance, and for ourselves a name, glorious above all women, even above those Sabine wives in the old time, who stopped the battle between their husbands and their fathers. Come, then, with us to the camp of Coriolanus, and let us pray to him to show us mercy.'

"Veturia said: 'We will go with thee!' And Volumnia took her young children with her, and they all went to the camp of the enemy.

"To see this train of noble Roman matrons was, in truth, a sad and solemn sight, as they wended their way
out of the city towards the hostile camp. Even the Volscian soldiers stood in silence, and with reverent demeanor, as they passed by, and pitied and honored them. They found Coriolanus, as the general of the host, seated in the midst of the camp, with his Volscian chiefs standing around him, awaiting his commands. When Coriolanus recognized his mother walking at the head of this sorrowful train, he arose in haste from his seat, and ran to meet her, and would have kissed her. But she prevented his caress, saying,—

"'Ere thou kiss me, let me know whether I am speaking to an enemy, or to my son; whether I stand in thy camp as thy prisoner, or thy mother?"

"Coriolanus hesitating to answer this unlooked-for question, she continued, 'Must it be, then, that had I never borne a son, Rome would never have seen the camp of an enemy; that had I remained childless, I should have died a free woman in a free city? But I am too old to bear much longer either thy shame or my misery. Rather look to thy wife and children, whom, if thou persistest, thou art dooming to an untimely death, or to a life of bondage.'"

"Then Volumnia and his children came to him and kissed him, and all the Roman ladies wept and bemoaned their own fate, and the fate of their country. At last Coriolanus, unable longer to endure the sight of the tears of his wife and mother, cried out,—

"'O mother! what hast thou done to me?' and he clasped her hand, and said in a voice trembling with emotion,—

"'Mother, thine is the victory! A happy victory for thee and for Rome, but shame and ruin to thy son!'

"Then he fell on her neck and embraced her, and then embraced his wife and children, and sent them back
to Rome; and he led away the army of the Volscians, and relinquished his sworn purpose of attacking Rome.

"For this heroic action the Roman people honored Valeria and Veturia, and begged them to choose what should be their reward for this noble deed. They thereupon asked that this temple should be erected upon the spot where Coriolanus had yielded to his mother's prayers; and the first priestess of the temple was Valeria, into whose heart Jupiter had first put the inspiration which she so faithfully obeyed. The temple stands at the fourth milestone on the Via Latina, and was dedicated by the consul Proculus Virginius, 486 B.C. The service of the temple was to be performed by women newly married for the first time, and no one who had wedded a second husband was permitted to approach the statue of the goddess."

"That is indeed a pathetic and inspiring incident," remarked Aziel, as Myrtilla finished her recital; and he thought how much higher it would rank among his memories connected with the Eternal City, when he recalled the low, sweet voice, and charming manner of the narrator.

As the rays of the mid-day sun had now become very oppressive, Myrtilla rose to retire into the villa, whither Placidus and Aziel soon followed her, the maiden seeking her own apartments, while the young men threw themselves upon the inviting couches in the porticoed nymphaeum. Here they were lulled to their noon siesta by the music of the plashing fountain, and cooled by the swaying of large fans made from the gorgeous feathers of the peacock in the hands of attendant slaves; while the air was perfumed by the roses and violets growing in crystal vases between the ivy-twined columns of the
portico. As Aziel sank into a dreamy slumber, he beheld visions of two fair faces, both so lovely and fascinating, that his mind for a moment could not determine which had charmed him most, the daughter of Rome the Imperial, or the daughter of Jerusalem the Beautiful.

That evening, as Aziel and Placidus, with Virgilia and Myrtilla, were partaking of the evening cæna in the triclinium of the Cælian villa, Aziel remarked that there was one more place in Rome that he much desired to visit before his departure from the city. "I have much curiosity to behold the Catacombs of Rome," he continued, addressing himself to Virgilia, who occupied the seat of honor on the middle couch, which her son, as head of the household, was entitled to, but which he gracefully insisted should be occupied by his handsome and revered mother.

Virgilia presided at the feast with patrician dignity, and appeared in dress and manner to adorn her station. Her robe to-night was Tyrian purple, which, in the seclusion of her own house, could not excite comment. Her gems were amethysts, set here and there with a rare emerald; while her sandals were of purple leather fastened with golden cords. Her luxuriant gray hair was partially concealed by a turban head-dress of cloth of silver, studded here and there with rubies.

Myrtilla, seated next to her brother, and on the opposite couch to Aziel, was radiant in a tunic of pale pink, fastened with carved cameos of rose-colored coral. Her hair to-night was coiffed in Roman fashion, upon which glistened a diamond star; her flowing robe, falling from the shoulder over a pink silk tunic, was of silver tissue, and her sandals of pink leather laced with silver cords. Her bare arms were clasped above the elbow with antique
bracelets of gold, and on her slender wrists were similar gold bands, connected with the upper armlets by chains of gold. Over her black coifed hair she wore a caul, or network, of strings of pearl, caught here and there by pink coral beads. The caul was fringed with pearls and silver, and fell low upon her broad white forehead in a crescent of small diamonds mingled with pearls and rubies.

These rich costumes were not donned by either Virgilia or Myrtilla as evidences of ostentatious display, but were worn with a quiet refinement and modesty, that bespoke their familiarity with an attire becoming their station; and with that attention to details, which showed the deference they paid to the presence of the son and brother, rather than from a desire to shine in the presence of a stranger. And Aziel felt that his presence had not occasioned this becoming appearance of these lovely women, but that such was their daily custom, when honored with the society of a son and brother.

"Thy desire may be granted this very eve," replied Virgilia, in answer to the expressed wish of Aziel. "Myrtilla and I had arranged to be escorted to the Catacombs by our trusty freedmen, with a sufficient retinue of slaves to insure our safety; and if Placidus and thou wilt join our party, it will please us much. I have received news that a copy of the Gospel written by Mark has been obtained by our Christian Church at Rome, and I am impatient to hear further regarding the marvellous life of the Christ, as described by one who was a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, like Matthew, or intimate associates of Paul and Peter, like Luke and Mark."

"Knowest thou who this Mark is?" inquired Placidus. "Luke I met in Jerusalem, when he came there with the Apostle Paul, having passed through Miletus, Tyre, and
Cæsarea, as the companion of Paul, on his third missionary tour; but of Mark I know little."

"I knew well the family of Mark in Jerusalem," replied Aziel. "He was the son of a certain Mary, a Jewish matron known to my mother, and was probably descended from a Hellenistic family, as he was the cousin of Barnabas of Cyprus, the great friend of Paul. The mother of Mark, whose Jewish name was John, or Johanan, meaning the 'Grace of God,' and whose Latin surname was Marcus, called Mark in the 'Acts,' was intimately acquainted with Peter, and it was to her house that the apostle repaired after his miraculous deliverance from prison by the angel. Mark was converted, and he was at Paul's side during the imprisonment of that apostle here in Rome, about three years ago. After that Mark was with Peter at Babylon, and from rumors I imagine he is now again on his way to Rome to join Peter and Paul, who now languish in the Mamertine prison. And Nero's former treatment of the Christians raises grave fears that both Peter and Paul will ere long suffer martyrdom at the hands of that infamous Cæsar."

Shortly after this conversation in the triclinium, the party started for the Catacombs.

That we may more clearly picture to our minds the Catacombs of Rome, the following description of them may be of interest.

The Catacombs are a vast labyrinth of galleries excavated in the hills round the Eternal City, beyond the walls. These galleries are often constructed on various levels, or piano, which cross and recross one another. Thus the space of ground occupied by the Catacombs is not large, but so numerous are the galleries, that there are not less than three hundred and fifty miles of them. The
galleries are from two to four feet in width, varying in height. The walls on both sides are pierced with niches, like shelves, each one containing one or more dead bodies. These vast excavations form the Christian cemeteries of Rome; they were begun in Apostolic times, and continued as burial-places by the Christians, until the capture of the city by Alaric in the year 410.

Originally the Catacombs belonged to private Christian families, who dug them in the gardens of their villas. "Among them were Lucina, who lived in the days of the Apostles, Priscilla, another contemporary, Flavia Domitilla, niece of Vespasian, Commodilla, whose property lay on the Via Ostiensis, Cirriaca, on the Via Tibertina, Pretextates, on the Via Appia, Pontiano, on the Via Portuensis, and the Jordani, Maximus, and Thraso, all on the Via Salaria Nova. Some of the martyrs buried in the Catacombs were SS. Hermes, Basilla, Protus, and Hyacinthus, on the Via Salaria Vetus."

The Catacombs were also used by Christians as places for religious worship. "These burial-places were called Hypogæum, a subterranean place, or Cæmeterium, a sleeping-place, a new name of Christian origin; sometimes also, Martyrium, or Confessio (its Latin equivalent), to signify the burial-place of martyrs, or confessors of the faith. An ordinary grave was called locus, or loculus, if it contained a single body, or bisomum, trisomum, or quadrisomum, if two, three, or four. The graves were dug by fossores, and burial in them was called depositio. The chambers were called cubicula. Some of the tombs were of a more elaborate kind, having a long oblong châssé, like a sarcophagus, either hollowed in the rock, or built up of masonry, and closed by a heavy slab of marble lying horizontally on the top. The niche over
tombs of this kind was generally vaulted in a semi-circular form, whence they were called *arcosolia*. Such tombs of the martyrs were used on the anniversaries of their death, as altars whereon the holy mysteries, or sacred sacraments, were celebrated. While some of the cubicula were only family vaults, others were chapels, or places of public assembly. The private vaults were often large enough to contain the family assembled for these solemn rites, and sometimes several cubicula were made close together, all receiving air and light through a centre shaft, so that a hundred persons might be collected in parts of the Catacombs to assist in public worship. In the very walls of Catacombs may still be seen episcopal chairs, and chairs for the presiding deacons, and benches for the faithful, having formed part of the original plan when the chambers were hewn out of the rock."

The Christians were anxious not to burn their dead, but to bury them in these rock-hewn tombs, and the bodies were wrapped in fine linen cloths, together with precious spices, remains of which have been found in the Catacombs. It is supposed that this was a Christian custom in imitation of the burial of Jesus in the Tomb of Joseph.

And now we will return to Placidus and his party, on that summer's night in Rome, 66 A. D.

As the Catacombs to which this company was bound were on the Via Portuensis, situated on the further bank of the Tiber, their excursion was partly by land and partly by water.

Virgilia and Myrtilla, being placed in litters borne by slaves, were attended for safety by bands of faithful freedmen, who held the offices of secretaries and stewards in the family; Placidus and Aziel accompanied them on foot, walking by the open side of the palanquins, that
they might converse with the ladies, and render them any needful assistance.

Having passed through the Via Scauri, which connected the Cælian Hill with the Via Appia, the party proceeded along the Appian Way, around the eastern side of the Palatine Hill to the Via Sacra.

Here their onward progress was impeded for a few moments by a funeral procession, wending its way out towards the Via Flaminia, to the burial-ground without the walls of the city. Among the rich a funeral in Rome, either by day or night, was an imposing scene. The citizen now being borne to the funeral pile was a Roman senator, and the display was in accordance with the position of the deceased.

As the palanquins containing Virgilia and Myrtilla were carried a little to one side of the road, to give space for the passing mourners, Aziel stood by the side of the litter of Myrtilla, an interested spectator of this sight, novel to a stranger in Rome.

"I perceive by the broad stripe of purple on the bier of the dead, and by his toga picta, that the deceased was of high rank," remarked Myrtilla; "and by the number of slaves walking near the corpse, wearing their newly-donned caps of liberty, that the dead man was not only rich, but merciful."

"Are the slaves of a Roman emancipated after the death of the master?" inquired Aziel.

"No," replied Myrtilla; "on the contrary, all his slaves are put to death if the master has been murdered by one of them; but by his will, a Roman often frees a number of his slaves, sometimes as an act of mercy, but frequently, I am sorry to say, as an act of ostentation, that thereby there may be a large number of attendants at his funeral."
"I notice the Romans have hired mourners, as is customary among the Jews," said Aziel, observing the wailing women uttering lamentations around the bier.

"And you perceive those three mutes, with dishevelled hair, smiting upon their breasts in token of grief," rejoined Myrtilla; "those, with the wailing women, are slaves of the undertaker, and have kept watch by the corpse during the time which has elapsed between the death and burial."

"Have you outward signs to mark the house where one lies dead?" asked Aziel.

"A branch of cypress is always hung over the door, to indicate a house of mourning," answered Myrtilla, "lest any priest should incur defilement by entering it."

The procession now being close at hand, Aziel noted its especial features. First came a band of flute-players, whose piping broke the stillness of the evening with noisy shrillness; then walked the female hired mourners, who were followed by a company of mimes and dancers, the leader of which was attired in such manner as to imitate the deceased.

"Are not those comic actors a strange incongruity in a funeral procession?" inquired Aziel.

"They so appear to me," rejoined Myrtilla; "but they are not expected to simulate grief, and often amuse the spectators quite in their own fashion. Our writers relate an instance when in describing the splendid funeral obsequies of one of the emperors, noted for his parsimony, the managers of the treasury are made to say, in reply to a question regarding the cost of the funeral, that it had required a hundred thousand pounds: 'Give me a thousand only,' cried the actor playing the part of the dead Emperor, 'and throw my body into the Tiber!' And the remarks of the mime counterfeiting the Emperor were
received with shouts of applause by the people within hearing."

"Who are those following the actors?" asked Aziel.

"Those form what is termed the procession of the ancestors," answered Placidus. "You can see plainly by the light of the many torches carried by the slaves, what office each one is intended to designate. When a man dies, in whose family have been those occupying curule offices, the wax masks, representing these deceased ancestors, and which are usually placed in niches in the atrium of the family mansion, are taken down and assumed by suitable persons, who also put on the official robes of the magistrate whom each one represents. You perceive here the triumphator, in his gold-embroidered toga, the censor, in his purple robe, and the consul, in his purple-bordered lacerna, each in his chariot, escorted by their lictors, with attendants bearing their insignia of office."

As the stately escort passed by, Aziel beheld the corpse itself, which followed the procession of ancestors, attired in senatorial robes, and laid upon a couch richly adorned with gold and purple, while a chaplet of flowers crowned the head of the dead. Pictures and effigies were carried after the corpse, and the bier was borne upon the shoulders of slaves, while the crowds of friends and spectators followed in the rear.

"When the funeral procession takes place in the daytime," resumed Placidus, as our party once again started upon their excursion, "the body is often borne to the Forum, where the wearers of the masks take their seats in the curule chairs, and the couch bearing the corpse is laid before them. A relation or friend of the dead man then pronounces the funeral oration, celebrating all the glories of his ancestors, and the virtues for which the
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deceased had been distinguished. The procession then resumes its course to the place of burial, which, according to Roman law, is usually without the city, and the corpse is there laid upon the funeral pile, already prepared for its reception. After the friends of the dead have thrown offerings upon the pyre, as the wailing women set up a mournful cry, the nearest relative applies the torch, and the flames soon envelop the bier. During the burning, rich families sometimes celebrate the obsequies by gladiatorial combats. The ashes of the dead are then gathered and mixed with perfumes, and placed in urns, which are deposited in the family sepulchres. Formal words of parting are then addressed to the deceased, and the funeral ceremonies are ended.”

“Do you approve of such a mode of burial?” asked Aziel.

“Part of the obsequies are very impressive,” replied Placidus, “but much of the ceremony is distasteful to me.”

By this time our party had passed through the Via Sacra, and thence by the Vicus Tuscus to the Velabrum; and here was presented another scene, which, in comparison with that just witnessed, exemplified the extremes of joy and sorrow in human life. A bridal band were escorting a Roman bride from the banquet which had been held in her father's house, to the home of her newly-made husband. The bride was arrayed in the marriage-veil and girdled tunica, with hair arranged in six ringlets. As she belonged to the peasant class, her dress, though not costly, was nevertheless picturesque. She would be lifted over the threshold of her new home, to prevent an ill-omened stumble, and the ceremonies of her nuptials would end with the merry and boisterous “Thalassio” song, by her young companions.
The ancient and venerable forms of Roman marriage, the *confarreatio* and *coemptio*, had almost died out during the first century, and most marriages were mere civil contracts, dissoluble at pleasure. Divorce was resolved upon on the slightest pretext, and Seneca declares that there were women in Rome who counted their age, not by the Consuls, but by the number of their husbands; and Juvenal mentions one Roman matron who had married eight husbands in five years. Many separated merely from a love of change, disdaining, like Æmilius Paullus, to give any reason, who told his friends “that he knew best where his shoes pinched him.”

The bride had little or no voice in the choice of her husband; the bridegroom arranged the matter with the girl’s father, and the contract was made by the formal words, “Spondesne?” “Spondeo.” A Roman maiden was kept in much seclusion; but after marriage the greatest liberty was allowed the wife. She retained control over her own property,—could go where she liked. Attended by her own troop of slaves, she might visit the temples of Isis and Serapis, witness the amusements in the circus and amphitheatre, frequent the public baths; and the only restraint placed upon her actions was that dictated by her own sense of modesty.

So great was the aversion to matrimony among the men, that heavy taxes were exacted from bachelors; and Metellus expressed the common opinion when he said,—

“If, Romans, we could exist without a wife, we should all avoid the infliction; but since nature has ordained that we can neither be happy with a wife, nor exist at all without one, let us sacrifice our own comfort to the good of our country.”

The marriage ceremony consisted mainly of sacrifices
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to the gods, and the inspection of entrails by the priests, that the omens for good or ill might be predicated.

The decadence of Roman morals was vastly hastened by Rome’s introduction of Grecian customs and opinions. Before that time marriage had been considered sacred at Rome. According to Plutarch and others, it was 520 years before a divorce occurred in Rome. But with Greek culture came also Greek frivolity, unbelief, and immorality. Family life, in the true meaning of the words, the Greek did not know. “Is there a human being,” asks Socrates of one of his friends, “with whom you talk less than with your wife?” Even Socrates went to hear Aspasia, and famous men collected the witty sayings of Greek courtesans, and wrote their histories. “Phryne, the courtesan—who promised the Thebans to rebuild their walls, if they would write on them in golden letters, ‘Alexander destroyed them, Phryne rebuilt them’—served Praxiteles as a model for his renowned statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite, and appeared herself as Aphrodite at the festival of Poseidon, as with unloosed hair, and the undress of Venus, she descended into the sea before the eyes of applauding Greece.”

In earlier days, a Roman wife remained at home, seldom appearing upon the streets, and then veiled, or in a closed litter; now the motto was, as Tertullian said, “See, and be seen!” Infanticide was not regarded a crime. “Household employments were despised, and the children, as they grew larger, were left to the care of slaves. Mothers were more concerned about their toilets, or what flute or cithara player would receive the crown in the next contest, what horse would win at the next race, what athlete or gladiator would come off victorious in the amphitheatre, than they were about the education of their children.”
Childlessness was regarded as a blessing, and Seneca, "in a letter of condolence to a mother upon the loss of her only son, does not hesitate to remind her, by way of special consolation, that she will now, as a childless widow, be so much the more honored and beloved by such as hope for an inheritance."

Extravagance ran riot; and not only effeminacy, but vice, became the fashion. Livy said: "Rome has become great by her virtues till now, when we can neither bear our vices nor their remedies;" and Seneca declares: "Vice no longer hides itself; it stalks forth before all eyes. So public has iniquity become, so mightily does it flame up in all hearts, that innocence is no longer rare,—it has ceased to exist." And somewhat later, Lucian exclaims: "If any one loves wealth and is dazed by gold; if any one measures happiness by purple and power; if any one brought up among flatterers and slaves has never had a conception of liberty, frankness, and truth; if any one has wholly surrendered himself to pleasures, full tables, carousals, lewdness, sorcery, falsehood, and deceit, let him go to Rome."

Yet this same Seneca, who could thus denounce vice, was openly accused of immorality, and closed his eyes to the enormities of his former pupil, Nero. With wealth and luxury, came also an extravagant display in dress.

“A fashionable Roman lady protected her complexion with a fine, artificial paste, which she laid at night on her face, and then bathed in ass’s milk. Of artificial washes, sweet-smelling oils, salves, perfumes, pigments, there was no end. Female slaves, thoroughly skilled in all the arts of the toilet, stood at her beck, and often, while dressing her, were roughly and cruelly treated, being pricked with long needles, or beaten. For each separate pigment a
particular slave was appointed, who had been perfectly trained to color the eyebrows black, or the cheeks red. The hair was dressed in the most artificial manner, or replaced by wigs. What magnificence, what changes of apparel, what wealth of gold, pearls, and precious stones, earrings, and bracelets!” Lolliia Paulina, the wife of Caligula, is thus described: “Caius Caligula was not smitten so much by the charms of her person, as of her estate, for she was the richest woman in Rome, the heiress of the extortioner of Gaul; and the Emperor, like a mere private spendthrift, was driven to restore his shattered fortunes by a judicious alliance.” Lolliia displayed her magnificence with a pomp truly imperial. “I have seen her,” says Pliny, “on no occasion of special solemnity, but a plain citizen’s bridal supper, all covered with pearls and emeralds, her hair and head-dress, ears, neck, and fingers, worth as much as forty millions of sestertes. Such was the style in which she came to witness the act of marriage. Nor were these the love-tokens of a princely prodigal; they were the treasures of her grandsire, amassed from the spoils of provinces. Such was the end of all this rapine,—Lolliius suffered disgrace, and perished by his own hand, that his granddaughter, forsooth, might blaze by lamp-light, in the splendor of forty millions.” “They wear two or three estates suspended from their ears,” says Seneca.

Poppœa Sabina, the wife of Nero, took with her on her journeys five hundred asses, in order that cosmetic baths might be prepared for her from their milk, and these animals were reported to have been shod with gold and silver; and it was said that Nero, when he amused himself with fishing, used nets interwoven with threads of gold.
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Men out-vied each other in squandering hundreds of thousands at a single meal, and the Emperor Vitellius, in the few months of his reign, exhausted a hundred and fifty millions. That the pleasure of eating might be prolonged, they made use of emetics. "They do not deign to digest the feasts collected from all parts of the world," says Seneca.

Rome obtained vast wealth from the conquered provinces. From the Temple in Jerusalem, Crassus plundered ten thousand talents (more than eleven millions of dollars). Gabinius, as Proconsul of Syria, exacted one hundred millions of denarii (over sixteen millions of dollars). The same Gabinius took from Ptolemy Auletes ten thousand talents, after Cæsar had exacted six thousand, making about eighteen millions of dollars. Spain and Gaul were forced to contribute largely, and Quintus Servilius Cæpio carried off from the Tectosagan city Tolosa fifteen thousand talents (nearly seventeen millions of dollars). As wealth and luxury increased, all forms of labor were considered degrading to a freeman; labor fell more and more into disgrace. Medicine, architecture, and commerce were alone regarded as honorable employments for a freeman.

Some estimate the number of inhabitants at the beginning of the Empire at from one to two millions. Of these, only about ten thousand belonged to the higher orders, senators and knights; there were about a million of slaves, and fifty thousand foreigners. The remainder constituted the Plebs urbana, who were absolutely destitute. Of service for hire, there was little in Rome; each household had its own slaves, who produced for the rich what they required in their homes. There was no real middle class. Many sought their living as clients at the houses of the
great, which was little better than a slave's life. The number of persons entitled to the distribution of public corn, in Caesars's time, rose to three hundred and twenty thousand.

"The thief," says Seneca, "as well as the perjurer and the adulterer, receives the public corn; every one, irrespective of morals, is a citizen." In addition to this gift of corn, largesses in money (congiaria) were distributed. Each congiarium of this sort cost the State two hundred and fifty million sesterces (over twelve millions of dollars). The world has never since witnessed such munificence, but this cannot be called benevolence.

"Not man, but the Roman citizen, was taken into consideration; not the needy, but strong men able to work, received the gift; not the individual, but the State, was the giver; not love, but justice, was the criterion. The congiarium was, after all, but each Roman citizen’s share in the spoil of a conquered world,—a premium which the rich, out of fear, paid to idleness."

Such giving only made the people demand more. When one of the emperors would have granted the people’s clamor for wine as well as corn, his praetorian prefect remonstrated: "If we grant the people wine, we must also serve out to them chickens and geese," he said. Such a system of largesses only worked demoralizingly. "Christianity first introduced true benevolence, and as it has ennobled labor, so it has also honored innocent poverty."

While the masses thus lived by public alms, the few revelled in surpassing luxury. Augustus boasted that he had found Rome a city of brick, and had left it a city of marble. A villa, which, with its gardens, comprised four acres, was considered small. The gorgeous atria of the mansions, adorned with lofty pillars of the most costly
materials, were ornamented with beams of Hymettian marble, supported by columns of the rarest of African marbles, while tiles of alabaster, bordered with green serpentine from Egypt, or slabs of variegated stones from the Black Sea, formed the brilliant tessellated floors. The arches glistened with mosaics of myriad-colored glass, while from one pillared roof to another, crimson awnings were hung, as a protection from the sun, and lent their rosy shimmer to the rainbow rays of the plashing fountains, and the cool greens of the luxuriant shrubs, and added a faint blush to the pale lily, and deepened the rich tints of the rose blooming in priceless vases of Corinthian brass, or falling gracefully from some glistening vessel of amber crystal.

For miles on all sides of the Imperial City, stretched the most magnificent parks, here encroaching even upon the sea, there formed by bringing earth at enormous expense, and covering the bare rocks, and transforming them into a blooming garden. In a land where the climate is enchantingly delightful, under skies brilliant and cloudless, over hills and in valleys, Rome sat enthroned in loveliness, Mistress of the World.

The interiors of the villas were equally magnificent. Babylonian tapestries covered the couches inlaid with gold and with silver; vessels of Murrha, worth from $7,500 to $37,500, stood on the priceless tables of citrus-wood; superb vases of Corinthian bronze gleamed between columns of alabaster; Æginetan candelabra threw a glowing softness on the antique silver and plate of gold, encrusted with gems, with which the sideboards were laden. Statues by famous sculptors lined the walls; paintings by renowned artists adorned the ceilings; fountains of perfume filled the air with a delicious fragrance;
while everywhere stood obsequious slaves to relieve the owners of the slightest physical exertion. Behind the couch of the master of the house at supper waited, perchance, some graceful Greek slave, who knew by heart Homer or Virgil, who might whisper in his ear some appropriate quotation from the classic poets, so that a rich Roman could even do his thinking by proxy.

In the absence of serious occupation, life became a mere routine of frivolities. "It is astonishing," Pliny writes, "how time is passed in Rome. 'Take any day by itself, and it either is, or seems to be, well spent; yet review many days together, and you will be surprised to discover how unprofitable they have been. Ask any one, 'What have you done to-day?' He will tell you, 'I was at a friend's, who gave his son the toga virilis; another requested me to be a witness to his will; a third asked me to a consultation.' All of these things appear at the time extremely necessary. But when we reflect that day after day has been thus spent, such employments seem trifling."

Another writer says,—

"Through dissipation, the minds of indolent youth have become sluggish, and no one rouses himself to the trouble and toil of an honorable employment. Sleep and lassitude, and, what is worse than both, zeal in wrong-doing, have taken possession of them. Their darling passion is to curl their hair, to weaken their voices to feminine accents of flattery, to vie with women in pampering the body, to excel in the foulest vices. Who of your contemporaries is full of spirit? Who is full of desire for knowledge? Who is even a man?"

When not given up to frivolity and dissipation, the most important occupations were writing, reading to others what had been written, composing poems, and admiring
those produced by others. "We suffer from a superfluity of sciences!" said Seneca. The scholars went to the lecture-rooms to hear some rhetorician declaim about morality, while the Roman dandies frequented the baths — "the clubs of the day" — to talk about everything and nothing.

The slave-markets were managed as are modern cattle-markets. "The slaves, male and female, stood there; the vendor cried up his wares, the buyers looked at them, felt of them, to be sure they were sound; the slaves were required to run, leap, open their mouths, show their teeth, etc. When purchased, they were assigned, according to ability or opportunity to some handicraft or art, to agriculture or to begging, or to the gladiatorial sports or to the brothel. As porters, they were chained in front of the gate, as with us a house-dog, and at night were shut up in the *ergastula*, or slave-prisons, like animals in a stall. Like them they were branded and marked; and they were also flogged and crucified, often on the least occasion. So long as there was any hope of profit from them, they were spared, and when dead, they were cast into a pit with dead animals, unless, indeed, they had been previously exchanged, according to Cato's advice, for old oxen and cows."

In the city of Rome the old and diseased among the slaves were killed outright, or left exposed on an island in the Tiber. "Dumb and fasting, a slave must stand whole nights long behind the couch of his carousing master. Woe to him, if by whispering, or even by sneezing or coughing, he disturbed the peace of the feaster. He was exposed to every caprice of his owner. A word, and he was sent to the field-slaves in the prisons on one of his master's numerous estates, or scourged till
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blood came, or horribly killed, or thrown as food to the fishes. According to the old Roman law, when a master was killed in his house, the slaves who had passed the night under his roof were all executed, if the murderer was not discovered. Slavery made masters cruel and hard, and not seldom, even women, renouncing the gentleness of their sex, took pleasure in torturing their female slaves. The slaves, in return, became what their treatment made them. As they were deemed incapable of any virtue, and arbitrarily and capriciously treated, so they became low-minded, lazy, lying, and treacherous."
CHAPTER X.

THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS. — A MOONLIGHT SAIL ON THE TIBER.

In contrast with the picture of extravagance and vice portrayed by the writers of that day, the following description of the Christians of the first century, given in the words of another,¹ is impressive.

"Not merely at church, but at home also, in their vocations, and on the streets, Christians desired to appear as Christians. They guarded with the greatest care against any connection with heathenism; they avoided with the utmost conscientiousness everything which could in any way be construed as a denial of their faith. Difficult indeed must have been the task, for their entire life was encompassed by a net-work of heathen customs, which a Christian must every moment rend, if he would remain true to his God. Every step and turn necessitated a confession of faith, and every confession involved danger. The symbols, and still more the spirit of heathenism, were everywhere. If a Christian went upon the street, he saw the images of the gods standing there, and met processions in which they were solemnly carried about. All who passed by paid their homage; the Christian could not do this. If he entered the senate or a court of justice, there stood an altar with incense and wine. Custom required one in passing to offer a libation, and strew incense. If

¹ Dr. Gerhard Uhlhorn: "The Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism."
he stepped into an inn, or stall, or shop, to make a pur-
chase, or leave an order, he always found an altar and
little idols, often no longer than the thumb.

"Or perhaps he was invited by heathen friends or
relatives to a family festival. If he did not go, he gave
offence; if he went, he still could not but incur their dis-
pleasure, by declining to participate in the festal sacrifices
and in the libations which were offered from beginning to
day of the meal, especially to the Cæsar-god, and by
refusing to partake of this or that article of food. Fre-
quently, on such occasions, the heathen purposely tempted
the Christians, by setting before them food prepared with
blood, from which they were accustomed to abstain. In
such circumstances Christians esteemed it all the more
their duty openly to acknowledge their faith.

"Not only custom and usage, but language also was
thoroughly imbued with heathenism. The formulas of
the oath, depositions, testimony before a tribunal, greet-
ings and thanksgivings, all contained remembrances of the
heathen gods. By Hercules! this, and similar exclama-
tions were often heard. The Christian must refrain from
these, must at least protest by silence. He might give
alms to a beggar in the street. Naturally, in gratitude, the
recipient would wish for his benefactor the blessing of
some god. Christians who were strict in their deportment
believed that it was not permitted them, in such a case, to
remain silent, lest it should seem as if they accepted the
blessing of an idol; they considered it incumbent upon
them openly to avow that their charity had been given for
the sake of the living God, and that He might be praised
therefor. If a Christian had occasion to borrow money,
the note which he must sign would contain an oath by the
heathen gods. He could only refuse to execute the note.
"Many special relations of life brought the Christians into still more difficult situations. A master would order a Christian slave to do something wholly unobjectionable from a heathen point of view, but sinful according to a Christian standard, and yet the slave was completely in the power of his master, who could have him, if disobedient, tortured, and even killed. How should the Christian wife who had a heathen husband, fulfil her Christian obligations, attend divine worship, visit the sick, entertain strangers, distribute alms, without offending her husband? How could the officer or the soldier perform his duties without denying his faith? All who had obtained a support by the heathen cultus, servants and laborers in the temples, idol-makers, sellers of incense, and others, must relinquish their occupations in order to become and remain Christians. Let us consider the strenuousness of the times, and their demands upon a Christian wife. They were days of conflict, little suited to the cultivation of the beautiful, even to a legitimate extent. Tertullian writes,—

"Pleasures must be discarded whose softness may weaken the courage of faith. I know not whether the wrist, accustomed to a bracelet, will endure, if the hard chain makes it stiff; I know not whether the leg will suffer itself to be fettered in the gyve, instead of by an anklet; I fear that the neck, hung with pearls and emeralds, will give no room to the broadsword. Wherefore, blessed of the Lord, let us meditate on hardships, and we shall not feel them; let us relinquish pleasant things, and we shall not desire them; let us stand ready to endure every violence, having nothing which we may fear to leave behind. The days of Christians are always, and now more than ever, not golden, but iron. The robes
of martyrs are preparing, they are held up by angel bearers. Go forth, then, amply supplied with the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles, taking your dazzling whiteness from simplicity, and your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; inserting in your ears the words of God, and fastening on your necks the yoke of Christ. Submit your head to your husband, and you will be sufficiently adorned. Busy your hands with spinning, and keep your feet at home, and hand and foot will please more than if arrayed in gold. Clothe yourselves with the silk of uprightness, the fine linen of holiness, the purple of modesty. Thus adorned, you will have God for your lover.'

"The heathen often sneered at the large number of women in the Christian churches; they called Christianity in contempt a religion for old women and children, but they were constrained to learn what Christianity made of these women, and to acknowledge, against their will, the difference between a heathen and a Christian woman. In the one case a passion for finery, vanity, coquetry beyond measure, in the other, simplicity and naturalness; there, immodesty and shamelessness, here, chastity and propriety; there, women who divided their time between making and displaying their toilets, and who shone at the theatre and the circus, at dinner-parties and festivals, where brutal shows, or indecent plays, or gluttony and drunkenness was the rule; here, wives who dressed to please their husbands, mothers who lived for their children; there, an enervated sex, painted, and spoiled by art; here, heroines who paled not even at the sight of the lions in the amphitheatre, and calmly bent their necks to the sword. 'What women there are among the Christians!' exclaimed the astonished pagan Libanius."
With this digression, in order to more vividly portray a picture of Rome at that era, we will return to our story.

Placidus and his party having reached the bank of the Tiber, the ladies descended from their palanquins, and they all embarked by the Pons Æmilius in a light skiff, for a sail down the river to the Pons Portuensis, leading to the Via of the same name on the other bank of the Tiber. Here was the Catacomb which they sought. Virgilia and Myrtilla had exchanged their delicate house robes for simple white garments, covered by voluminous dark blue mantles. Leaving their freedmen and slaves with the litters, to await their return to this landing, they set sail with Placidus and Aziel, and were wafted down the stream by the soft night breeze, while the moon silvered the waters, and the nightingales sang in the groves, which lined either side of the river. As they passed a nobleman's villa, six crosses, upon which crucified slaves were hanging, shone ghastly in the full light of the moon; and now and again the delicious music of the night warblers was pierced with the shrieks of some poor tortured slave bound to the rack, or being scourged at the command of his brutal owner. Common as these sounds were to Virgilia and Myrtilla, their sweet faces were expressive of their horror at such cruelties, and Virgilia remarked,—

"Surely Rome has need of the Gospel of love taught by the pitying Christ!"

In the midst of the Tiber, just north of the Pons Æmilius, where our party embarked, was the Insula Tiberina. Upon this island stood the famous Temple of Æsculapius, containing the statue of the healing god, brought from Epidaurus to Rome in the year 156 B.C., by order of the oracles consulted in the Sibylline books,
regarding a remedy to stay the awful pestilence which ravaged Rome at that time. The legend regarding the erection of this temple was as follows. When the Roman ambassadors, sent to Epidaurus to procure the statue of the god, embarked in the trireme with the image, a snake, thought to contain the deity himself by the superstitious idolators, went on board the galley with the statue, and when the vessel touched at Antium, where was also a Temple of Æsculapius, the serpent made for the land, and entered the temple. This snake remained at Antium three days, coiled round a tall palm-tree. At the end of that time it re-embarked of its own will, and the trireme proceeded on its way. As the galley was being rowed up the Tiber to Rome, and when opposite this island, the serpent left the vessel, and swam across the river to the Insula Tiberina; and, thereupon, the Romans thinking this a manifestation of the will of the gods that the temple should be erected upon that spot, it was accordingly built there, and became a great resort for invalids, who repaired thither to offer sacrifices to the god of healing, that thereby, perchance, their lost health might be recovered.

Having reached the Pons Portuensis, the party landed, and, led by Placidus, proceeded to the gardens of the Christian Pontiano, beneath whose estate this catacomb was excavated.

Aziel followed his friends with much curiosity into this strange place of worship. Entering a large cubicula, he saw about one hundred Christians gathered in this underground chamber. How different the sight from that of upper Rome! Here were no images of false gods, no brutal scenes, no coarse jests, such as had assailed his ears in the baths and streets of the city. An impressive still-
ness brooded over all; a holy atmosphere attuned the soul to a spirit of prayer; not a visible offering to a false god or impotent idol, but to the Almighty God, and His Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

In the midst of that little company of believers, an aged Christian rose to read from the Gospel, and Aziel recognized the words from the Acts, which he himself had quoted to the Egyptian: "Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

"If we are the offspring of God," said the aged Christian, "how can the Godhead be a dumb idol of stone, or image of gold? Can the offspring have minds capable of thought, hearts moved by emotions, affections swayed by love and compassion, and wills powerful for choices, and yet the Godhead be but a dumb idol or a relentless fury? Must not the God who has created us have a mind capable of infinite thought, a heart moved by the most sublime emotions, an affection swayed by transcendent love and compassion, and a will all-powerful in heaven and on earth?"

Then another Christian rose, and opening the scroll of the lately received Gospel of Mark, read, —

"But Jesus called them to Him and saith unto them: Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

"But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."
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As that heroic band of believers then knelt in prayer, repeating in unison the words which Jesus taught His disciples, "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven," Placidus felt a deep conviction of the truth of the invisible presence of an Almighty and Infinite Power, which could so inspire these men and women, to risk their lives in defence of their faith, and endue them with courage even in Nero's Rome to defy the combined forces of Nero, heathenism, and the devil, by their sublime heroism. "Those were wicked times; but when human nature was at its worst, the Saviour thought it worth dying for." Above, in the streets of Rome, vice ran riot; crime stalked abroad with unabashed insolence, cruelty gloated in blood and death-pangs, immorality made of Rome "the great scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy," while the great Beast from the Abyss sat upon the throne of the Empire.

And here beneath that iniquitous city, working out her own terrible destruction, was this band of holy men and women. "And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are Thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." And soon will be fulfilled the prophecy of the angel in Revelations:

"Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen! and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

While of this little band of Christian martyrs it shall be
said: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

As Placidus, with his mother and sister, accompanied by Aziel, sails homeward through the moonlight, let us take a glance of those times as pictured by another.¹ "The age in which the treasures of the world were squandered in luxurious pleasure, ran swiftly enough to its end. Under emperors like Caligula and Nero, all property, all pleasure, life itself, became insecure. There were two leading ways by which happiness was sought. 'Enjoy!' said Epicurus. 'Forego!' exhorted the Stoic; or, to speak with Epictetus, 'abstain and endure!' Scepticism itself was a renunciation,—a despair of attaining to assured knowledge. Heathenism, despairing of every kind of happiness, had no further consolation for the evils of this life than suicide, and it knew no other victory over the world than this flight out of it. The old world had become perplexed about its century-honored gods. The time of secure certitude was past; a day of seeking and questioning had begun. Men sought and asked for new gods,—gods who could fulfil what had been promised in vain for the old.

"Truly the times were fulfilled; the old world was ready, not to produce Christianity from itself, but to receive it. In Greece, in Rome, had been shown what the human spirit can accomplish in its own strength. It is capable of great things, and gloriously has it wrought; but all the greatness sank into ruin, all the glory paled, and one thing it could not do,—it could not appease the longing of every human soul for the eternal, for God. The end of

¹ DR. GERHARD UHLHORN: "The Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism."
Heathenism, as respects religion, is complete inefficiency,—perfect despair of itself. Man can know nothing with certainty; this is the end of all questioning. *Patet exitus!* This is the end of all search for happiness, suicide is the last consolation. But, in the act of expiring, Heathenism reaches forth to the new creation which God will provide. Everywhere coming events cast their shadow before them, the universality of Christianity is adumbrated in the universality of the Roman Empire, faith in the one living God, in the Monotheism which, through the labor of Philosophy, and the mingling of national gods, opens a way for itself into ever-widening circles. Everywhere is disclosed a seeking and questioning which wait for their fulfilment, and will find it,—the seeking for redemption in the Saviour of all nations; the questioning respecting the other life in the preaching of the risen One. And in the midst of the seeking heathen world, Israel stands as prophet, fulfilling here also its mission,—to prepare a place for Him who is to come. Here, if anywhere, can it be perceived, not to say grasped with the hand, that everything in the history of our race, according to the plan and counsel of God, who is rich in mercy, finds its goal in Him, in whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen, in Christ the Lord."
CHAPTER XI.

AZIEL RETURNS TO JERUSALEM. — AZIEL, MIRIAM, AND JESSICA IN THE HOUSE OF ANANUS. — FLORUS AND QUEEN BERENICE. — THE ZEALOTS.

It was the latter part of the summer of the year 66 A. D. Aziel had returned to Jerusalem, where a sedition had been excited among the Jews by the cruelties of Gessius Florus, who had succeeded Albinus as Procurator of Judea. Nero had gone to Greece, attended by courtiers, and the ministers of his luxury and vice. His great ambition was to gain distinction as a victor in the Grecian games. All the states which held musical contests had humored him with the offer of their prizes, and the contests to occur in successive years at Olympia, Nemea, Delphi, and Corinth, were all to be enacted during his stay in Greece, and in compliment to him.

Nero did not confine his own performances to music, but contended alike in tragedy, comedy, and charioteering. Wherever he went he challenged the foremost artists, and extorted the prize from all competitors. Before this August Cæsar went a Roman consular, playing the part of herald, and announcing to astonished Greece the marvellous fact that "Nero, the Emperor, is Victor, and he crowns the People of Rome, and the World, which is his own."

And now, while Nero sings, and pipes, and dances in Greece, receiving with puerile delight ephemeral wreaths of laurel from obsequious flatterers, the Imperial Crown
of the Empire is being swiftly snatched from his unworthy brow.

The Emperor had placed the government of Rome in the hands of a freedman, Helius; and when rumors rose of the discontent in the city and the provinces, and the heretofore suppressed murmurs of the people and soldiers grew louder and louder, till the low mutterings had become at length an ocean’s roar, still so deaf was the infatuated monster, that when Helius sent word to him of the growing storm which threatened him, and urged his immediate return to Rome, Nero obstinately replied,—

“You admonish me, you entreat me to present myself again in Rome; nay, but you should rather dissuade me from returning, until I have reaped my full harvest of laurels.”

And so Nero sang and danced, and the outraged people not only murmured, but soon spoke in thunder tones of indignation. But not yet did the blow fall.

At Delphi, Nero consulted an oracle, and was warned against the seventieth year; and the infamous wretch of thirty counted his age with glee, and imagined the omen to portend a long life. While there was a chaplet to be won in Greece, Rome mattered little to this mad egotist; and while Greece bows in mock obeisance to this most infamous of earth’s rulers, let us glance at Judea.

Now it chanced that in these days, Berenice, sister of King Agrippa, was in Jerusalem, having come up to the Holy City at the time of the Feast of the Passover. Cestius Gallus, proconsul of Syria, having also arrived at Jerusalem, had been importuned by the people, that he would aid them by restraining Florus in his wrong-doing, for he had plundered the city and provinces, and had not hindered any man in robbery against his neighbor.
Cestius spake the people fair, promising that he would endeavor to persuade Florus to deal more mercifully with them. But Florus, accompanying Cestius to Cæsarea, demeaning himself to the Proconsul with a fair appearance of good-will towards the populace of Jerusalem, had nevertheless determined to drive the Jews to a war with the Romans, that thereby his evil deeds might not come to the ears of Cæsar.

In the house of Ananus, on Zion's Hill, at eventide, sat Aziel, Miriam, and Jessica, on the ivy-grown balcony of the roof-terrace. Aziel had been entertaining the young maidens with delightful accounts of his life in Rome, and Miriam's eyes had glowed with a deeper light, as he told of the Christian worshippers in the Catacombs, while her cheeks had blanched with indignant horror, as he portrayed in some slight detail the cruelties of Nero.

They formed a charming group on that bowerd roof, as the sunset glows bathed the crest of the Mount of Olives with glory, and the cloud canopy over their heads was flecked here and there with feathery vapor-plumes, rose-colored, or pale lemon, or green in tint, swaying like gorgeous wings of the brilliant plumaged birds of the Orient; while larger banks of clouds rose like columns of gold capped with entablatures of cloud-sculpture. On the opposite hill of Moriah, the Temple stood resplendent, king of all ancient fanes, symbol of the Almighty Jehovah, the One God before all gods, the Alpha and Omega, to whom be honor and power, dominion and glory, through the ages of ages!

Miriam rested in a graceful pose upon a rich divan covered with a drapery of costly Babylonian tapestry, and adorned with large pillows of golden damask. Not as a Roman beauty did she recline amidst her sumptuous
cushions, with an air of languor, but rather, as a noble Jewish maiden, conforming to the customs of her times, yet maintaining such a reserve and stately dignity as should, forsooth, repel all familiarity of speech or even look. Though she reposed there a dream of Oriental beauty, not even Aziel, a friend from childhood, would have dared to touch the slender hand lying upon the curving head of the divan, while the dimpled fingers toyed with a white lily hardly more perfect than themselves in loveliness.

Myrtilla would have reclined amongst the cushions with not less dignity and reserve, but the Roman or the Grecian maiden, accustomed to behold from infancy the masterpieces of sculptured art, assumed unconsciously a greater abandon of pose than a Jewish maiden, to whose eyes all images were strange.

Miriam was attired in a tunic of white linen, girdled with a broad scarf of scarlet silk, harmonizing well with the glowing colors of her luxurious divan. A white gauze veil of Oriental stuff, sprinkled over with golden lotus blossoms, denoting the active commerce maintained between Jerusalem and Egypt, rested lightly on her shining black braids of hair, and softly screened her swelling throat, while through the transparent material the sparkling of her rich jewels was plainly visible.

At her feet, upon a low hassock, sat Jessica, grown much taller in the two years just past, and demanding with pretty airs her claims to a greater deference; for a Jewish maiden of fourteen was no longer a child, but assumed the dignity of the modern young women of eighteen. The girl was beautiful, while not of the same type as her sister Miriam; for through her mother’s ancestry, descended from the ancient line of David,
appeared from time to time a fairer style of beauty; and Jessica's hair had caught the gold, and the blue flax flowers had laughed into her baby eyes.

As all persons delight in contrasts, the roguish maiden had questioned Aziel with eager curiosity regarding the appearance of his Roman friend Placidus, and had expressed much satisfaction when told that his eyes were dark, and locks the raven's hue; and saucily had she informed her sister's friend,—

"I am glad he is a dark man, Aziel. I like not men with woman's curls of gold, and eyes like doves, as thou hast; but I am willing to confess they make most obedient and useful friends."

And Miriam's reprimand had been cut short by Aziel laughingly declaring, "that it were well for his peace of mind that he did not possess the eyes and hair admired by the saucy Jessica, else might she have smiled on him so sweetly as to have endangered his tranquillity of heart."

To which the girl, with pretty frown and slightly pouting lips and a dignified demeanor, haughtily replied,—

"I have no occasion to try and fascinate Miriam's admirers," which keen shaft did its intended work; and silence fell upon the trio for a moment, while Aziel stole a glance at Miriam, and inwardly blessed the saucy girl for saying what he dared not utter; and Miriam wondered if the heedless Jessica had discovered the secret she herself would have given much to know.

And well would Aziel and Miriam be mated, if fortune should thus favor them. Aziel was tall, graceful, lithe of limb, broad of chest, noble of brow, kingly of mien; gracious as a woman; brave as a lion when danger threatened; simple as a child in his faith in God; firm as a rock
against wickedness; wrathful as a mountain tempest when aroused against a great wrong in defence of the right and the weak; placid as a summer morning in his cheerful nature; pitiful as a mother in the sight of the sufferings of others; heroic as Hercules in bearing his own griefs; true as the load-star to his friends, his country, and his God.

Handsome in truth he was, as he stood by a large crystal vase filled with blooming roses, while he rested his right arm upon the ivy-twined balustrade surrounding the roof pavilion. His attitude was one of ease, but the muscles of his finely developed frame were still alert for action, and evinced none of the weak inertness displayed by the Roman dandies, enervated by a life of luxury and vice. His Jewish robe of finest wool, dyed in the costly Tyrian purple, threw out in bold relief the light in his shining hair and flowing beard. His turban of gold-colored silk seemed to grace his brow as a kingly diadem. Truth was mirrored in his eyes; a power to command written on the broad, intellectual forehead; generous in giving, faithful in holding trusts committed to his care.

Rachel now appeared, bearing golden goblets filled with the light wine of Palestine, and Jessica, springing quickly from her hassock, gracefully offered the goblet to Aziel in token of renewed friendship. And Miriam looked on both with a loving approval, and it was hard to say which of them received the most tender glance from her dark eyes.

Jessica was clad in a tunic of pale blue, and over her hair, in which stray rays of sunshine seemed immeshed, floated a veil of golden gauze, which she had proudly donned in token of her outgrown childhood, and present dignity of Jewish maidenhood. Jewels also now shone upon her fair white neck, and golden bracelets clasped
her rounded arms, where they swelled in perfect curves below the shoulder, and also upon the slender wrists. Her gem-encrusted sandals were fastened at the ankle with silver bands and chains, and rings sparkled upon her fingers, for Jessica had the Oriental woman’s love of adornment, which, however, she carried to no undue excess, in those days, when women were more lavishly attired than in more modern times.

As Aziel talked of Virgilia and Myrtilla, he had not noted any sign of jealousy overshadow Miriam’s face, while she had expressed intense longing to meet and know two such lovely women.

“Will not thy friend, the Roman Placidus, visit thee in Jerusalem?” inquired Miriam.

“Peradventure, in the future,” responded Aziel; “but he is now with the General Vespasian, being summoned to Ptolemais, where Vespasian is organizing forces to suppress the uprising in Galilee.”

“If war be declared between Rome and Jerusalem,” said Miriam, “and it should come to pass that Placidus and thou wert in hostile camps, thy past friendship would add much to thy sorrow.”

“Nay, not so!” rejoined Aziel; “though Rome and Jerusalem may be enemies, Placidus and Aziel will ever be friends.”

“That is well spoken,” said Miriam, smiling, rejoiced to find Aziel so worthy of her regard. “When one has partaken of the hospitality of a friend, though their native lands may be at variance, a man can be true to his country and also true to his friend.”

“I fear troublous times betide this land,” remarked Aziel, while a look of sadness flitted across his frank and noble countenance. “Gessius Florus has sent messengers
to take seventeen talents out of the treasury of the Temple, pretending that the Emperor has demanded them. Methinks this is only a ruse of his to drive the people to riot; and even as I passed through the Xystus, the populace seemed in an uproar, crying out against the tyranny of Florus. Some of the Jewish youths walked through the square, carrying baskets, and mockingly begging alms for the avaricious Florus, as though they would in derision seek help for this official beggar.”

“I fear this will much anger the governor,” declared Miriam; “and though I sympathize with the people, I deem these deeds ill-timed.”

“Oh, talk not of hateful war, and seditions!” cried Jessica. “Tell me, Aziel, of that great Rome, and more about its wonderful sights; I myself will see that same Rome some day.”

“Nay, little sister,” chided Miriam; “thy childish curiosity will peradventure take thy eager feet into some thorny paths, I fear.”

“Look not so sadly, Miriam mine!” cried the impulsive maiden, throwing her arms about her sister’s neck, and imprinting a warm kiss upon the pensive brow. “Be sure of this,” continued the laughing girl; “when danger threatens, Jessica will show no fear, even though Roman soldiers confront her.”

“I believe thee, Jessica beloved,” rejoined Miriam, gazing with pride upon the flushed face and resolute bearing of the tender child she had guarded with such motherly care. “Thou art a true Jewish maiden of thy father’s line of noble patriarchs, and I know thou wouldst be like Ruth, true and stanch; or like Esther, undaunted by the sceptre of Ahasuerus, did duty demand. But we will hope, little maiden, that no such trial awaits thy
courageous spirit." And she caressed the soft cheek of the pretty child, little aware of the fate hanging over that youthful head.

"And so thou didst not bring me a civetta, from that great Rome," Jessica exclaimed. "Thou neglectful Aziel! such an owl would add much to my collection of feathery pets; but I forgive thee, for thou hast brought back thyself, and thou art better than an owl, though I insist that thou art not so wise."

Thus the gay child changed in mood from grave to gay, like April shower to sunshine; but though April smiles, there is thunder imprisoned in her banks of snowy clouds, and in the child's heart was heroism, and truth, and brave endurance.

As Miriam had feared, when Florus heard of the reception the Jews in Jerusalem had given to his demands, he forthwith marched to Jerusalem with an army of horse and foot soldiers, and calling before him the chief men of the city, he commanded that the leaders in the tumult should be delivered up to him. And when he found that this was not done, he thereupon gave free reins to his soldiers to rob and murder the people, insomuch that all Jerusalem was filled with fear and blood; and even Roman knights, because Jews by birth, were shamefully beaten before his judgment seat, and these were afterwards crucified.

Though Berenice, the king's sister, sent her body-guard and captains to Florus, beseeching mercy for the people, he paid no heed to her entreaties. She thereupon, queen though she was, went herself, barefoot, and in the garb of mourning, and stood before his tribunal, making personal intercession for the prisoners; but Florus regarded her not, but commanded his soldiers to torture these victims
before her very eyes, and would doubtless have slain her also, but that she escaped to the palace, where she was under the protection of her guard.

The next day the people gathered in the Xystus in great multitudes, crying out against Florus. Whereupon Ananus, as one of the chief priests, who desired that there should be peace rather than war, together with Aziel, who was well known, and much respected by the citizens for his father's sake, as well as for his own exemplary character, — these, together with other Jewish princes and priests, besought the populace that they give no occasion for evil report to Caesar, and thus the people were persuaded to return quietly to their homes.

But Florus, intent on raising a disturbance, sent to the chief men of the city, and said, —

"If ye now be earnest for peace, go forth and meet the soldiers that are now coming to the city, and salute them as friends."

This he said craftily, for he had meantime sent word to the centurions that they should take no heed to the salutations of the people. And so it came about.

The people went forth with friendly greetings, but the soldiers answered nothing, and the populace, being incensed at such a reception, denounced Florus, whereupon the soldiers chased the people back to the city, trampling on many, and slaying many more with clubs and weapons.

The Jews were then thoroughly aroused, and Ananus no longer restrained their just wrath, as they cast stones and javelins upon the soldiers from the roofs of the houses, as Florus attempted with his troops to take possession of the Temple. Neither did the chief priests prevent the populace from tearing down the cloisters connecting the Tower of Antonia and the Temple, through which
cloisters the Roman soldiers were accustomed to keep watch of the people on feast days.

Florus, being met by this determined resistance, retired from the city to Cæsarea, and sent letters to Cestius, accusing the Jews of the very outrages which he had himself committed against them. Whereupon Cestius sent one of his captains to Jerusalem to inquire into the matter.

Ananus, with the High Priest, and accompanied by Aziel and other men of rank, awaited the messenger from Cestius, and escorted him to the Temple, after the captain, with one attendant only, had gone through the city, according to the advice of King Agrippa, to test the spirit of the people; and finding all men quiet and peaceably disposed, the captain said to Aziel:

"I find no rioters among this people."

"The populace are well disposed," responded Aziel; "’t is but the treacherous dealings of Florus which incense them."

"I will bear thy saying to Cestius," said the captain, as he courteously departed.

Then King Agrippa assembled the Jews upon Mount Moriah, and spake to them of Rome’s great power, and persuaded them to rebel not against such a formidable antagonist; and King Agrippa and Queen Berenice, his sister, lifted up their voices and wept, and with tears besought the people to desist from riot.

The multitudes were much moved, and indeed it was a pathetic sight to behold the king and queen in tears, and the glorious Temple standing there as symbol of the Almighty God, who had said: “Vengeance is Mine!” And near the queen stood many Jewish matrons, and lovely Jewish maidens, among whom were Miriam and
Jessica; and Miriam gazed with pride upon her father Ananus, as he replied with dignity to the words of King Agrippa,—

"We war not against the Romans, but against Florus, for the wrong that he hath done to us."

Whereupon Agrippa politically made answer, knowing well the truth of the words of Ananus, yet still desiring to avoid a conflict with Rome and Nero, through whom he held his present province,—

"Your tribute ye have not paid, and ye have broken down the cloisters between the Tower of Antonia and the Temple. These things ye have done not against Florus, but against Cæsar. If ye would not war against Rome, do ye build again the cloisters, and pay your tribute."

The people hearkened to this advice from the king, and promised to repair the cloisters, which perchance would have ended the excitement, but for other events.

And now the mother of Aziel sickened and died, which, at the time, caused the young man much sorrow; but as events shortly transpired, he was afterwards comforted in his bereavement, by the thought that his beloved mother was spared the bitter experiences which befall the Jews of Jerusalem.

Now it came to pass that Eleazar, son of Ananias, the High Priest, being a bold and determined young man, persuaded numbers of the people that they should not receive any offerings from foreigners, and that they should not sacrifice in honor of Cæsar. This was the true beginning of the war with the Romans. As Eleazar was governor of the Temple, he had much influence with a seditious class of Jews, who were eager for any riot which might give them an opportunity to display their intense hatred of their Roman rulers, whom they deemed tyrannical oppressors.
Ananias, the High Priest, together with the Jewish princes, and many of the chief priests, among whom was Ananus, the father of Miriam, and certain Pharisees of renown in the city, being members of the Sanhedrin, including Berachiah, the father of Aziel, took counsel together concerning the danger which this rebellion threatened to bring upon Jerusalem; for being men of calm judgments, and considering, also, the formidable power of Rome, they thought it the better part of valor not to rebel, but to exercise caution and a wise policy in dealing with so strong and vindictive a foe.

These chief men, therefore, sent messengers to Florus, and to King Agrippa, when they found that their advice to the Zealots, under Eleazar, availed nothing, and they besought Florus and Agrippa that they should send soldiers to Jerusalem to awe the rebels into submission, hoping thereby to avoid bloodshed.

Hitherto the Romans had omitted to occupy Jerusalem with an armed force, partly out of respect to the Jews, and partly from policy; for the Jews inspired even Rome with superstitious fear, owing to their marvellous stories of the power of their God Jehovah, and much awe was manifested even among the Roman soldiers, when they faced the majestic Temple, and listened with incredulous wonder to the accounts of the mysteries connected with the unseen Holy of Holies.

A cohort of Roman soldiers occupied the Tower of Antonia, but such a small force was powerless amidst the seditious multitudes. King Agrippa, holding his tetrarchy by the will of the Cæsars, had been made by the Romans a sort of spy in the watch-tower of his palace, which overlooked the Temple, and the great Xystus, where the people gathered for business or intrigue. The Jews, as
has already been said, had raised the walls of the Sanctuary to shut out their sacred precincts from foreign observation; and with the Zealots Agrippa was unpopular. So great had been the dislike manifested towards the king, that he had lived for some months in one of his palaces in Berytus.

It was at this time that Aziel, with his father, Berachiah, arrived one afternoon at the house of Ananus, on Zion's Hill. The Zealots, under Eleazar, held the Temple, and the chief men of Jerusalem waited anxiously for the troops for which appeal had been made to Florus and Agrippa.

"Hast thou heard aught from the king?" questioned Ananus of Berachiah, as the friends were welcomed by Miriam and her father.

"Florus has paid no heed to our request," replied Berachiah, "but King Agrippa has promised us three thousand horsemen."

"I like not this silence of Florus," said Ananus; "methinks it gives color to the rumor that he desires this rebellion, and would be well pleased to see Rome and Jerusalem at war."

"Such inference is well founded," interjected Aziel "This procurator has caused grievous mischief, and by contrast with his cruelties, even Albinus was to be commended."

"Are the Sicarii again abroad?" asked Miriam; "I fear much for my father when he is engaged in his sacred offices in the Temple, for these men of the dagger respect no place, and commit murder even on the steps of the Temple itself."

"This system of private assassination organized by the Zealots," remarked Aziel, "is one of the gravest dangers
which threaten our chief men. The conspirators meet under oath in secret, choose the victims, who in turn are to be sacrificed, and take advantage of our feast days, or public festivals, to mingle with the crowds, with daggers concealed under their garments, and give the fatal thrust ere one is aware of the presence of an enemy. I also fear much for my father, from this cause.”

“Beware also thyself,” said Miriam, with a persuasive smile, as she turned her dark eyes upon the face of her young friend; “remember, thou too art a mark for their daggers,” she added, with loving anxiety betrayed by the tremor in her voice, and a slight quiver of her mobile lips. “I have heard of thy daring patriotism, and also of thy prudent recommendation of respect to ruling powers, and the Zealots like not one who professes patriotism, and yet counsels obedience to Cæsar.”

“From what I have heard Aziel say of this same Cæsar,” exclaimed Jessica, “I wot it is no love for Nero, but love for Jerusalem, which gives him caution; methinks he would fight with right good-will against so great a monster, could it be done without danger to Jerusalem, and the Holy Temple.”

“Thou art right, little one,” averred Aziel. “This Cæsar I loathe with hottest hatred, and yet, ’tis true I counsel moderation, for Cæsar is Rome, and Rome means those powerful legions which have conquered the world.”

“I agree with thee,” answered Ananus. “Better bear the Roman rule, if we must, than attempt rebellion, and have our proud city and noble Temple laid in the dust. I had thought the Messiah would have come ere this, to deliver us from Roman rule, but we must patiently wait His coming,” he said, sadly.

“I believe the Messiah has already come,” declared
Aziel; "and I am convinced the Christ was He, and that through Him we shall receive, not earthly freedom from the Roman yoke, but through His Perfect Life, and Atoning Death, and Miraculous Resurrection, we may already have spiritual freedom from the bondage of sin, and the hope of immortal glory in the world beyond."

As Aziel uttered these fervent words, his voice became eloquent with persuasive love, and his blue eyes glowed with a light which beams only on the face of a Christian. Ananus gravely shook his head in silence, and Berachiah murmured,

"I wish I could believe as Aziel does! My beloved wife was also of his faith; but to me it is not yet clear, though I am willing to confess I marvel at this Christ more and more, and shudder when I remember the cry of my countrymen, 'Crucify him! his blood be on us and on our children!' If He was indeed the Divine Son of Jehovah, I question much if this Jerusalem may not yet be destroyed, as the Nazarene declared."

"If that should come to pass," reflected Ananus, "if Jerusalem be destroyed, and Jehovah's Holy Temple is overturned, then will I acknowledge the claims of the Nazarene, and conjecture that such terrible retribution had fallen on our nation as the inevitable result of the rejection of the Truth. But while the Temple stands, I wait still for the Messiah of the Jews."

This conversation was interrupted by a commotion in the streets without. Hastening to the brow of Zion's Hill, they beheld the troops, sent by Agrippa, fighting their way through the crowds of rebels filling the Xystus below in the Valley of the Tyropœon. Commanding Miriam and Jessica to seek the safety of their home, Ananus followed Aziel and Berachiah, who had started
to join the chief men and Jewish princes, who, with the
High Priest, Ananias, and members of the Sanhedrin,
were gathering in the streets of the Upper City, on Zion’s
Hill. And there also the soldiers of Agrippa, having
routed the bands of rebels, and forced them to retreat to
the Temple, occupied by Eleazar and his Zealots, came
shortly and aided the chief men of Jerusalem in maintain-
ing their position on Zion’s Hill.

And then began a series of sorties lasting for seven days.
Now the Zealots sallied forth from the Temple and attacked
the troops; then again the soldiers threw darts into the
Lower City, even approaching the Temple itself; but so
strong were the Temple walls, that neither stone nor dart
made much impression on its bulwarks; but when the
Zealots made excursions from their stronghold, the troops
met them in hand-to-hand contests, and while the rebels
were superior in boldness, the king’s soldiers were superior
in skill.

Thus the conflict waged for seven days, and neither side
had yet gained the advantage. But upon the eighth day,
which was the festival of Xylophory, or Wood-carrying,
on which day it was the custom for every Jew to bring
wood for the altar that the sacred fire might be kept per-
petually burning, the Zealots prevented the remainder of
the people from performing this religious service; and
having admitted to their ranks many of the Sicarii, they
grew bolder, and attacked the troops with such fury that
the king’s soldiers were overpowered by their multitude
and frenzy. Thereupon the Zealots gained access to the
city on Zion’s Hill, and set fire to the house of Ananias,
the High Priest, and also to the palaces of Agrippa and
Berenice, and other notable buildings. They also fired
the archives of the city and destroyed the records in which
were written the names of those who owed aught to the
money-lenders. This they did that they might gain the
favor of the multitude, that every man thus freed from
debt might thenceforth be their partisan.

Then did the Zealots rush to the Tower of Antonia, and
as it was guarded by only a small cohort of Roman soldiers,
it was quickly taken, and those who kept it were slain.
Afterward they laid siege to the palace of Herod, which
siege continued for several days.

It was the Sabbath day, and still the Zealots held the
Temple, and prevented the usual religious ceremonies.
And it came to pass at the first watch of the night, being
the hours between sunset and nine o'clock in the evening,
that Aziel came with hot haste to the house of Ananus,
bearing portentous news.

Miriam and Jessica had remained all day in intense
anxiety, not knowing what fate might befall their father
and friends in these troublous times. As they beheld Aziel
approaching, they ran to meet him.

"Is father safe?" cried Miriam.

"Yea, thanks be to Jehovah! our fathers are both thus
far safe," responded Aziel; but his overshadowed face and
weary manner, denoted that some ill had fallen upon the
city.

"What evil tidings hast thou, Aziel?" demanded Jessica,
with some importunity, now that she knew that her father
was free from harm.

"This day am I ashamed to be a Jew of Jerusalem!"
sighed Aziel; "for our fellow-citizens have greatly dis-
honored us."

"Why speakest thou thus?" asked Miriam, with sym-
pathizing voice, denoting the share she bore in any sorrow
that might come to the heart of her friend.
"I will relate the disgraceful story," said Aziel. "Thou knewest that the Zealots had laid siege to the palace of Herod, and when they could not take it, they made an agreement with the soldiers of King Agrippa, that they should come forth and suffer no injury; but to the Romans they would give no promise of safety. The Roman soldiers thereupon fled to the three towers of Herod,—Hippicus, Pharsælus, and Mariamne. Being, however, reduced to great straits for food, the Romans agreed to surrender and lay down their arms, providing their lives be spared. To this the Zealots agreed, and when the Roman soldiers, believing in the good faith of the Jews, came forth and laid down their arms, thus placing themselves at the mercy of their enemies, expecting the bond of agreement to be honorably kept, as becometh noble warriors, to the lasting disgrace of Jerusalem, the Zealots no sooner perceived their enemies without arms, than they fell upon them and slaughtered every Roman, save only their captain, who promised to become a Jewish proselyte. And this ignoble deed was committed even on the Holy Sabbath Day, which devout Jews hold in such high reverence."

Just then Ananus entered the house, and greeting his daughters with tearful eyes, he murmured, while he rent his priestly robe, in sign of deep distress,—

"Verily, my children, this day has Israel been dishonored, and the Holy Sabbath of Jehovah most grievously desecrated! Never did I think these aged eyes would be forced to look upon the profanation of the sacred Sanctuary of the Lord God Almighty,—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob! Methinks, perchance, this is the awful retribution for the Jews' rejection of His Divine Son; for if the Nazarene were indeed the Messiah, Jerusalem must yet see greater afflictions!"
CHAPTER XII.

CESTIUS MARCHES AGAINST JERUSALEM. — WOE TO JERUSALEM. — WHEREFORE SHOULD THE TEMPLE BE DESTROYED? — VESPASIAN APPOINTED COMMANDER OF THE ROMAN FORCES.

When tidings of these affairs were brought to Cestius, he determined to march against the Zealots in Jerusalem. He summoned the twelfth legion of Roman soldiers, and the three kings, Agrippa, Antiochus, and Sohemus, furnished twelve thousand men, of whom the half were expert archers. His Roman troops were both horse and foot soldiers, and he was accompanied by King Agrippa.

Cestius having burnt several cities on his way thither, and put the Jews dwelling there to the sword, reached Gabao, which place is six miles distant from Jerusalem. Here he encamped. But the Zealots, having been joined by many turbulent fellows, and now being very bold on account of their numbers, rushed forth from the city, and attacked the Roman camp; and so fierce was their onslaught, that but for the aid of the horsemen, Cestius and his forces would have been routed. As it was, five hundred and fifteen of the Romans were slain; but of the Jews, two-and-twenty only. Pleased with their partial victory, the Zealots retired to the city.

Now the chief men of Jerusalem, including Ananias, the High Priest, and Berachiah and Aziel, and Ananus, the father of Miriam, together with the members of the Sanhedrin, belonged to the moderate party, and denounced
this seditious rebellion of the Zealots, which threatened destruction to their beloved Jerusalem. But the multitudes were led by the Zealots, and listened not to the advice of these men of note; and as the Zealots held the Temple and the Lower City on Mount Moriah, this moderate party was forced to seek safety on Zion's Hill, in the Upper City.

As the house of the High Priest had been burned, the chief men met for counsel in the house of Ananus. Here they were assembled after the attack of the Zealots upon the Roman camp at Gabao.

"Overtures came from King Agrippa, to-day," said Aziel, who had just returned from seeking news in the city.

"What answer was sent him?" eagerly inquired Berachiah.

"Another disgrace has been laid upon Jerusalem," responded Aziel, sadly. "What think ye?" he continued, with increasing indignation; "Agrippa sent to the Zealots Borceus and Phebus, as ambassadors best known to them, hoping thereby to persuade them to desist from fighting; and through these ambassadors Agrippa promised that Cestius should give them his right hand, in token of the Romans' forgiveness of what they had already done amiss, if they would cast away their arms, and come over to him. For Agrippa hoped that some would hearken to his words. And this the Zealots fearing, they seized the ambassadors before they could utter a word; and Phebus they slew, and wounded Borceus so that he barely escaped by flight. And now has Cestius moved on towards Jerusalem, and is even now encamped on the hill Scopus, just without the northern wall, distant seven furlongs from Jerusalem."

And now, for a time, we must leave the Upper City, on
Zion's Hill, and cross over to Mount Moriah, where we can more closely observe the manoeuvres of the Zealots. Within the outer courts of the sacred Temple were gathered crowds of turbulent rebels, ripe for any sedition, eager for blood and rapine. Eleazar and a few of his associates may be allowed, peradventure, some higher motives of supposed patriotism, and were, perchance, excited with what seemed to them righteous zeal; but in carrying out their daring projects, they held nothing sacred, and soon found themselves joined to hordes of robbers, and rebels, and reckless rioters, restrained by no principle, and recognizing neither civil nor religious rights.

Then arose much commotion in the ranks of the Zealots, upon the rumor gaining ground that Ananias, the High Priest, and other of the chief men of the city, were about to open the gates of Jerusalem to Cestius and the Roman eagles. Eleazar was at this time counselling with the leaders of his rebel bands within the outer court of the Temple, when certain of his spies burst in upon them, exclaiming,—

"Go to, ye men of Jerusalem! Why wait ye here idle, when, peradventure, Ananias has already treacherously opened to Cestius the gates of the Upper City?"

Whereupon there was a great outcry, and the wrath of the rebels waxed hot, neither did they wait for orders, but rushed forth from the Temple; and were joined by hordes of idlers from the Xystus, who wot not for what purpose they sallied forth, and who would have joined the moderate party as heartily against the Zealots, as now they joined the rebels against the chief men of politic and conservative views, being that part of a city's rabble ready for any riot, irrespective of person or party. These crowds having
so swelled the ranks of the Zealots as to give them boldness to attack, the frenzied multitudes rushed forthwith across the king's causeway, which separated Mount Moriah from Mount Zion, and proceeded ruthlessly to fire and plunder the royal residences, and with hot haste to cry out against the High Priest, Ananias, and the chief men of the city, whose wise measures would fain have restrained this riotous rush of the insensate populace.

Miriam and Jessica, beholding from their terraced roof this horde of wild ruffians brandishing clubs and stones, and all kinds of weapons upon which they could lay their eager hands, stood with blanched faces, clinging to each other in mute agony.

"Behold the petted women of these soft lords!" cried a burly rebel, seizing a stone and winging it up towards the terrified maidens. But the missile only struck a crystal vase, and shattered it to atoms, while the mob passed on, crying out against Ananias.

As the throng receded in the distance, Aziel was seen by the sisters ascending the outer stairway of the house, and was quickly at their side.

"Are the fathers safe?" asked Jessica, with white cheeks and trembling lips.

"Yea, both are safe," responded Aziel, trying by word and manner to reassure the frightened maidens; and seeing the demolished vase, he exclaimed, —

"Thanks be to Jehovah! that stone was not so aimed as to strike either of you."

"But it has destroyed my favorite vase!" pouted Jessica, childlike easing her pent-up agony by a sportive outbreak.

"Well, vases can be mended with new ones," laughed Aziel; "but broken heads are not so easily repaired."
"What is the news, Aziel?" inquired Miriam; for she, with keener insight than Jessica, had perceived, in spite of his assumed cheerfulness, that evil did betide.

"I have, indeed, ill news," sighed Aziel, knowing he could no longer keep them in ignorance of events, and hoping, as their present fears were somewhat allayed, that they would receive the tidings with greater composure.

"Fear not to speak," rejoined Miriam, displaying renewed calmness in voice and manner.

"The Zealots have captured the High Priest Ananias, who had taken refuge in the aqueduct of the palace, and they have slaughtered him and his brother, and others of our chief men. And now am I come to consult about measures for thy greater safety; and as thy father, Ananus, and my father, Berachiah, are even now at the door, we can all the more speedily determine the matter."

Ananus and Berachiah ascended straightway to the roof-bower. As they reached the balcony, a cry rang out on the evening air, shrill, mournful, and awesome, which filled the listeners with startled dread.

"Woe! woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the city and to the people, and to the Holy House! A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Holy House; a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides; and a voice against this whole people! Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"

"Again that terrible prophet!" exclaimed Miriam.

"I answered thee once, my child, regarding this same cry," said Ananus, "that it was probably some lunatic from the mountains; but now I perceive that this is indeed a message from Jehovah. Verily the curse has fallen. Would to God we had taken warning two years since, when first we heard this ominous cry!"
“Would, rather, that our people had not rejected the Christ!” reverently reflected Aziel.

Again that bodeful wail thrilled through the quivering ether. Above the restless city, riotous and red with blood, sailed the serene moon, symbolizing, in its placid silver sheen, the calm rest of those souls lifted above earth’s turmoils, reposing in eternal tranquillity in the recognized love and omnipotent power of their Heavenly Father.

For a time there was silence on that moon-lit roof, each heart battling with the emotions awakened by that direful dirge. Miriam had thrown herself upon the divan, with head lifted towards the heavens, while Jessica knelt upon the hassock, with face buried in the cushions at her sister’s side. Aziel stood a little apart, with gaze riveted upon the Hill of Calvary, where had shone that glorified Cross; while Berachiah sat upon a Persian tabouret, with face bowed in his hands, and his long gray locks sweeping his lap, while his robe of sackcloth, and the fresh ashes upon his linen turban, denoted his great grief. Ananus stood erect, with hands spread towards the Holy Temple. The tears fell fast upon his snowy beard, white as that of Moses, while his High Priest garments made known that upon him had fallen the choice of the Sanhedrin, to take the office left vacant by the murdered Ananias.

Aziel was the first to recover his composure, and turning to Ananus, he said, —

“Rememberest thou not, how the Christ did say, —

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in the holy place: and when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.
For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down; for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be.'

"I am informed by the Jewish Christians," continued Aziel, "that they believe this prophecy of the Christ is now being fulfilled; for we see the 'Abomination of desolation,' even the idolatrous Roman armies, with the images of their gods in their ensigns, even now standing in the holy place, and Jerusalem is encompassed with armies, and the time is now come when Christians should flee to the mountains. Already have many of Jerusalem Christians fled to the mountains of Perea, and, peradventure, for this very providential reason, Cestius delays his attack on the city, that under the providence of Jehovah, those who have faith in His Divine Son may be spared this coming destruction. I would ask of you all, shall not we also, while there is yet time, follow the Christians into the mountains of Perea?"

"Nay, verily!" rejoined Ananus. "Thou dost see that the Sanhedrin have laid upon me the charge of this Holy City, as Jehovah's High Priest. While the Temple stands, my duty is in Jerusalem, though Roman legions threaten, and the abomination of desolation encompasses this ancient city of God."

"And to that I also agree," said Berachiah, lifting his head from his trembling hands. "Though I am no High
Priest, I am a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and hold naught so dear as this Jerusalem the Beautiful, and the Temple of Elohim-Jehovah!"

"What sayest thou, Miriam, my daughter?" inquired Ananus. "Peradventure Aziel counselleth well on thy account and for the sake of thy tender sister."

"While my father is High Priest in Jerusalem," responded Miriam, with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks, "my place is ever at his side."

"And while my father remains in the Holy City, though one stone should not be left upon another," declared Aziel, "there, too, will I abide!"

"And am I left out?" cried Jessica; "know then, verily, though Roman eagles shall spread their accursed wings on every side of Jerusalem, the Beloved City of God, while my father and my sister are here, though all others flee to the mountains, yet will not I!"

"Bless the courageous child!" exclaimed old Rachel, as she followed the coming of her master with the customary golden cups of wine, borne by her upon a silver salver, upon which were also ruby glass dishes filled with grapes and figs and pomegranates. She carried them to her master's guests, saying, —

"Though Roman hosts do encamp on Scopus, while one lives, one must eat and drink."

And friends and host lifted the goblets to their lips, pledging to each other their steadfast fealty to their country and to their God.

Then Aziel, gazing again towards Calvary, spake in half revery, while all were silent, awed by his solemn words, —

"Proud Cæsar sat enthroned in royal state, Lord of the Imperial Empire of the world! While by the Lake of
Galilee, there stood One, who in majesty outranked great Jove. And to the one, the world gave the bended knee, but to the Nazarene, a crown of thorns. Well might the earth shake with tumultuous heart! Well might the sun be darkened, and the day hide its accustomed light! Well might the thunder roar in tones of woe! Well might both earth and heaven start back aghast, before such a spectacle of awful crime! — The King of Kings uplifted on the Cross! In Rome, the world bowed before the empty shrine of an exploded myth of Jupiter; while in Jerusalem they mocked the Son of God Almighty, and dared to nail Him to a cross of ignominious shame! Jesus or Jupiter? Choose ye this day, was the offer made to man. A myth of wrath, hurling back thunderbolts of hate, and grim freaks of chance, upon distracted mortals, powerless to prevent, to whom death was the only succor — such was Rome’s religion and hope.

"Or will ye have the Christ, Saviour Divine, sent forth from high heaven for man’s salvation? Such was the offer to Jerusalem. For answer, behold the Cross on Calvary! while Caesar bows to Capitoline Jove!

"Mark well the sequel! Shall that Temple stand, which failed to know the Great Jehovah’s Son? Upreared in homage to Almighty God, and casting forth His Well Beloved Son! Shall that Jerusalem be left unbowed, which drove the Lord of Glory from its gates? Shall that proud nation of the Jews be spared, which dyed its cruel hands in Jesus’ blood? Methinks the knell of the Holy City’s doom has rung upon the ages. The hour has struck, and the blow has fallen!"

"Elohim-Jehovah, grant that thy words be not a true prophecy, my son!" sobbed Berachiah, rending his sack-cloth robe; "but if the Nazarene be Christ, as thou dost
claim, woe indeed be to Jerusalem, and to the Holy House, and to the people! But how knowest thou that the Nazarene is the Christ?"

"You remember, father, in our Torah, in the Book called Genesis, the story of Creation is given twice."

"I have often wondered wherefore, my son."

"For this reason, father, as it seems to me, that the Christ might be therein more plainly revealed."

"And how is that, Aziel, my son? Thou art more learned than I in the writings of the Rabbis, and, peradventure, thou hast found there some statement which inclines thee to this strange belief."

"Nay, father; it was not in the learning of the Rabbis that I was taught this mighty truth, but in diligent searching of the Scriptures, as the Master, Christ, commanded of those who would learn of Him; and thus was the Truth revealed to me."

"Tell us, Aziel, more fully of your search," said Ananus; "for though I am a High Priest of Jehovah, I have not found the Christ in the story of Creation, as given in the Torah."

"In the first chapter of Genesis the account is given, wherein the Creator is declared to be God-Elohim."

"I agree with thee, Aziel," rejoined Ananus; "that is called the Elohistic account, and our Rabbis give the distinction between Elohim and Jehovah thus: 'While Elohim exhibits God displayed in His power as the Creator and Governor of the spiritual universe, the name Jehovah designates His nature as He stands in relation to man. God announced Himself to Moses as the "I AM THAT I AM," — Jehovah.'"

"And Christ declared," interjected Aziel, "'Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM,' or Jehovah."
"Where findest thou that saying, my son?" inquired Berachiah, adding to Ananus, "That was, forsooth, a strange and awesome claim indeed."

"Those words of the Christ are written in the Gospel scrolls, penned by his disciples," answered Aziel; "and for this cause I have made renewed study of our Torah, as written by Moses, and with reverent awe I received the light as revealed in the sacred pages of the Holy Book; and thus the interpretation came to me. As I have said, the first account in Genesis gives the description of Creation as performed by God-Elohim. But I also found in the Gospels these words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' Now, in confirmation of this, Christ declared himself to be the 'I AM'—Jehovah; and in the second chapter of Genesis the account is given wherein the Creator is declared to be 'The Lord God,' which title, in the most ancient copies of our Hebrew Torah, is designated by the word Jehovah, so that the names, Lord God, Jehovah, Christ, all refer to the manifestation of God the Father, in Christ the Son."

"If that be so, my son, would that our Rabbis had studied more deeply in our Torah; then, peradventure, they would not have crucified the Nazarene, if thy interpretation of the Holy Book be truth. What thinkest thou, Ananus, was the sin of man as interpreted from the description of man's fall, as given in our Torah?"

"Man's sin was disobedience," replied the High Priest, Ananus. "The disobedience of man, from which sprang
all evils, sin, sickness, and death, was not created by God, for no evil can come from perfect good; but forgiveness is the highest manifestation of perfect love, and without the permission of evil, God's love would have had no opportunity to exercise its highest function of forgiveness."

"Would not that seemingly cast reflection upon Jehovah?" asked Berachiah; "to permit evil that His greatest perfection might be manifested thereby?"

"I take it not so," replied Aziel; "man makes his own evil. God having endowed man with free will, the decrees of Jehovah are unchangeable, and man's choice of evil did not annul Jehovah's previous decree of free will; as another puts it plainly: 'Christ came to show us that the world had never belonged to the powers of evil, but that in His original thought God had decided that a moral world should be created; and that in this decision, which gave to man the choice of good and evil, He had to take upon Himself infinite suffering until the world should be brought back to Him. The redemption of the world by Christ is part of the creation of the world by Christ.' The Christ declares the truth plainly in His parable of the Prodigal Son," continued Aziel. "The forgiveness of that Father did not imply that in order to manifest this surpassing love He had caused the son to fall into the evil. The son chose the evil, and must consequently choose also to return to his Father; but the forgiveness was so full, that the Father even went out to meet him while he was yet a great way off. The forgiveness of the Father implied also not the condoning of the sin in the prodigal, but the destruction of sin, thereby transforming him into his former state of obedience, which re-instated him in his Father's household. This transforming and re-instating of misguided man is the Divine Mission of Christ."
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"The sayings of the Nazarene are passing strange, my son," said Berachiah; "Would I had listened to thy mother when she prayed me to read the Gospel scroll!"

"The words of the Nazarene, father, are the words of the Christ, the I AM—Jehovah—God, and must indeed hold mighty mysteries to finite men."

"How dost thou account, my son, for all these myriad evils that have come to the human race?"

"I cannot altogether solve the mighty problem, father, but thus it seems to me. All this long train of evils came from man's choosing to disobey God; and in His infinite love and mercy, God overrules even those very evils for the good of those who love and obey Him."

"What thinkest thou of evil, Aziel?" asked Ananus.

"It seemeth to me," answered Aziel, "that all evil may be traced to self-love, or the misappropriation of God's good gifts. All kinds of sin, if traced back, may be found to be a good made evil by an immoderate use in self-worship. Thus, selfishness is centring on self the love due to God and our fellow-men; miserliness is prudence carried to a selfish immoderation; drunkenness is immoderate appetite, which, in its God-ordained office, supplies our physical bodies with necessary food; immoderate generosity runs to prodigality, and so on, through the lists of vices and virtues. And the Nazarene said, 'There is nothing from without a man that can defile him; for from within, out the heart of men proceed evil thoughts.' Paul also, in his epistles, gives warning against immoderation. Man's first step downward seems to have been choosing self instead of God, and that same point of departure from good throws light on the temptation of Eve, as narrated in our Torah, which is also referred to in the sacred writings, called by the Christians the New Testament, parts of
which I have seen, written by the disciples of the Nazarene, and by Paul, the apostle. Some hold that the account in our Torah of Eden is a Divine allegory, as were the parables of the Nazarene, instead of a literal history. That self is the starting-point of sin seems to be verified by the declaration of the Nazarene, when He summed up the whole duty of man: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, —Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.'"

"Our Torah teaches such love to God," said Ananus; "but methinks the Nazarene sets forth stronger this love to our fellow-men. And, verily, those words of the Christ reveal to me a stupendous thought, —even God's love is not self-centred, but goes forth to the limitless needs of His Creation."

"Yea," answered Aziel, "only selfishness is self-centred; all love goes forth to others. God's love wraps the universe in its Infinite glory, and in the smaller domains of nature; the sun gives forth, else there would be no rays of warmth and light; the flowers give forth, else there would be no perfume to make fragrant the summer breeze; the earth and the sea give forth, else there would be no food for man and beasts; and naught but men and devils bow at the shrine of self which was the starting-point of sin."

"How dost thou harmonize the permission of evil with the holiness of God, my son?" asked Berachiah.

"It seemeth to me thus, father. God having decided to give man free will, that would necessitate power of choice between self-will and God's will. Had there been no free
will given to man, he would have had innocence; but his obedience to God would have been compulsory, and thereby God would not have been so highly honored as by voluntary free-will worship, and man would not have experienced the testing from which results character. It seemeth to me that God places character even higher than innocence, for the Epistles of Paul, and the writings of John, the disciple of the Christ, place the saints redeemed through the Christ, who have endured to the end through great tribulations, higher in glory than the angels who have perfect innocence, but who have never been tested by resistance to temptation and victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

“Thinkest thou that God sends upon man the evils by means of which the character of man is tested?” asked Ananus.

“Nay, verily,” replied Aziel; “for that would make God the creator of evil, whereas God is our Deliverer from evil. The miracles and declarations of the Christ make these truths plain. Sin, sickness, and death are not from God, but from Satan. For when Christ healed the woman who had a spirit of infirmity, He replied to the faultfinding ruler of the synagogue: ‘Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?’ If God the Father had bound this woman by sickness, would God the Son have unloosed her?”

“Thou speakest a deep thought, my son,” said Berachiah. “If the Nazarene were God incarnate, that declaration would refute the general opinion that God sends sickness.”

“And seest thou not also, father, that the same power in the Christ healed both sin and sickness?”

“It is not clear to me, my son; I have not noted the miracles of the Nazarene as I should.”
"Thou rememberest the palsied man, father?" responded Aziel; "when the bed on which he lay was let down through the roof in the midst of the crowd surrounding the Nazarene, Christ said to the sick: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee!' and when the scribes reasoned in their hearts objectingly, Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said: 'Whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), "I say unto thee arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way;" and immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth.' It seemeth to me to be here clearly proved that the healing of sin is healing of sickness in us also, by Christ; and we obtain both health and holiness in proportion to our appropriation by faith of the Perfect Redemption of both body and soul by the Divine Christ. This point I find Paul makes very clear in his Epistles, which I have lately studied."

"I have not read the Gospel scrolls," said Ananus.

"Not only by example does Christ work in us," resumed Aziel; "but by the imparting to our souls of the Holy Spirit, the promised Comforter, who empowers us to be born again into the spiritual kingdom of God, by being transformed in the likeness of Christ, and becoming at length perfect, like unto the Father."

"That is a strange doctrine, to be born again; did the Nazarene teach that?" inquired the High Priest Ananus.

"Yea, verily," answered Aziel. "To one of our own Rabbis, by name Nicodemus, Jesus the Christ said, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"That is a hard saying, my son," rejoined Berachiah; "what meaneth it to thee?"
"From the teachings of the Gospel I gain this light upon it," answered Aziel. "Paul declares that Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; therefore it seemeth to me that being born again is the new life awakened in us by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, transforming our natures into a likeness of the Christ. Choice lies with us. The choice of Christ on our part insures the regenerative power on His part. We have always been the immortal sons of God, but Satan hath bound us with the fetters of sin, sickness, and death, meanwhile whispering the insidious lie that they were God-sent. Then Jesus the Christ, God incarnate in the flesh, bursts these Satan-made bonds; brings to light our immortality; declares that God is our Father; casts out sin and sickness; conquers death, and offers to all mankind the Father's welcome to the Prodigal,—re-instatement in our immortal inheritance. Only those will be disinherited at last who refuse to return to their Heavenly Father's Home."

"Dost thou find other record of the Nazarene in our Holy Torah?" asked Ananus; "if so, 'tis passing strange that our learned Rabbis have overlooked it."

"Yea, verily," rejoined Aziel; "I have sought diligently in our Sacred Scriptures, and I am filled with amazement to discover that the Jehovah-God of our people is, in truth, the Christ. Wot ye not how God declared Himself to Moses as 'THE I AM THAT I AM;' and behold Christ declares Himself to be the 'I AM'—the Jehovah—'before Abraham was.' Thus is brought to pass that saying of the Nazarene: 'Search the Scriptures, and they are they which testify of Me.'"

"If such be the Holy One, crucified by our nation, no marvel that the direful doom has fallen, and the wail of
woe even now pierces our hearts!” murmured Ananus, gazing with grief-stricken eyes towards the beloved but desecrated Temple.

“If the Christ were indeed the Jehovah-God, Creator of this visible world, what wonder that the sun was darkened, and the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, while their Divine Creator was the recipient of such astounding indignity from the creatures whom His Divine Love had created!” said the weeping Berachiah. “Nature veiled her face in horror, abashed at such awful deed,” he continued musingly; “but sinful man dared lift his finite hand against the Infinite, if so be this Nazarene were, in truth, the promised Messiah.”

“I have sometimes questioned,” said Aziel, “why so many centuries were allowed to pass before Christ was revealed to man in Jesus of Nazareth. But when we understand that all the Old Testament account is a revelation of Christ to man, in His manifestation as Jehovah-God, we gain a new spiritual perception of the purpose of the manifestation of the Jehovah-God of the Old Testament in the Christ of the New Testament.

“God had already revealed Himself as Creator, Lawgiver, and Governor of the race, in the Jehovah and Lord God of the Old Testament; and in Christ manifested in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, God continued His revelation to man as Saviour and Messiah, making proof of the Divinity of the Nazarene by means of the very laws of nature which Christ had Himself ordained, when in the beginning He manifested the invisible things of the Father by means of the visible creation of the Son.

“And He showed in His miracles that He held those laws controlled by His higher spiritual laws, that the eternal holds and controls the temporal, is in harmony with it;
and He proved by demonstration that of both natural and spiritual law, He, Christ, the Jehovah-God, the I AM, the Son, was the Creator. For the very reason that Christ, as Jehovah-God, created the material body as well as the spirit of man, could He command the sick, sin-marred bodies of suffering humanity, reaping the terrible harvest of evils which man's disobedience had sown, 'Be thou whole!' and straightway the Jehovah-God willed the disorganized atoms into perfect order, which is health.

"As the Nazarene declared that we can know the Father only through Himself, the Son; as He has declared that He is Jehovah-God, Creator of the visible universe; as He has declared that through Himself only is Eternal Life; as He has declared that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; as time and eternity unite to express His marvelous Being; as He has challenged the world to convict Him of sin; as His character shines the resplendent blazing Centre of time and Eternity, earth and heaven,—every living thing, all created things,—plants, birds, beasts, stars, suns, and men,—must bow responsive to His bidding. All nature obeys His laws; only man dares to defy his Divine Creator."

"Do our prophets make it plain, my son, that this Christ was the Creator of this visible universe, and that the Father, Elohim, is the invisible God revealed to man through Christ His Son?"

"Yea, father," answered Aziel; "both Isaiah and Paul make that point very clear, it seems to me."

"Where dost thou find that, Aziel?" asked Ananus.

"In the book of Isaiah it is written thus," said Aziel: "'For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour! Every one that is called by my name, for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea,
I have made him. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour.’”

“That is a stupendous statement, my son, that there was no God formed,—that is, made visible to man, and no man created before the manifestation of God the Father in Christ the Son. Didst thou find this in the prophets in thy study, Ananus?”

“I have here the Isaiah scroll,” replied Ananus, as he turned to a table near by, and turning it over, he continued: “Yea, here are the very words quoted by Aziel; it is wonderful I never noted them before.”

“And Paul verifies that statement, when he writes in one of his epistles, which I have lately read,” resumed Aziel, “‘Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.’”

“Woe be to our nation, who crucified that Holy One!” murmured Ananus.

“And Paul again writes,” continued Aziel, “‘For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal Power and Godhead.’ So it seemeth to me,” said Aziel, “that all things visible were created by Christ, and through Him are manifested the invisible things of the Father, Elohim-God; and Christ, incarnate in the
flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, was but the continuation of the Omnipotent Plan of Creation and Redemption, and so the Nazarene was the incarnate Christ in flesh, the same Christ who was in the beginning with God, and was God; the manifestation of God's power in the visible Creation, and the manifestation of God's love in the Messiah."

"The first commandment of our sacred law," said Ananus, "forbids worship of more than the one God; does not the Christian doctrine uphold the worship of three Gods,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?"

"We worship but One God only," answered Aziel; "the doctrine of the Trinity, as held by Christians, is but a triune manifestation of the One God, Elohim-Jehovah-Christ. To state it simply, it seemeth thus to me. Our Torah says: 'In the beginning;' now before that beginning there was without beginning the One God,—the Father, invisible, unmanifested; then at a set time, in the beginning, the Father manifested Himself visibly in Creation, through the Word,—Christ,—and thus was revealed as God the Son; this same God the Son manifested Himself in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth. So God the Father, through God the Son, manifested Himself visibly, first by the creation, then in the flesh; now that He has ascended to God the Father, and is no longer visible in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, He reveals Himself still to man as God the Holy Ghost, working by His Divine power invisibly in the souls of men."

"The reason given for the rejection of the Nazarene by our people," said Ananus, "was that the Jews expected their promised Messiah would found an earthly kingdom, and deliver them from the Roman yoke. This Nazarene did not deliver our people from their Roman enemies; then how explain the purpose of His appearing in human form to man, if such was not His mission?"
"It seemeth thus to me," rejoined Aziel, "as I ponder on the teachings of the Nazarene. Christ came to found a spiritual, not an earthly kingdom. His mission was to free the souls of men from all the fetters with which evil had bound their immortal spirits. His reign is eternal and His kingdom is omnipotent. As Paul says of the true followers of Christ: 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'"

"But, my son, this Nazarene was crucified by our people; woe be to us! Thou canst not say Jehovah-God could die? If this Christ were indeed Jehovah, how dost thou explain the Cross?"

"Verily, thou art right, father. Jehovah can never die, else would He not be God. It was not the Divine Christ, but the human Jesus, who was hung upon the Cross, and laid in the sepulchre. But death could not conquer incarnate God, and the Resurrection proved the Divinity of Christ. Thus from eternity to eternity, Christ was, and is, and will be manifested."

"But, my son, nearly forty years have passed since the crucifixion of the Nazarene, and the reign of evil in the world seems not diminished."

"That is true, father, but I have gained great light in the study of the Scriptures upon that point, as interpreted by a diligent student of the Sacred Records, whose words I have copied on this tablet, from which I will read to thee a portion. This Christian writer explains it thus,—

"'The plan of God, with reference to man, spans three great periods of time, beginning with man's creation, and reaching into the illimitable future. Peter and Paul designate these periods as "Three worlds." These three great epochs represent three distinct manifestations of Divine Providence. The first, from creation to the flood,
was under the ministration of angels, and is called by Peter, "The world that was." The second great epoch, from the flood to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, is under the limited control of Satan, called by the Nazarene "The prince of this world," and is therefore called by Paul, "This present evil world." The third is to be a "world without end," under Divine administration, the Kingdom of God, and is called by Paul, "The world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness."''

"Does that writer say aught of the next age?" asked Berachiah.

"I have these lines on my tablet," responded Aziel, —

"'At Jesus' death a new age began, —the Gospel age, or Christian dispensation, wherein should be heralded good tidings of justification, not to the Jew only, but to all nations; for Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. With this age, the "present evil world" will end. In the end of this age, and dawn of its successor, Satan is to be bound and his power overthrown, preparatory to the establishment of Christ's Kingdom, and the beginning of "The World to Come, wherein dwelleth righteousness."''

"Does that writer explain how the Jews were so blinded as to fail to recognize their Messiah, if so be the Nazarene were Christ in truth?" asked Ananus.

"I will read again from his words copied on my tablets," replied Aziel: "'While under the discipline of evil, and unable to understand its necessity, God repeatedly expressed to mankind His purpose to restore and bless them through a coming deliverer. But who that deliverer should be, was a mystery for four thousand years, and it only began to be clearly revealed after the resurrection of Christ."
"About the time when Jesus was born, all men were in expectation of the Messiah, the coming king of Israel, and, through Israel, of the world. But Israel's hope of the glory and honor of their coming king, inspired as it was by the types and prophecies of his greatness and power, caused them to overlook another set of types and prophecies, which pointed to a work of suffering and death as a ransom for sinners, necessary before the blessing could come. This was prefigured in the Passover, before they were delivered from Egypt, in the slaying of the animals at the giving of the law covenant, and in the Atonement sacrifices, performed year by year continually by the priesthood. They overlooked, too, the statements of the prophets, "who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Hence, when Jesus came as a sacrifice, they did not recognize him; they knew not the time of their visitation. Even His immediate followers were sorely perplexed when Jesus died; and sadly they said: "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." They failed to see that the death of their leader was in partial fulfilment of the covenant of promise, the ratification of the New Covenant under which the blessings were to come. However, when they found that He had risen from the tomb, their withered hopes began to revive, and when He was about to leave them, they asked concerning their long-cherished and oft-deferred hope, saying, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." They could not understand before the Pentecostal blessing came, for Christ had declared, "When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." Not until the
times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, will the words of our prophets come to pass, 'I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.'"

"Surely our nation knew not what they did when they rejected Jesus of Nazareth!" sighed Berachiah.

"Peradventure, when the end of this present evil age you speak of shall draw near," said Ananus, "then will be fulfilled the words of Isaiah the prophet. I have deeply pondered upon his strange vision, concerning which he says,—

"'And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord.' Perchance," he continued, "if, as you say, Jerusalem shall now be laid low for the rejection of the Nazarene, this strange vision may refer to a future rebuilding of the Holy City. The swift beasts, called by the prophet, 'kirkaroth,' have always been a mystery to me; for the word doubtless comes from our Hebrew words 'kar' and 'karkar,' meaning a furnace, and to sway, and that must surely denote some strange, swift, moving thing, unknown to us."

"It is also prophesied in our book of Daniel, regarding those latter days," rejoined Aziel, "where the angel said to him: 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' We know not what shall befall our people during this age, but when these prophecies are fulfilled, future generations will see the return of our scattered people here in Jerusalem, even
though the Romans shall have destroyed our city and our Temple. For the word of our God is unchangeable, and the Christ, who declared to His disciples the destruction of this Temple, which we now behold desecrated and desolate,—for He said, 'Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down,'—said also, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Verily, I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' Therefore I feel that the Doom of the Holy City is already being fulfilled."

Again silence brooded over that little group, while the mystery of the spiritual birth was being wrought in the seeking souls of the aged Berachiah and Ananus. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

At last the low, reverent voice of the High Priest broke the solemn stillness, as, with eyes still turned towards the Temple, he said: "Peradventure, Aziel, thy younger mind has caught the prophetic glory of a marvellous vision of the future, when this same Nazarene, whom I now willingly acknowledge to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, shall have conquered the world as His spiritual Kingdom, and men shall no longer repair to this Temple in Jerusalem to worship Jehovah, for every heart shall be a temple, and the light of the Shechinah shall illumine with effulgent radiance the Holy of Holies in every man's soul."

Just then a nightingale lifted its voice in the oleander grove, singing its hymn of praise to God, its Creator, in the midst of the carnage and bloodshed of the tumultuous city, where the evil spirits of men's lawless passions
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worked death and destruction. The plaintive notes of
the trusting songster fell upon the ear of Aziel with a
tranquillizing influence, and the faith in his soul rose
triumphant above his gloomy fears. He felt assured that
whatsoe'er should betide those who appropriated by faith
the perfect redemption through Christ, should find help in
every time of trouble, and through Him everlasting life.

And wherefore should the Temple be cast down, so that
one stone should not remain upon another? Not that
heathen gods were triumphant! Not that Great Jehovah’s
arm was shortened! Not that the invincible power of the
Almighty and Infinite Elohim, the Everlasting I AM, was
loosening its irresistible grasp upon the helm of the uni-
verse! Not because false creeds and doctrines had pre-
vailed! Not because the swing of the earth’s orbit was
placed in the merciless hands of a blind chance! Not
because mankind were perforce working out one of the
little cycles appointed to different ages, in evolving the
destinies of the human race, foreordained by grim gods of
matter to end only at last in hopeless annihilation! Not
because hope and faith were dead things of a past credu-
licity! Not because belief in an Omnipresent, Omniscient,
and Omnipotent Deity had been found by experience to
be a myth! Not because a hope in a spiritual life beyond
this earthly existence had been proven to be only the
ideal fancy of imaginative minds! Wherefore, then,
should the Temple be cast down? How answer the seem-
ingly difficult question, why Jehovah would allow the
shrine dedicated to Himself to be ruthlessly destroyed by
heathen hands? What are some of the answers which
come winging their shining way to our minds, down
through the centuries, borne on the gleaming rays stream-
ing forth from the Golden Gospel of the God-Man?
By the coming of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, had the old Temple ritual been superseded by the Gospel dispensation of salvation offered to all races of the world. And the rent veil hanging before the hitherto invisible Holy of Holies, witnessed the consummation of the Atonement accomplished through the Perfect Life, and Sacrificial Death, and Divine Resurrection of the God-Man.

"And behold the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;" signifying, peradventure, that the power to rend that Holy Veil could only come from Heaven above, and was not the work of earthly hands, as it is said it was rent from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top. And the power to destroy that Temple itself came also from above; for had not Jehovah willed that the old dispensation of the Temple ritual should be done away by the coming of the new dispensation of the Gospel of the Messiah, His Divine Son; then, though Rome's eagles, Egypt's armies, Grecian warriors, Arab archers, Thracian lance-throwers, Gaban horsemen, Illyrian spearmen, Tyrian daggers, Damascus blades, Italian legions, Alexandrian auxiliaries, Syrian slingers, Spanish javelins, Galatian foot-soldiers, Lybian slaves, with all the machinery of war and weapons of the known world, had come against those sacred walls, yet had they stood firm, unless Jehovah Himself had, in His wise providence, allowed their downfall.

As before, in the history of the Jews, Elohim had allowed the hitherto sacred Ark of the Covenant, with golden Mercy-Seal, and shining wings of Cherubim, consecrated by the presence of the Almighty power of Jehovah in the effulgent light of the Shechinah, to be plundered and destroyed by heathen hands, as its mission was accom-
plished, and God would not that His chosen people should be led to worship any object formed by the hand of man, even though it had been the Holy Mercy-Seat, where His presence had been visible; so now, when the peculiar office of the Temple was superseded by the Higher Office of the Messiah, then was the Temple also permitted to be destroyed, lest peradventure it might have been regarded as an object in itself worthy of worship, whereas naught but God Himself, who is a spirit, and His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, must henceforth receive the worship of the world.

Peradventure, had the Jews not rejected the Son of the Great Jehovah, Jerusalem and the Temple might have been permitted to remain consecrated to the service of the Christ. We cannot say, but this we have good reasons for surmising, that the wicked rejection of the Messiah of the world by the Jews, and their awful curse pronounced by themselves upon their own heads, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" was sufficient cause for the destruction of their glorious city, and their famous but desecrated Temple.

The Christ is the Messiah not only for Jews, but for Gentiles, for Greeks, Romans, barbarians, bond and free. No one nation of the world was to have exclusive right to His proffered salvation; no one city of the world was to set bounds to the spread of his Gospel of Love. The Temple, symbol of God's peculiar favor to the Jews, was to be cast down, and the Cross uplifted, — symbol of Christ's atonement offered to all races. The walls of Jerusalem were to be laid low, and the Gospel carried into all lands.

Henceforth, no temple of earth might rear its proud head, saying: *I alone am the Church of God!* Hence-
forth, no walled city might shut in its Pharisaical inhabitants boastingly, crying: *We alone are the chosen people of God.* Henceforth salvation would be offered to all; henceforth the Bread of Life would be common to all.

For three days Cestius remained in his camp at Scopus, but on the fourth he set his army in marching array; and such was the martial bearing of the Romans, that the Zealots fled from the outposts of the city, and took refuge behind the walls of the Temple. Cestius, having burned certain parts of the suburbs, encamped in the Upper City, near Herod’s palace.

Doubtless, if he had so willed, he could now easily have conquered the rebels; but, with strange apathy, he was persuaded by Priscus, and other of his captains, who had been bribed by Florus, who desired nothing so much as that Rome and Jerusalem should come to open warfare, that he should not attack the Zealots. It would seem as though the Jews, in their blind error, doomed the city to destruction, and thus was Cestius allowed to be so easily hindered. God wills only good to His children, but mortals, blinded by evil, rush madly on to their own direful doom.

Cestius now gave command to his army that they should assail the Temple, and Herod’s palace. This they did for five days, without gaining advantage. Whereupon, on the sixth day, Cestius attacked the Temple on the north side, having with him picked men of the legion, and skilful archers.

So furious were the Zealots in defence, that at first the Romans were driven back from the walls; but at length Cestius ordered his legions to form a tortoise with their shields, which manoeuvre gained for him the victory. And this mode of warfare was as follows: A tortoise was made by the first rank of Roman soldiers resting their
shields against the wall, and to these others, coming close, joined their shields, and this was done by still other ranks, and the shields, fitting tightly together like the tiers on the shell of a tortoise, formed a guard called the *testudo*; and under cover of this protection the Romans were enabled to come near to the walls, for neither arrow nor dart could pierce these linked shields; and such a manner of defence so alarmed the Zealots, that they wavered in their courage, and, learning that the soldiers had so undermined the walls as to be ready to set fire to the gate of the Temple, the Zealots fled with haste, and the people would speedily have opened the gates to Cestius and his legion, but, with strange timidity, Cestius called back his troops from attacking the city, and with no apparent reason retired once again to his camp on Scopus.

Thereupon the rebels took heart and pursued Cestius, and as the Romans continued their flight, the Jews way-laid them in a narrow defile, where the horsemen were at great disadvantage, the foot-soldiers, also, being heavily armed, whereas the Jews were lightly equipped, and therefore prepared for this kind of warfare; this being so, the Romans suffered great loss, and retreated with haste to their former camp at Gabao.

In this conflict, Priscus, who commanded the sixth legion of the Romans, and Longinus, the Tribune, and Æmilius Jucundus, captain of a troop of horse, with many others of less renown among the Romans, perished.

The Jews, being now strong of heart, on account of their success, collected in large numbers, and boldly attacked Cestius at Gabao, and with such frenzy, that the Romans fled in haste, leaving behind them all such baggage as might hinder their swift flight, and killing all beasts of burden except those which bore the arrows of the artillery.
So Cestius came to Bethhoron. While the Romans kept in the open country, the Jews forbore to attack them; but as they were close upon Bethhoron, having to go through a narrow pass, the Zealots fell upon them, showering darts from the rocks above, and attacking them both in front and in the rear.

Neither could the horsemen defend themselves from the sharp javelins which filled the air, and the foot soldiers were helpless to preserve their ranks, and the steep rocks prevented the horsemen from coming to their aid.

Indeed, so great was the fury of the Jews, and so sore were the straits of the Romans, that they lifted up their cries in lamentations, nor tried to defend themselves, being overwhelmed with despair; while the triumphant Zealots shouted aloud for joy.

Peradventure, this would have put an end to the entire army of Cestius, but that night falling upon the contestants, the Romans made their way to Bethhoron, and the Jews, surrounding them on all sides, determined to wait until the morning.

Meanwhile Cestius, to save his army, resorted to a stratagem, though it was a severe ordeal for the few brave soldiers upon whom his choice fell. Selecting four hundred of his bravest troops, he set them on the rampart of the camp, bidding them display the Roman standards, as though the whole army were still entrenched there. Then, during the hours of friendly darkness, Cestius and the remnant of his army stole quietly away, and thus gained time in their flight. In the morning, the Jews attacked the camp, slew all of the brave four hundred, and pursued after Cestius. But this device had given him so many hours' march, that the Jews at length relinquished the pursuit, and returning, they gathered up the spoils of war,
robbing the dead, and collecting great stores of plunder, and many implements of war, of which they afterwards made great use. Of the Romans, five thousand three hundred of the foot soldiers were slain, and three hundred and eighty horsemen fell in the conflict. The victorious Zealots then returned to Jerusalem, and open war was declared between the Romans and the Jews.

News of this great calamity to the Romans having reached Nero in Greece, he thereupon appointed Vespasian as commander of the Roman forces, to quell this uprising in Judea. Vespasian therefore mustered his allies and forces at Ptolemais, while Titus, his son, took a ship for Alexandria, and summoned from thence the Fifth and Tenth Legions, to serve in the impending campaign.

The Sanhedrin became a council of war, and divided Palestine into seven military districts. Of these the most important was Galilee, which was defended by a strong line of posts from the sea to the Lake of Tiberias. It was Vespasian's plan to complete the reduction of Galilee before turning his arms against Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had appointed certain men to be leaders, both in the cities and the provinces, and they had chosen Josephus to take command of the Jewish forces in Galilee. This Josephus, the son of Matthias, became afterwards the illustrious historian of the Jewish war.

Josephus belonged to an ancient and noble Jewish family, and was withal noted for rare learning and scholarly abilities, and had heretofore been sent to Rome in behalf of certain persons accused by Felix, who were ordered to answer for their deeds to Nero. Josephus gained the favor of Poppaea, Nero's wife, who gave him many gifts, and honored him with royal consideration. Therefore Josephus was most averse to war with Rome,
and counselled his country against such futile project, but was overborne in advice by the hot-headed Zealots, who thirsted for naught so much as for an opportunity to cross swords with Cæsar's legions.

Finding he could not prevail in his efforts to prevent the Jews from rebelling against Rome, Josephus determined to serve them as best he could, and accepted the government of Galilee, behaving himself with great wisdom and courage.

Now, for a time, we must turn our gaze from Jerusalem, torn with internal riots, which Ananus endeavors to quiet by wise counsel and mild forbearance, while we follow Vespasian in his preparations for the subjugation of Palestine; for in this manner we may, peradventure, gain a clearer understanding of that famous war against the Holy City.

As we have said, Placidus had been summoned from Rome to attend Vespasian as his tribune; and he did comport himself with so much valor, that he was appointed to important posts in the campaign. The tactics of Vespasian were slow and cautious, taking warning by the example of Cestius, who had rushed with headlong speed against the impregnable Jerusalem, and had found to his terrible cost that the Holy City was not to be thus easily subdued.

When Flavius Vespasian, A.D. 67, came down into the province of Judea by the command of Nero, and had gathered a great army at Antioch, even sixty thousand men, Josephus straightway warned all the people of Galilee to fly within the entrenched cities, he himself, with the bravest of his soldiers, betaking themselves to Jotapata, the strongest of the cities of Galilee. He sent also letters to the Sanhedrin, at Jerusalem, setting forth
the state of affairs, and recommending them to make peace with Rome, but adding that if war was their decision, they should forthwith supply him with soldiers, that he might be able to join battle with the enemy.

Vespasian, meanwhile, conferred with King Agrippa at Cæsarea Philippi, and the tetrarch, in such case, thinking it more prudent to show himself an ally of Rome rather than of Jerusalem, entertained the Roman general with sumptuous feasts.
CHAPTER XIII.


On the distant waters of the Mediterranean, Roman war galleys gathering, tossed pearl-white foam upon the sapphire sea. The fragrant meadows, "lily-lit," skirting the lake of Gennesaret, were ruthlessly trampled by the feet of Rome's auxiliaries; and through the streets of Nazareth, made holy by the footsteps of the Christ, reeled drunken myrmidons of Cæsar, who defiled the air, still echoing with the holy words of love, by their coarse jests and brutal oaths.

The doves nestling in the cedars flew away, affrighted by these strange sounds of war, and the Jordan drew back its waves reluctant from the polluting touch of Roman bathers, remembering that its waters had been made holy by contact with the sacred person of the baptized Jesus.

In Capernaum, where the fevered sick had felt the healing touch of that miraculous power which clothed the God-Man, with an effulgence visible only to angels, and in Gadara, where the souls of tormented demoniacs were set at liberty from legions of devils, at the commanding word of Him who rules all powers of darkness, and to whom even the demons are subject,—in those places for-
ever consecrated by such manifestations of the Divine nature of the Son of Mary, now gather hordes of pagan soldiers, praying to the myth of Jupiter, or, worse still, sacrificing in honor of the Great Beast from the Abyss, now seated on the throne of Rome.

The olive-trees of Chorazin, and the palm groves of Bethsaida, which had bent a listening ear to the life-giving words of their Divine Creator, when the heedless inhabitants had regarded not the mighty works of Him who came to save a perishing world, and who therefore uttered those denunciatory sentences against these cities, which, in their indifferent unbelief, were more guilty than Tyre and Sidon,—these same palms and olives now shuddered in the night winds, bemoaning the desecration of the soil of Galilee, once pressed by the sinless feet of its rejected Lord.

In Cæsarea Philippi, where that momentous warning had been spoken to that little band of reverent disciples,—“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—there are now held high revels in the palace of Agrippa, in honor of Vespasian. “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” still rings through the echoing ether, yet vibrating with the melodious tones of that matchless voice; but the wild revellers hear not the heavenly echo. But nature yet thrills with the remembrance; and the constant lilies of the field still tremble from His tender touch; and the grass blades quiver from the soft treading of His feet; and the sparrows snuggle trustfully in their nests, mindful of the Father’s noting of their fall; and the vines hang heavy with their luscious clusters, whose purple is flushed with blood-red tints, since the Master honored their life sap by symbolizing it to His Own most precious blood.
In Magdala, where rang out those warning words, in answer to the tempting Pharisees and Sadducees, "O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the sign of the times?" still abide blinded Jews, now entrenching themselves in the tower overlooking the Lake of Tiberias, unconscious that the hour of their destruction, foretold by that Divine Voice, has come.

On the opposite bank of the lake, where the four thousand hungry men, women, and children had been fed by the loving Master, His only store being seven small loaves and a few fishes, still wave the pine-trees, which had shaded the multitudes on whom He had compassion; and the night winds moan amidst their branches with plaintive lament, that they should no more bend in reverent adoration over that Sacred Head.

In the village of Nain, spreading up the slope of the hill from the plain of Esdrælon, where the commanding voice of the God-Man broke in upon the dull ears of the dead son of a widow, and, responsive to those irresistible tones, the soul, already winging its way to the beyond, obeyed the summons, and the dead was restored alive to his mother’s arms,—on this momentous spot are now pitched the tents of the pagan army, and the standard of Cæsar is uplifted, regardless that the surrounding hills witnessed the presence of One so mighty that the gates of death could not prevail against Him.

By the well of Sychar, in Samaria, lying in the sheltered valley between Mount Gerizim on the south, and Mount Ebal on the north, where the summer makes this the paradise of the Holy Land, filled with gardens, cooled by glittering fountains, and where orchards of figs, pomegranates, olives, citrons, apples, and almonds flourish;
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lovely Sychar, the ancient Shechem of Palestine, renamed by Vespasian Neapolis, near which lies the tomb of Joseph, at the foot of the sacred mount of Gerizim; here where Abraham pitched his tent, and built an altar to Jehovah, under the oak of Moreh; Sychar, made more sacred still by the presence of the Divine Son of God, who condescended there to preach to the solitary and sinful woman that wondrous sermon from the text,—

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;" and, moreover, to this same humble listener, the Great Messiah did announce Himself,—

"I that speak unto thee am He!"

And now in this same Sychar, where the myrtles cluster, swinging their white censers, purple-rimmed, wafting their fragrant incense upon the sun-lit air; and the almonds scatter their pink showers upon the grass; and the rosy blossoms of the oleanders mingle with the white flowers of the orange-trees; and the crimson pomegranate-bells ring out the new song of the Gospel, instead of chiming, as heretofore, with the golden bells bordering the sacred robe of the High Priest, when he sacrificed in the Holy Place in the Temple, now no longer necessary, because the spotless Lamb of God has been once for all laid upon the Altar of Burnt Offering, as an atonement for the sins of the world,—in this same Sychar, by that sacred well, now stand caravans of camels, laden with implements of war, while Roman pagans and Egyptian idolaters slake their thirst from its refreshing waters, forever blessed by the reflection of that Divine Face which bent over them, when, weary by His ceaseless ministrations of love, the Son of God sat there to rest beside Samaria’s fountain.

And other places still, made holy by the footsteps of the
Christ, now resound with desecrating sounds of war,—that holy place in Bethlehem, that rock-hewn stable, that manger, cut from the stone wall, which received the Divine Babe when no place was found for Him, the Holy One from Heaven, in village khan, nor any villager to offer shelter to the Virgin Mary in her hour of need; in that same sacred stable, made more resplendent by the effulgent light beaming from the holy brow of the Divine Child than Nero’s boasted Golden House, glowing in gorgeous pomp on Rome’s high Palatine,—within those walls still echoing the sweet murmurs of that Holy Babe’s voice, now sit fierce Sicarii, throwing the gambling dice, and befouling that consecrated air with horrid jests and coarse profanity.

Without that sacred Grotto, the birthplace of Mary’s Son, the lilies bow their lovely heads in silent grief at such harrowing desecration, and their dew-filled eyes shed tears of sorrow upon the white faces of the stars of Bethlehem growing at their feet; while the ring-necked doves coo sadly in the branches of the weeping willows, and the palm-trees droop their emerald-green plumes, which whisper musically in the breeze. The rock-rose, cistus, clambering over the walls of the holy cave, blushes pink with indignation at such forgetfulness of Him, the lovely Rose of Sharon, once shining in His perfect beauty there in the sight of men and nature. The myrrh, planted in neighboring gardens, to be used in the oil of holy ointment, drops golden tears of fragrant gum, in memory of the perfumed spices wrapped with the linen around that sacred body laid in the tomb of Joseph.

In Bethany, on the slope of the memorable Mount of Olives, in that house where Jesus talked with Mary, and Lazarus, raised by His miraculous power from the jaws
of death, even on the cushioned divan, which, perchance, the Christ had honored by the pressure of His matchless form, now sat a Roman soldier, and, with his companions, feasted in drunken revel. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, ruthless pagan hands cut down those holy trees, whose boughs had sheltered that Lone Sufferer, when all men, and even God Himself, seemed, for a time, to forsake that anguished heart, dropping great tears of blood, that sinful men might be forgiven.

It was night under a Galilæan sky. The moonbeams, which had kissed with reverent caress the brow of Nazareth’s Carpenter, and thereby gained a heavenly radiance by such a contact as should impart to those silvery rays a greater glory than reflection of the noon-day’s splendor, these moonbeams now paled in witness of Galilee’s departing beauty, and hid themselves, sorrowing, behind gray cloud-curtains, drawn across the eastern sky.

In Agrippa’s palace in Cæsarea Philippi, lights flashed, and revellers feasted, and the wine-cup was lifted to the lips of smiling women and martial men. Here libations were poured forth in sacrifice to pagan gods, and heathen rites were celebrated, that the coming conflict between Rome and Jerusalem might be decided by destiny in favor of the Roman eagles. And wherefore would Rome be victorious? Not by the strength of Roman legions! Not by the power of heathen gods! Not by the force of implements of war, nor skill in Roman warfare! Not for the aid of Egypt nor Arabia! Not by the Thracian’s brawny arms, nor by the prowess of Illyrian bands! Not through the sure aiming of swift archers! Not through the help of allied ranks of Gauls! Not through the wisdom of Vespasian, nor daring of brave Titus! Not by
all of these combined, was Jerusalem laid low! For in spite of all, the Holy City had yet remained impregnable to heathen attack; but for the mighty reason that Jehovah Himself ordained that power should be taken from that nation which had rejected His Well-Beloved and Divine Son!

In the triclinium of Agrippa's palace sat Vespasian, the guest of honor, and by his side, fair Berenice, sister of the king,—though Jewess, and petitioner at Jerusalem in behalf of her countrymen, when Florus brutally shed their blood, now plotting with Agrippa in favor of the Roman lords, in whose eyes she would fain appear attractive. Her costume was of queenly magnificence. Her cymar was cloth of gold and her robe of Tyrian purple, while her black hair was coifed in Roman fashion, covered with a caul of pearls, studded with emeralds. Jewels blazed on her arms, caressed her pink shell ears, glittered with dazzling lustre on her white breast, where glowed a ruby, worth a king's ransom; there it lay like a great drop of heart's blood on the ivory whiteness of her skin. Her slender fingers were weighted with costly rings, while her girdle of linked gold was set with stars of gems; and the handle of the radiant fan, made from the plumage of the beautiful birds of Paradise, which hung from her girdle by strings of pearls, was encrusted with sparkling diamonds, set in the form of sprays of lilies. Upon each silver sandal lay an almond blossom, embroidered in pale pink beads of coral; and the sumptuous couch, on which she languidly reclined, was of ivory, set with plates of gold, and covered with soft cushions of eider down, encased in silken covers of white silk, arabesqued in golden threads.

Not alone is she pleasing to Vespasian, for the handsome Titus, a dozen years her junior, who, returned from
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Alexandria with legions summoned thither, now with his father, is being royally entertained by King Agrippa; and Titus fails not to note the loveliness of Berenice, and will still more admire her, as we shall see. For at this time thirty and nine summers had passed over the head of Berenice, but touching her so lightly, that she still bloomed in all the gorgeous beauty of womanhood, more dangerous oft to the heart of man than a maiden’s blush; for eye, and hand, and voice had been well skilled in all the tricks of coquetry, and the art of fascination was so consummate that it seemed but the artlessness of a lovely nature.

Placidus, as tribune of Vespasian, attends the general, and sees also this beautiful Berenice; but remembering his stately mother, Virgilia, and his sister, Myrtilla, whose pure beauty is to this voluptuous display as the white lily to the gaudy coloring of a painted Magdalene, his pulse quickens not even at the touch of those soft hands, when, lifting a rose fallen from her fragrant dress, he hands it to her, and as their fingers meet over the glowing flower, she smiles into his eyes, with all a woman’s wiles of fascination; but Placidus bows only in courtly deference, and glances with cold eyes upon those alluring charms, which piques her vanity to a greater show of kindness, until his studied coldness touches her wounded pride.

"I hear that Nero has arrived in Rome, after spending a year in Greece," remarked King Agrippa to his guest, Vespasian.

"He was loath to return," responded Vespasian, "for Grecian laurels pleased him more than imperial cares."

"I wot he knoweth little of Rome’s policies, and careth less!" interjected Titus; and turning to Placidus, he continued: "Hast thou learned of the manner of great
Cæsar's triumphal return from Greece? He has instituted his Neronian games after the style of the Olympian, and must needs return to Rome like a triumphal general, in purple tunic, riding in the chariot in which Augustus had triumphed, and wearing a gorgeous cloak embroidered with golden stars. On his head he wore the crown won at Olympia, and in his right hand that which had been given to him at the Parthian games, while the rest of his numerous prizes and coronals, which had been perforce adjudged to him, were carried in a procession before him, with badges attached, stating the places where they had been so valiantly won. He was followed by his five thousand Augustani, who vociferously made loud acclamations, crying out, 'that they were the Emperor's attendants, and the soldiers of his triumph.'"

"It must indeed have been a goodly sight for Roman soldiers!" quoth Placidus, with scornful looks, having listened with indignation to such a recital of great Cæsar's warlike prowess.

"And more," resumed Titus; "as it was a custom that the victor in the Grecian games should be drawn in a chariot harnessed to white horses, through a breach in the city wall, as a mark of honor, great Cæsar must needs cause an arch of the Circus Maximus to be taken down, that he might thus also pass through a breach; and so on he passed through the Velabrum and Forum to the Palatine Hill; and to the Temple of Apollo was our noble Cæsar borne; and everywhere, as he marched, victims were slain, while the streets were perfumed with saffron; and sweetmeats, birds, and chaplets were scattered by fair Roman ladies, in honor of their heroic emperor, who had won such famous laurels! These sacred crowns are now suspended in his bed-chamber, and statues of brave Nero,
attired as a harper, are now erected in many places, and his chief concern is to spare his melodious voice from too great strain, lest his warblings in the theatre might be less impressive."

"Methinks that Cæsar will have somewhat more weighty matters than womanlike warblings to attend to, ere long," said Vespasian. "I hear there are commotions in Gaul, and that Vindex, with other men of power, have revolted. This report makes me anxious to proceed briskly with this Jewish war, that I may be prepared for coming events, which forebode not well for Nero. And forthwith," he continued, turning to the tribune Placidus, "I do now commission thee, that thou shouldst proceed to-morrow, with a thousand horsemen, and six thousand footmen, to assist the people of Sepphoris, who are disposed to make peace with the Romans; for Sepphoris is the largest city of Galilee, and is, withal, a place well favored by situation, and encompassed with so strong a wall that its alliance may prove of much avail in the present conflict. Moreover, I am informed that Josephus is preparing an attack upon Sepphoris, if, peradventure, he may effect its conquest before the city is rendered impregnable by Roman aid."

Thereupon, Placidus at once retired from the banqueting-hall of Agrippa's palace, to make ready for his speedy departure, noting not the farewell glance of Berenice's sorrowful eyes, who would fain have detained so handsome a Roman soldier by her side, but who was compelled to content her vanity by renewed wiles to fascinate the more vulnerable Vespasian, and the more susceptible and youthful Titus. Womanlike, the prey within her power lost momentarily a shade of desirability, even though her ambition realized the greater policy of pleasing a Roman
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general and his favored son rather than a subordinate tribune.

Having aided the inhabitants of Sepphoris to withstand the attack of Josephus, who thereupon retired, vanquished, to Garis, a city not far from Sepphoris, Placidus overran some parts of Galilee, and at length attacked Josephus, who had retreated to the walled city of Jotapata, the strongest of all the cities of Galilee.

But this undertaking of Placidus met with ill fortune, for the Jews, came boldly out of Jotapata ere the Romans were aware, and so briskly fought in defence of their homes and families that even the skilled training of the Romans was set at naught, these being encumbered with heavy armor, while the lightly-armed Jews retreated with swiftness, after making a vigorous onslaught. Placidus, finding himself unable to assault the city, returned to the Roman army, then encamped at Ptolemais, under Vespasian.

Vespasian and his son, Titus, having departed from the palace of Agrippa, in Cæsarea Philippi, had been some time in Ptolemais, gathering together an imposing army; and being joined by Placidus and the cohorts under his command, they prepared to subdue Galilee.

It was early morning in the Roman camp. A valiant sight was that Roman army, well exercised in warlike skill; for as one writes:—

"They do not begin to use their weapons first in time of war, nor do they then put their hands first into motion, while they avoided so to do in times of peace; but as if their weapons did always cling to them, they have never any truce from warlike exercises; nor would he be mistaken that should call those their exercises unbloody battles, and their battles bloody exercises."
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When the trumpet sounded on that bright morning, and the newly awakened dawn lifted the pink cloud-curtains shrouding the glowing east, where, according to the thoughts of Alexandrian auxiliaries, Isis dreamed in distant Egyptian skies; and, according to the Roman warrior's imagination, Aurora, with rosy fingers, scattered dew-flowers; both Roman and Egyptian soldiers, under that Galilean sky, bowed in reverence to their several deities, ignorant of the glorious arising of the Heavenly Day-Star, which, nearly seventy years before, had flashed its radiant rays through the midnight darkness which enveloped the world.

Then, having finished their morning sacrifices to their respective gods, the Roman soldiers and their auxiliaries made ready for the coming conflict. And thus was the method of Vespasian's army, as described by an ancient writer:—

"Those auxiliaries which were lightly armed, and the archers, were ordered to march first, that they might prevent any sudden surprises from the enemy, and might search out the woods that looked suspicious, and were capable of ambushes. Next to these followed that part of the Romans who were completely armed, both footmen and horsemen. Next to these followed ten out of every hundred, carrying along with them their arms, and what was necessary to measure out a camp withal; and after them such as were to make the road even and straight, and if it were anywhere rough and hard to be passed over, to plane it, and to cut down the woods that hindered their march, that the army might not be in distress, nor tired with their march. Behind these he set such carriages of the army as belonged both to himself and to the other commanders, with a considerable number of their horsemen, for their
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security. After these he marched himself, having with him a select body of footmen and horsemen and pikemen.

"After these came the peculiar cavalry of his own legion, for there were a hundred and twenty horsemen that peculiarly belonged to every legion. Next to these came the mules that carried the engines for the sieges, and the other warlike machines of that nature. After these came the commanders of the cohorts and tribunes, having about them soldiers chosen out of the rest. Then came the ensigns encompassing the eagle which is at the head of every Roman legion; the king and the strongest of all birds, which seems to them a signal of dominion, and an omen that they shall conquer all against whom they march. These sacred ensigns were followed by the trumpeters. Then came the main army in their squadrons and battalions, with six men in depth, which were followed at last by a centurion, who, according to custom, observed the rest. As for the servants of every legion, they all followed the footmen, and led the baggage of the soldiers, which was borne by the mules and other beasts of burden.

"But behind all the legions came the whole multitude of the mercenaries; and those that brought up the rear came last of all for the security of the whole army, being both footmen, and those in their armor also, with a great number of horsemen. And thus did Vespasian march with his army."¹

There were sixty centuries in a Roman legion, each under the command of a centurion. The legion was under six tribunes, or chief captains, who commanded by turns. The ordinary guard consisted of four soldiers, corresponding to the watches of the night, who relieved each other every three hours. The captain of the guard was the

¹ Josephus.
Prefectus Praetorio, or commander of the Praetorian troops, to whose care prisoners from the provinces were assigned. This was the Roman guard in Rome, which, of course, was vastly increased in times of war.

Having taken the city of Gadara, Vespasian encamped before Jotapata.

Now Jotapata was built upon a precipice midway between the Lake of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. To the southwest lay purple Carmel, standing as a wall between the plain of Sharon on the south, and the broad expanse of Esdraelon upon the north. Beautiful Carmel! clothed with its "excellency of wood," with rocky dells, and jungles dark with copse,—here, dense with brushwood of oaks and evergreens, tenanted with wild game and forest birds; there, bright with wild hollyhocks, while fragrant jasmines clambered up the tree-trunks, and various flowering creepers swung in glowing garlands from bough to bough. There is not a flower which blooms in Galilee which does not grace the mountain-side of picturesque Mount Carmel, as rugged, grand, and beautiful, it lifts its famous head towards the bright skies of Galilee, pushing its bold bluff promontory almost into the blue waves of the Mediterranean.

On the highest ridge of this mountain stood the Altar of Jehovah, which Jezebel cast down; and here afterwards the priests of Baal called in vain upon their gods, while Elijah received from the Great Jehovah, whom he worshipped, that marvellous manifestation of His Almighty power, in the fire descending from Heaven and consuming the sacrifice, and even the very stones of the altar.

Sweeping through the valley, between Mount Carmel and the rocky precipice upon which Jotapata was built, ran the river Kishon, winding its way from the foot of
Mount Tabor to the blue reach of the Mediterranean. A rich landscape of olive groves, gardens, wheat-fields and palm-plumes, with meadows studded with lilies and flax-flowers, and gemmed with the white stars of Bethlehem, skirted the foot-hills, and garlanded the plains.

But different from all this pleasing scene was the view of Jotapata, rock-girt on all sides, insomuch that the only approach to the city was from the north side, where the mountain sweeps down to the valley. So sheer were the precipices, that the head was made dizzy as the eye endeavored to measure the vast depths beneath the towered walls of this stronghold.

“This is, forsooth, a well fortified place!” said Vespasian to Titus, his son, as the Roman army approached the northern side of the city.

“Yea, verily,” replied Titus. “By the sacred name of Jupiter! we will, peradventure, have a tough tussle, or a long siege. Wist ye not, Placidus,” continued he, “how this Josephus gained the ear of Cæsar’s wife, when he was last at Rome? Methinks, in his present stronghold, he will display much cunning, and must withal be watched for fear of wily stratagems.”

“Thou speakest truly,” rejoined Placidus. “I have had knowledge of this Josephus, and my cohorts have already tasted the cold steel of Jewish weapons, and felt the prick of Jewish darts, before these very walls. The Jews are mad with fury, and are withal fighting for home and country, and thus are, forsooth, no mean foes for even Roman soldiers; for they make up in boldness what they lack in martial skill.”

“There is the trumpet signal for a council-of-war in my father’s tent,” said Titus. “Come! we are summoned thither.”
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The Roman camp had been pitched on a small hill, seven furlongs from Jotapata, and within full view of the enemy. We must greatly admire the symmetry and regularity of the Roman encampments; for when they have marched into an enemy's country, they do not begin in hot haste to fight, while they are ill prepared for such an encounter, but they proceed forthwith to raise a wall around their camp, having levelled the uneven ground, and by measure made it four square, by skill of carpenters and tools, which are never wanting in a Roman camp. The space within the camp is set apart for tents, but the circumference is a strong wall, adorned with towers, between which stand the engines for throwing arrows and darts, and slinging stones and battering-rams, with their iron heads ready to be taken forth and used against the besieged city. There are four gates in the wall, large enough for the entrance of laden beasts of burden, and wide enough for excursions of armed men and horsemen. There are also streets within the camp, with the tents of commanders in the midst; the most central one of all, in form like to a temple, is that of the commanding general. The Roman camp appears like a city suddenly rising before the enemies' wondering eyes, with market-place, and shops for trades necessary to war, and council-halls for officers, and martial debates. Moreover, all these are erected with amazing speed, owing to the multitude and skill of the various laborers.

The army within the camp is divided into companies, each company provided with the necessary wood and corn and water, and they dine together. Nor is anything commenced nor ended without a signal trumpet. In the morning, at bugle call, the soldiery go every one to their respective centurions; these repair to their tribunes, and
these again salute the general of the entire army, and receive from him the watchword and orders for the day. So perfect are the signals of the trumpets, and so complete the order of command, that when there is an occasion for making sallies, or for breaking camp, an immense host is moved with seeming ease, each one in proper rank, with no misunderstanding regarding each one's post and action. And this is the order of the arming of a Roman host.

"The footmen are armed with breastplates and head-pieces, and have swords on each side; but the sword on their left side is much longer than the other, for that on the right side is not longer than a span. Those footmen also that are chosen out from the rest to be about the general himself, have a lance and a buckler; but the rest of the foot-soldiers have a spear and a long buckler, besides a saw and a basket, a pick-axe and an axe, a thong of leather and a hook, with provisions for three days, so that a footman hath no great need of a mule to carry his burdens. The horsemen have a long sword on their right sides, and a long pole in their hand; a shield also lies by them obliquely on one side of their horses, with three or more darts that are borne in their quiver, having broad points, and not smaller than spears. They have also head-pieces and breastplates, in like manner as have all the footmen. And for those that are chosen to be about the general, their armor in no way differs from that of the horsemen belonging to other troops; and he always leads the legions forth, to whom the lot assigns that employment."

Such was the completeness of the Roman camp now pitched before Jotapata. Moreover, the Romans never rushed headlong to battle, for when they were to fight, they left nothing to be done off-hand, and thus, peradventure, to prove a grave blunder. Counsel was first taken,
then action proceeded swiftly, but in order; for they esteemed rash success never to be relied upon, but only a freak of fortune, much less to be desired than more deliberate action consequent upon prudent consultation. Thus were they often overpowered for a time by the bold sallies of the hot-headed Jews, who made their successful sorties under the spur of some momentary enthusiasm; but in the long run, the wise counsels of Roman generals favoring more deliberate tactics gave Rome signal advantage in the end.

The Roman soldiers were hardened for war by fear; for the laws inflicted capital punishment, not only for desertion, but for slothfulness and inactivity. And they were also inspired by the great rewards bestowed upon valiant soldiers.

"The readiness of obeying their commanders is so great that it is very ornamental in peace; but when they come to a battle, the whole army is but one body, so well coupled together are their ranks, so sudden are their turnings about, so sharp their hearing as to what orders are given them, so quick their sight of the ensigns, and so nimble are their hands when they set to work, whereby it comes to pass that what they do is done quickly, and what they suffer, they bear with the greatest patience. In a case, therefore, where counsel still goes before action, and where, after taking the best advice, that advice is followed by so active an army, what wonder is it that Euphrates on the east, the ocean on the west, the most fertile regions of Libya on the south, and the Danube and Rhine on the north, are the limits of this Empire? One might well say that the Roman possessions are not inferior to the Romans themselves."
CHAPTER XIV.


Now let us glance within the council-tent of Vespasian. Upon a couch covered with the tawny skin of an African lion sat the scarred warrior, with head whitened by nearly sixty winters and the toils of many campaigns. His eyes were still alert and piercing, and his form erect. He was clad in shining armor of linked gold, below which fell the plaits of his white wool tunic. The muscles in his bare arms were knotted like whipcords, while his brawny hand, grasping his short sword, betokened familiarity with many hand-to-hand conflicts. His voice was full and commanding, more harsh than sonorous, made husky and rasping by loud commands in many battles. He was, forsooth, a splendid specimen of the Roman soldier.

Having first learned to obey, he had now learned to rule with an iron will, and would ere long display his powers to command in even wider domain than famous battlefields.

Near Vespasian stood Titus a youth of twenty-seven, clad like his father in glowing armor, with the red military cloak fastened to his left shoulder with a golden eagle. The scabbard of his sword was encrusted with
amethysts and emeralds, and his helmet surmounted by the Roman eagle engraved in gold.

By his side stood the tribune Placidus, the friend of Aziel. He, too, was in full armor of shining golden links, with a martial mantle hanging upon his left arm, which bore also a small shield or buckler. Other tribunes stood around Vespasian, while many captains of cohorts and centurions awaited without the tent the orders from this council-of-war.

The tent was hung within with rich and Oriental tapestries, and adorned with many trophies of foreign wars. Persian rugs covered the earthen floor, and costly skins of various wild beasts made luxurious seats and couches of war-tent furniture. The gorgeous helmet of Vespasian, encrusted with many gems, lay on a small table at the right hand of the general, where war-maps of Galilee and Judea bore testimony to the martial method of the campaign. A slave knelt at the feet of Vespasian, buckling the golden greaves upon the feet and legs of the general, that his protective armor might be complete.

But Titus and Placidus, disdaining such safeguards, were shod only in the military sandals, leaving their powerful and shapely limbs bare below the folds of their woollen tunics, hanging in heavy plaits beneath their sleeveless coats-of-mail.

"Dost thou intend an immediate assault, father?" inquired Titus, noting the complete armor which Vespasian wore.

"Nay; rather, I counsel a siege," responded the general; "but I am thus armed, for I intend to view the situation of the enemy, accompanied by my tribune, Placidus, and thyself, that thereby I may learn, if possible, the strength and power of the foe. Meanwhile, I do commission these
tribunes and captains that they shall set my army to work to raise a bank against that part of the wall of the city most practicable. Let the soldiers cut down trees on these neighboring mountains, and gather together heaps of stones, and, moreover, protect themselves with hurdles of split timbers and twigs wattled together, that under cover of these crates they may form the banks, and be not hurt by the darts of the enemy. Let them also set the engines for throwing stones and darts round about the city, even to the number of one hundred and sixty machines; and let those engines fitted for hurling lances be in place, together with balls of fire and sharp-pointed arrows, that nothing be lacking to make the siege successful. Order also that the Arabian archers, well skilled in eye and hand, be not wanting."

Thus was the Roman army set speedily to work, and such was their activity and method that Jotapata was soon besieged on all sides, and the city in danger of being conquered.

Meanwhile Vespasian, accompanied by Titus and Placidus, made a careful survey of the enemy’s position, and learned shortly how wily the Jews were in successful stratagems, as well as bold in sallies. For the Jews made adventurous sorties out of the city, and pulled away the hurdles protecting the Roman workmen, and killed many; and where they could not seize the hurdles, they burnt them with fire, so that Vespasian found it necessary to join hurdle to hurdle for greater protection, and place his soldiers so closely together that the Jews could make no excursions between the different bands.

Now, when the bank was raised, Josephus, though thus threatened, was yet ready with stratagems for the preservation of the city, and he ordered his workmen to build
the city walls yet higher. When this appeared a seeming impossibility in the face of such powerful foes, he invented a sort of cover for his soldiers, which set at naught even the darts and stones and fire of his enemies. He ordered his men to fix piles upon the top of the city wall, and expand before them the raw hides of oxen newly killed, which hides, being yielding, hollowed themselves when stones were thrown against them, and, being moist, the darts would glance off, while the fire thrown upon them was quenched by the moisture in them. Thus protected, the walls of Jotapata were raised both day and night, till they stood twenty cubits high.

Josephus also built strong towers upon the walls, and when the hide protections were removed, the Romans were amazed to behold such formidable battlements.

Then Vespasian determined to starve the Jews into a surrender, and for a time left off fighting.

Within the city of Jotapata, Josephus and the Jews were in sore straits; for there being neither fountain nor spring of water in the city, the inhabitants began to suffer much from thirst. This news coming to the ears of the Romans, they deemed the destruction of the Jews near at hand, but Josephus again availed himself of a crafty stratagem.

Calling to him many of the Jews, he thus addressed them,—

"We must outwit our enemies. So, though our distress for water be great, nevertheless we must persuade the Romans that our supply is sufficient. Therefore, though the water is so little that it must be meted out to each inhabitant in small measures, yet, notwithstanding, I command you to take your garments and dip them in this precious water, and hang them on the walls dripping, until
the water shall run down from them to the ground, and by this device we will deceive our foes, who will suppose that water must indeed be plenty, to be thus ruthlessly wasted."

This did the Jews, and the conclusion of the Romans regarding the matter was even as Josephus had supposed. Then did Vespasian despair of taking the city by their want of water and food, for Josephus had also outwitted him in regard to the scarcity of food, he having despatched some of his trusty soldiers through a certain rough and uneven path, so difficult of ascent that the Romans had failed to guard it well, and these Jews, clothing themselves in the skins of sheep, crawling on hands and knees, had been taken by their foes for dogs, even as they intended, and in this way had gone out from the city to neighboring places, and had returned well supplied with provisions.

Moreover, the Jews, rendered desperate by their despairing condition, and preferring to die in battle rather than by hunger and thirst, made such bold sallies from the city, as much to discomfit the Romans, whose heavy armor impeded them in such hand-to-hand conflicts.

Whereupon, Vespasian ordered the battering-rams to be brought nearer the battlements, and to be put in motion to make a breach in the walls. For this also were the wily Jews prepared, and fearing lest the heavy blows of the iron ram's-heads would demolish their freshly erected defences, they filled sacks with chaff, and hung them down before such places as the strokes of the engines menaced, and by thus blunting the force of the blows, the walls were for a time preserved. It was of little avail that the Romans provided themselves with long poles with hooks at the ends, to cut off the sacks, for when this was accom-
plished, Josephus ordered his men to gather combustible materials and set fire to the engines and the hurdles, and thus the Romans were occasioned much loss and trouble.

There were also many valiant deeds performed by certain Jews that day. One, Eleazar, seizing a stone of enormous size, cast it down upon the iron ram’s-head of the engine, and brake off the head of the machine; and, moreover, such was his bravery, that when the ram’s-head fell down in the midst of his foes, he leaped straightway after it and caught it up, and clambered to the top of the wall amid a shower of darts, which pierced his naked body on all sides, till he was covered with wounds; yet was he not vanquished by dart or arrow until he had with triumph displayed his trophy from the top of the wall, when he fell down and died.

Then Josephus set fire to the engines belonging to the Fifth and Tenth Legions, and did, moreover, put the soldiers to flight.

Whereupon Vespasian, chagrined at such a disaster, exposed himself to the darts of the enemy, thinking only of finding some method of subduing these frenzied and brave Jews.

"Behold the general of Cæsar!" cried a Jewish archer on the walls of the city. "Jehovah speed my arrow!" and forthwith he took aim at Vespasian, and did pierce him in the foot.

"The general is wounded!" rang through the Roman ranks; and Titus cried, running to his father’s side,—

"Art thou dangerously injured, my father? By the Capitoline Jupiter! the Jewish dogs shall smart well for this!"

"'Tis but a scratch from a dart," replied Vespasian. "Quiet the fears of my troops, and forthwith make hot
haste with the conflict, for these wily Jews are no mean foes."

"On with the engines!" cried Placidus, leading his legion in the thick of the fight; and his soldiers, joining shield to shield, did speedily come to the city wall, and placing their ladders, did attempt to scale the battlements.

For this attack also was Josephus prepared.

"Give them the hot oil!" he cried to his men, who thereupon poured upon the Romans a great quantity of boiling oil, which, running beneath their heavy armor, caused excruciating pain, burning the flesh of their faces and bodies, till they retreated in terrible torment.

"By Hercules! these Jews are fierce fighters!" cried Placidus to Titus, as the legions fell back for a time.

"Thou mayest well say it!" quoth Titus, who also had been discomfited by a stratagem of Josephus. For when Titus was endeavoring to ascend with his legion, on one side of the wall, by means of ladders and machines, the Jews had poured boiling senegreek upon the boards, making them so slippery that the Romans fell backward; neither could those coming up, nor those going down, stand on their feet, but fell on the bank they had raised, and many were there slaughtered by the darts and arrows of the Jewish archers.

It was now the forty-seventh day of the siege of Jotapata, and the banks thrown up by the Romans had become higher than the walls. A Jewish soldier had been captured by the Romans, and was brought to Vespasian, who demanded that he should reveal the condition of the city.

"Nay, verily!" cried the Jew; "never will I betray my countrymen!"

"Put him to the torture!" commanded Vespasian, who, though not brutal, was nevertheless unrelenting in times of war.
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But no torments extracted from the poor victim a word of disclosure regarding the affairs in the city; and then, exasperated beyond endurance by his obstinacy, Vespasian ordered that he should be crucified. When the Jew was nailed to the cross, he smiled defiantly at his executors, and died in silence.

But at length a deserter informed Vespasian that the city might be captured in the last watch of the night, when the guard, worn out with watching and fighting, would probably be overpowered by sleep. Whereupon Titus and Placidus, accompanied by a part of the Fifteenth Legion, departed from the Roman camp about the last watch of the night, and marched noiselessly to the wall of the city, and having cut the throats of the sleeping guard, entered the city without opposition.

When it was already day, the Jews were filled with consternation to find their enemies in the very midst of their city, and their citadel taken, and they themselves, and their families, prisoners of war. Whereupon many of the chief citizens, preferring death to slavery, thrust their swords through their own hearts, being determined to die the death of soldiers rather than to live the slaves of Rome.

Then did Vespasian give orders that the city should be destroyed, and the battlements burnt. Moreover, all the Jewish men found alive at the taking of the city were slain, and the women and children were taken captives, even to the number of twelve hundred; and the number of the Jews killed in the taking of the city, and in the various conflicts, was forty thousand.

Now Josephus had taken refuge in a deep pit, together with forty of the chief men of the city, and the Romans searched diligently to find him, being very desirous of taking Josephus alive.
"By Saturn! this Josephus hides himself with much cunning from Roman eyes!" quoth Titus to Placidus, as they searched among the dead, and scanned the faces of the living, and despatched bands of soldiers to ransack the recesses of the city, lest, peradventure, Josephus might escape their grasp.

"This subtle Jew would make the siege of Jerusalem very lively by his crafty stratagems, if he doth slip through Roman fingers, and gain an entrance there," continued Titus.

"If that unwelcome event cometh to pass," rejoined Placidus, "may Jupiter give sharp wits to the Romans, for my back still smarters from that vile bath of boiling oil, which strategy of the Jewish dogs, though much beneath the warlike tactics of Roman soldiers, was, nevertheless, a wily manner of defence."

"Dost thou seek for Josephus?" inquired a Jewish woman standing near by.

"In truth," responded Titus; "and, by the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, than which a Roman can swear by none higher, it shall go well with thee if thou canst reveal the hiding-place of this Josephus."

"'Tis not to obtain mercy from the Romans, but revenge on Josephus, that I will divulge the secret of his present refuge," said the woman, while her dark eyes lighted with a glow of hatred, and her thin hands were raised in emphatic gestures to add the tragedy of action to the bitterness of her shrill tones. "Listen a moment, ere I lead ye thither, that ye may know how a Jewish woman scorned can hate, and take revenge. Before I was married to that citizen of Jotapata, who now lies there upon yonder heap of dead, slain by his own hand rather than bow the knee to Roman conquerors, I was a member of the house-
hold of Queen Berenice; and I can say now, with seemly modesty, for all my charms of face are now dead things of the past, mine was the fairest countenance among her favored women. It was then that I first knew Josephus, who was honored by the patronage of King Agrippa; and then did Josephus greatly praise my beauty, and, moreover, so court my favor as to win my deepest affection, and lead me to betrothal, which, amongst Jewish maidens, is regarded sacred as marriage vows.

And whilst I was preparing for wedlock, having bestowed my love upon Josephus most loyally, I received from him notice of a divorcement, for the Jewish betrothed, like wedded couples, can only be severed by divorce. And thus was I scorned by Josephus, because, forsooth, he had found some woman's face which had taken his fickle fancy. So now will I seek revenge for that past insult, and as he made me slave in love to him, so I will deliver him up to become the slave of Rome. Thus will I be avenged. Come! I will lead ye to the cave where he lies hidden, and he shall know that Judith, whom he scorned, can pay the debt of hate she owes him by a sweet revenge."

When the Romans had, by means of this woman, learned the secret of the hiding-place of Josephus, Vespasian sent to Josephus the tribune Nicanor, who was well known to the Jew in former times, that he might persuade him to surrender himself to the Romans, giving assurances to him that his life should be safe; for Vespasian desired to take so valiant a foe a prisoner, and he was determined to preserve a man of such courage.

When the Jews learned that Josephus had received this proposal from Vespasian, they endeavored to persuade him to die with them, rather than surrender himself to their foes, and thus they cried out to him, —
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"O Josephus! art thou still fond of life? Canst thou care to live in slavery? Hast thou forgotten thy former bravery? We will lend thee our right hands and a sword, and if thou wilt die willingly, thou shalt die as general of the Jews; but if unwillingly, thou shalt die as a traitor to them."

Then was Josephus fearful of attack, and thought to restrain their fury by politic words, and he thus addressed them,

"O my friends! why are we so earnest to kill ourselves? It is a brave thing to die in war, but so that it be according to the law of war, by the hand of conquerors. If, therefore, I avoid death from the sword of the Romans, I am truly worthy to be killed by my own sword, and my own hand; but if they admit of mercy, and would spare their enemy, how much more ought we to have mercy upon ourselves, and to spare ourselves? For it is certainly a foolish thing to do that to ourselves which we quarrel with them for doing to us. I am willing freely to confess that it is a brave thing to die for liberty; but he is equally a coward who will not die when he is obliged to die, and he who will die when he is not obliged so to do. And think ye not that God is much displeased when a man does injury to the life He has bestowed upon him? It is from Jehovah we have received our being, and we should leave it to the disposal of the Almighty to take away that being in His own good time. The bodies of all men are indeed mortal, and are created out of corruptible matter; but the soul is immortal, and was made in the image of the Creator of mankind. Do not ye know that those who depart out of this life according to the law of nature, and pay that debt they owe to God, when He that lent it to us is pleased to require it back again, enjoy eternal fame, that their souls
are pure and obedient, and that they may, peradventure, obtain a most holy place in heaven? Whilst, perchance, the souls of those whose hands have acted madly against themselves may be received in the darkest place in Hades. If, after the offer of their right hand for security, I be slain by the Romans, I shall die cheerfully.”

Thus did Josephus argue with the Jews concealed within the cave with himself, to prevent their self-murder. But in their despair they shut their ears to his counsel, being determined to die rather than surrender. Then did Josephus resort to method to save himself, since his comrades were resolute to perish, and he said, —

“Since it is determined among you that you will die, let us commit our mutual deaths to determination by lot. He on whom the lot first falls, let him be killed by him that hath the second lot; nor shall any of us perish by his own right hand, for it would be unfair, if, when the rest are gone, one of us should repent, and save himself.”

Thus did it come to pass, when they had drawn lots, that he who had the first lot laid bare his neck to him that had the next lot, and at length, Josephus with one other only were left. Then did Josephus persuade this comrade that it were better for both to live than that one should kill the other. Whereupon Josephus surrendered himself to the Romans, and was led by Nicanor into the presence of Vespasian.

Now, both Vespasian and Titus were desirous that so brave and sagacious a man as Josephus had shown himself to be, should be sent to Rome rather than be slain. But when Josephus learned of their intended disposition of him, he concluded that his own fate were better in the hands of Vespasian than in those of Nero; and, moreover, he announced that he had weighty matters which could be
made known only to Vespasian. Accordingly, the general ordered all to withdraw from his presence, save only Titus and Placidus, and then Vespasian bade Josephus make known his thoughts. Then Josephus said,—

"Thou, O Vespasian, thinkest no more than that thou hast taken Josephus himself captive; but I am come to thee as a messenger of greater tidings, for had not I been sent by God to thee, I knew what was the law of the Jews in this case, and how it becomes a general to die. Dost thou send me to Nero? For why? Are Nero's successors, till they come to thee, still alive? Thou, O Vespasian, art Cæsar and emperor, thou, and this thy son! Bind me now still faster, and keep me for thyself; for thou, O Cæsar, art not only lord over me, but over the land, and the sea, and all mankind; and, in truth, I deserve to be kept in closer custody than I now am, in order to be punished, if I rashly affirm anything of God."

"Thinnest thou not this some cunning trick?" asked Vespasian of his son.

"Forsooth! I know not how to take the man," responded Titus. "Such matters are not to be lightly listened to, for fear of a charge of treason;" then turning to Josephus, Titus continued, "If what thou sayest be not a vain thing, I wonder that thou didst not prophesy to the people of Jotapata that their city should be taken."

To which Josephus answered,—

"I did, in truth, foretell to the inhabitants of Jotapata that they would be taken on the forty-seventh day, and that I should be caught alive by the Romans."

Whereupon Vespasian ordered Placidus to confer with the Jewish prisoners concerning this declaration of Josephus.

And it came to pass that in the space of about an hour
Placidus returned to the tent of Vespasian, and reported that it was even as Josephus had said, for the captives affirmed his predictions concerning the capture of the city; and thereupon Vespasian began to believe also what had been foretold regarding himself. Yet was Josephus not set at liberty, but was kept in honorable bonds by Vespasian and Titus, who bestowed upon him raiment and costly gifts, and treated him with much consideration, intending to give him freedom if these things should ever come to pass.

Let us now turn to view a bloody battle which took place on the Lake of Gennesaret, called also the Sea of Galilee. The country which lies over against this lake is wonderful for beauty and fertility; it is the garden of Galilee, watered by the river of Jordan, and with a soil so fruitful that it combines the verdure of both cold and warm climates. The purple clusters of the grapes may be gathered from the vines during ten months of the year, while figs hang on the trees at all seasons, and walnuts requiring the coldest air grow side by side with tropical palm-trees, while olive groves, needing a temperate climate, flourish, and all varieties of vegetation find there a congenial air and soil. And besides the good temperature of the air, this region is also watered from a bounteous fountain.

The Lake of Gennesaret in length is one hundred and forty furlongs; its breadth is forty; its waters are sweet to drink, and though the water is temperate when drawn up, yet, if left in the open air, it becomes as cold as snow.

The city of Taricheæ is situated on the southwestern border of this lake. Vespasian, who had returned to Cæsarea Philippi, having heard that Taricheæ had revolted, came with three legions of soldiers, and pitched
his camp near Tiberias, awaiting his son, Titus, to bring up the remainder of the army. Titus having at length joined his father, Vespasian sent him with six hundred chosen horsemen to disperse a great multitude of the Jews who had gathered upon the plain near the city.

But when Titus perceived that the enemy was very numerous, he sent word to his father that he would require more troops; and meanwhile, that he might encourage his soldiers to fight, if needs be, even against such odds, he thus addressed them: —

"My brave Romans! — for it is right for me to put you in mind to what nation ye belong, so that ye may not be ignorant who you are, and who are they against whom we are going to fight — ye know verily, regarding us Romans, that no habitable part of the known earth has been able to withstand our power; but as for the Jews, though they have been already beaten, yet do they not give up the cause; and a sad thing it would be for us to grow weary under our good fortune, when they bear up under their calamities. Consider farther that you are to have a conflict with men in effect unarmed, while you are well armed; with footmen, while you are horsemen; with those who have no good general, while you have one; and as these advantages make you in effect manifold more than you are, so do their disadvantages mightily diminish their number. Now it is not the multitudes of men that give success in war, but it is their bravery that does it, though they be few. The Jews have boldness and rashness, and those passions, forsooth, make a great figure when they succeed, but are quite extinguished in times of ill fortune; but we are led on by courage, and obedience, and fortitude, which are not only apparent in our good fortune, but do not desert us in misfortune. Verily, this is an opportunity
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wherein my father, and I, and you, shall all be put to the trial, whether he be worthy of his former glorious performances, whether I be his son in reality, worthy to bear his name, and whether you be really my soldiers. It is usual for my father to conquer, and I could not endure the shame of returning to him if I should be taken by the enemy. And how will you be able to avoid being ashamed, if you do not show equal courage with your commander, when he goes before you in danger? For you know very well that I shall go first into the danger, and make the first attack upon the enemy."

These brave words of Titus inflamed the ardor of his soldiers to frenzy, and as the reinforcements from Vespasian then arrived, the band under Titus regretted much that any aid should have come to take from them some of the credit of the expedition.

Whereupon Titus, mounting his horse, rode first against the foe, cheering his men with resolute action and brave words. Then did the Jews meet this onset with boldness, but being hotly pressed by the horsemen of Titus, and many of them having been slain, the rest retreated to the city.

Then was there a great tumult in the city, the majority of the inhabitants being opposed to war, and the seditious portion being eager for battle; which clamor was so loud, that it was heard by Titus without the wall, who thereupon cried to his men,—

"Soldiers! now is the time! Take the victory which is given to you by this dissension amongst the Jews!"

Saying this, Titus leaped upon his horse and rode down to the lake, and entered the city the first of them all, being quickly followed by his brave troops.

Then did the frightened inhabitants flee to the lake, and
try to take refuge in the boats gathered there. But there was a great slaughter made in the city before Titus had punished the authors of the revolt.

Word being brought to Vespasian of this success of his son, he immediately fitted up many ships to pursue those Jews who had escaped in the boats.

Then followed a bloody fight upon the lake, between the vessels sent by Vespasian and the weak ships of the fleeing Jews. Then did the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee turn to red, from the blood of the slain, for the Jews, being lightly armed, were pierced with the Roman darts; and many were the hand-to-hand conflicts, as the Romans leaped into the Jewish ships, swords in hand, and cut down all within their reach. And those of the Jews who were not pierced by darts, and slashed to pieces by the swords, or cut by the long spears of their foes, were thrown into the lake, and if they lifted their drowning heads above the waves, straightway a Roman lance transfixed them, or a Roman sword beheaded them.

The shores of the lake were full of shipwrecks, and the beautiful beach of the sea lay piled up with heaps of the dead. The bloody waters flamed red beneath the noonday sun. The pure air was befouled by the putrefying masses, and the fertile banks were changed from a blooming garden into a ghastly burial-place, where the dead lay uninterred, and the vultures and jackals held hideous carnival under the midnight sky.

When this fight was over, Vespasian sat in tribunal in the city of Taricheæ, to determine what should be the fate of the prisoners yet alive. And now we must note the most cruel and barbarous action of Vespasian during this Judean War. Nor, as it appears, did Titus give consent to this base deed, nor did Vespasian himself exult
therein, but was seemingly forced thereto by his unfeeling counsellors.

Though Vespasian did not personally adjudge death to the victims, he gave them an ambiguous liberty, by permitting them to depart on the road to Tiberias, while the Romans seized upon all the roads leading from the city, thereby preventing their retreat. Then the inhabitants were brought before Vespasian in the stadium of the city, and he commanded that all the old men, and useless persons, should be slain, which was done, to the number of twelve hundred. And of the young men, Vespasian chose six thousand of the strongest of them, and sent them to Nero, and the remainder, being over thirty thousand, Vespasian sold for slaves, except such as he gave to King Agrippa. This ignoble act was done by Vespasian, after a public assurance had been given the prisoners of sparing their lives, and when it was also known that these victims were in no wise guilty of the revolt against the Romans. Nor was Vespasian disposed to commit this inhuman deed, until his officers had persuaded him thereto by these arguments: "That nothing could be unjust that was done against the Jews, and that when both cannot be consistent, advantage must prevail over justice."
CHAPTER XV.

THE FALL OF NERO. — VESPASIAN DECLARED EMPEROR,
AND TITUS INTRUSTED WITH THE COMPLETION OF THE
JEWISH WAR. — TITUS ADVANCES TOWARDS JERUSALEM.
— SCENE IN THE HOUSE ON ZION’S HILL. — THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE PEOPLE IN THE XYSTUS. — THE ZEALOTS
SEND FOR AID TO THE IDUMÆANS.

While these events were convulsing Galilee, affairs were
threatening Nero in Rome. Vindex, a Gallo-Roman, scion
of a royal house in Aquitania, while prefect of Farther
Gaul, made overtures to Servius Sulpicius Galba, who, for
several years, had governed Hither Spain, that they should
make a simultaneous revolt against Nero. Galba was an
old and distinguished officer, being seventy-three years of
age. When at Delphi, Nero had consulted the oracle
about his future fortunes, and had been warned against
the seventy-third year; Nero had failed to see the significa-
cant fact, as pointing towards Galba.

Vindex had fixed his eyes on Galba as the ablest of the
class from which the tides of fortune might make an
emperor. Nero seemed blind to his impending fate, and
though warned of the revolt against him, he amused the
Roman nobles, who had come to discuss with him the
affairs of state, by explaining to them the mechanism of
a new water organ, on which he smilingly declared he
purposed to perform in public, adding with satire that
such was his intention “with Vindex’s good leave!” Once
more Nero celebrated the games of the circus; once again he piped and sang; once again, with strange apathy, he drove his chariot, seemingly indifferent to his approaching doom.

Vindex, having taken his own life, being baffled in his conspiracy not by Nero's sagacity, but through the misunderstanding of his accomplices, the puny Emperor considered his position safe, and resumed his heedless life, little regarding the advancing hour of retribution.

At length, as courier after courier dashed into Rome, proclaiming the defection of generals and legions, Nero, like a whining child, exclaimed, —

"Never was such ill fortune as mine! Other Cæsars have fallen by the sword, but I alone must lose the Empire, still living!"

One moment he declared that he would take ship for Alexandria, and there earn his subsistence by singing in the streets. The next, he called upon the Roman citizens to rise in his behalf, and ordered his courtesans and dancers to be attired and armed as Amazons, to attend him in his march. Again he cried that he would slay every Gaul in Rome, massacre the senate, and let loose the caged lions in the streets, and lay the Imperial City in ashes. Then he would weep and lament his fate with hysterical excitement, and weakly propose to go and meet the rebels, trusting to his beauty, his tears, and his persuasive voice, to move the hearts of his enemies.

The populace of Rome, at first indifferent, were now clamoring against Nero, enraged to fury by finding that a vessel, lately arrived from Alexandria, bearing, as they supposed, corn for the starving inhabitants, was laden, not with food, but with fine sand to spread upon the arena of the amphitheatre.
The frightened tyrant, terrified at last by the threats which reached his ears, sprang from his couch at supper, dashed his costly cups upon the ground, and taking a vial of poison from Locusta, who had heretofore aided him by preparing doses of poison for others whom he desired to be rid of, rushed forth into the gardens, calling upon certain tribunes and centurions to attend him in his flight. But all his guards and attendants refused to accompany him, and one cried out bluntly,—

"Is it then so hard to die!"

When at midnight he returned to his palace, every slave had fled; his chamber had been robbed even of the precious poison, and not a guard was at hand to lend him his sword.

"I have neither friend nor foe to help me die!" he cried, in despair.

At length one freedman, Phaon, offered him the refuge of his villa, four miles from the city. Throwing a rough cloak over his shoulders, with bare feet, and a handkerchief to mask his face, the wretched Nero glided like a pursued ghost through his dismantled palace, mounted a horse, and, accompanied by three slaves and Phaon, passed through the city gates at dawn. The road was full of travellers asking for news of Nero. The mutterings of the Prætorian guards, calling down curses upon his hated head, were wafted to his ears as he fled in terror.

A thunderstorm added to the wild horror of the hour. The lightnings darted athwart the morning sky, and the shock of an earthquake made the earth to tremble. Nero's horse shied at a dead body on the roadside, and the handkerchief falling from his face, revealed his identity to a passing prætorian. Reaching the villa, and dismounting, Phaon desired Nero to crouch in a sandpit near by, while
he should endeavor to open a drain leading to the bathroom of the villa, that thus the wretched man might be admitted to the house unperceived; but the trembling tyrant declared that he would not "go alive underground," and stooping to a muddy pool, took some water in his hand, exclaiming, with puerile sarcasm,—

"This is the famous drink of Nero!" referring to a favorite beverage of sweetened water, which Nero himself had invented.

At length a hole was made, through which the dethroned Emperor crept on his hands and knees into a wretched chamber, and threw himself upon a tattered couch, sighing, and with tears exclaiming,—

"What an artist to perish!"

Now he implored some of the slaves to set him an example how to die; then he ordered them to dig a grave, reproaching himself for his cowardice, crying in Greek:

"Fie! Nero, fie! Courage, man! Come, rouse thee!"

At length the trampling of horsemen was heard without, and Nero, starting up, quoted the line of Homer,—

"'Sound of swift-footed steeds strikes on my ear,'" as he placed a weapon to his breast, and an attendant slave drove it to the heart of the doomed Emperor.

Thus perished this monster of crime! this strange contradiction of artistic tastes and bestial brutality! this execrated tyrant! this character of infamy! at the age of thirty years and six months, in the fourteenth year of his disgraceful reign, A. D. 68.

Vespasian, having been informed of the death of Nero, and that Galba had been made emperor, forthwith sent Titus to Rome to salute Galba, and to learn his commands regarding the Jews.

But as Titus was sailing by the coasts of Greece, word
came that Galba had been slain, having reigned seven months, and that Otho was chosen in his place.

Then did Titus return speedily to his father, bearing this important news, and while Vespasian and his son were in suspense regarding the sequel of affairs, reports came that Otho and Vitellius had come to arms regarding the kingdom, and the soldiers of Vitellius gaining the victory, Otho had slain himself, after reigning three months, and Vitellius had thereby come to the throne of Rome.

Then did the officers and soldiers of Vespasian declare their general to be better entitled to wear the royal purple than Vitellius, whose fame as a soldier was not so great as that of Vespasian; and they consulted, and said, —

"Truly our Vespasian has the greater capacity for governing, and hath, withal, the skill and wisdom which comes with years, and in his son, Titus, we have also strength and bravery; thus shall we secure the advantages of both ages, and it is more seemly that our generals be made emperors, they who have borne the labors of such great wars, than that the senate, perchance, may choose an emperor whom Roman soldiers would despise."

Thus did Vespasian's legions determine to force upon him the government of Rome, and would accept from him no refusal to their demands that they salute him as emperor.

Then did Vespasian make ready for his journey to Rome, intrusting to his son Titus the completion of the Jewish war. Having proved that the prophecy made by Josephus was not a vain boast, Vespasian released the Jew from imprisonment, and honored him by many marks of respect, and Josephus then became one of the counsellors of Titus, and was employed by him as a mediator between the Romans and the Jews.
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Now we must return to Jerusalem. The Zealots still continued to hold the Temple, while the numbers of the seditious had been increased by an influx of refugees from various parts of Galilee, who fled from the cities attacked by Vespasian. Of these, the boldest was one John of Gischala, who had fled with a body of armed men from his native city when Titus had encompassed Gischala.

All of Galilee being now subject to Roman rule, Titus was advancing with his army towards Jerusalem.

Meanwhile the inhabitants of the Holy City were much distressed by the state of affairs in their beloved city, for the more moderate of the populace sided with Ananus against these unlawful deeds of the Zealots, more especially the wicked desecration of the Holy Temple. The Zealots had reached such a pitch of profanation, that they had dared to choose for themselves a high priest, one Phannias, a rustic, and unlearned, and one most unworthy to hold the sacred office.

The people could no longer bear the insolence of these unholy actions, but were zealous to overthrow this rebel tyranny. Meanwhile the strife in the city waxed hotter than ever; for Eleazar the Zealot prevailed against the people and Ananus, the High Priest, for Eleazar had laid hold of the money which Cestius, the Roman, was providing for the wages of his soldiers, and Eleazar had also robbed the public treasury of the city, having slain Antipas, the treasurer of Jerusalem.

Then did riot run high in the Holy City. The Sicarii and the Zealots caused tumults without number, and filled the whole city with robbery and slaughter, as though it were not enough misfortune which threatened Jerusalem, when the victorious Roman army was daily advancing towards its walls. These internal insurrections convulsed
the city from centre to circumference, and it would appear as though the very spirits of evil had entered the souls of these seditious Jews, to lure them on to their inevitable destruction; for instead of combining together against their common and powerful enemy, Rome, they fought one with the other, by day and night, so that the more prudent of the inhabitants looked upon the Romans as friends, rather than foes, who might deliver their city from this terrible and disgraceful civil war.

In the house of Ananus, on Zion's Hill, there were sad faces, and many troubled conversations regarding these menacing dangers. Jessica alone smiled, even when she wept, and maintained a steadfast courage, which was, to the drooping spirits of her careworn father and more anxious sister, like the refreshment of the dew upon the sun-parched plains of Galilee. For the flesh of man is mortal, and though the spirit is willing, the mortal frame is very weak.

"What would we do without the merry child in these troublous times?" asked old Rachel of Miriam, after one of Jessica's bright sallies of wit, as the young girl retired from the room singing. But little they knew that the courageous child went to the retirement of her own chamber to weep her blue eyes dim with burning tears, for it was not child-like unconsciousness of danger which rendered Jessica so seemingly unmoved, but it was rather the strong spirit of an undaunted will, glowing in her woman's breast, which trials should but heat to the white glow of tempered steel. For such a soul can neither be conquered by sorrow nor obstacle, and only the weight of personal disgrace, caused by one's own follies, can impede the flight of the white wings of such a nature towards the mountain-tops of an unfettered freedom.
Jessica could brave a martyr's fate with unflinching fortitude, but she could brook no meanness in her own soul, and she disdained with haughty contempt the whining complaints of weak natures, though she would stoop with tenderest pity over a suffering child, and eagerly lend her own white hand to raise a fallen sister, if so be her own soul might remain spotless as the snowflakes.

Miriam was the personification of sweet submissiveness, selfless devotion, and passive endurance. She would bear the wrong uncomplainingly, living her own beautiful life, unstained by any act of selfishness or by any word of unkindness; but Jessica would fight for the right, deeming it beneath her to submit to the wrong which her own courage could defy.

Miriam was the white dove in the fragrant cedar groves of Sharon; Jessica was the mountain eaglet, undaunted by the glare of the mid-day sun, awed by the dizzy heights of the steep purple peaks.

Upon the roof-balcony sat Ananus, wearied and disheartened by the grievous load which weighed down his aged shoulders. Aziel and his father had come to counsel with the noble High Priest, who would sacrifice his life to prevent this awful desecration of the Holy Temple of Jehovah, the honor of which consecrated place he held the dearest object of his reverent and devout heart.

His venerable head was bent upon his breast, where rested the sacred ephod, badge of his high priest's office; and his eyes, dim with tears, were cast downward towards the floor of the pavilion, for he had not the heart to raise them towards that beloved Temple, so polluted by ruthless men.

Miriam stood by her father's shoulder, with her loving hand laid upon his white hair, from which the heavy turban was removed, that the soft evening air might give ease to his aching temples.
Jessica sat upon a divan near a trellis, over which clambered the beautiful rock rose; and she toyed with a pet bird, which pecked the sugar from her slender finger, seemingly amusing herself, but in reality alert to catch the rumors of the civil disturbances. A very wily diplomat would Jessica have made, and Queen Berenice herself had not more politic intuitions than this youthful maiden, watching with keen perceptions for lurking dangers threatening those she loved.

“What news to-night, Aziel?” asked Ananus, rousing himself from his dejection.

“The Zealots have still farther proceeded in their wicked profanation, and have dared to elect for themselves one whom they call a high priest, thus setting aside the law of inheritance according to which our chief priests were wont to be appointed.”

At these ill tidings Ananus groaned in spirit, and was greatly troubled; for this Ananus was a wise and prudent man, and might haply have saved the city if his words had been heeded by the frenzied rebels. Rising from his divan, and replacing the turban upon his head, he said:—

“I must appeal once more to the people ere it be too late. Peradventure they will take heed to my counsel; or, if not, my conscience will be clear regarding my efforts in defence of Jerusalem, and the Holy Temple of the Great Jehovah.”

“Thou wilt not surely go to-night, father?” cried Miriam, in alarm.

“It must needs be so, my daughter! Delay may prove fatal.”

“Let me go with thee to the Xystus, father!” exclaimed Jessica.
"Nay, nay, dear child! What would a tender woman like thee do in a crowd of frenzied rebels?"

"Fear not for me, father!" rejoined the young girl, springing from her couch, and handing her bird to Rachel; then appearing at the stairway, said, "If they harm thy gray hairs, it shall be through the heart of Jessica!"

"Brave child! thy tender arms cannot ward off the blow, if a blow must come upon this aged head. And were it not for thee and Miriam, death would be welcome to this burdened heart, now that the Holy Temple of my God is thus polluted;" and turning to Berachiah, he continued, "Old friend, and Aziel, my son, hear this my testimony to the Nazarene, whom I now believe to be the Christ. I am convinced that Jehovah would not thus allow His sacred Temple to be profaned, and His altars polluted by the bloody hands of godless men, unless He had provided a refuge for His faithful people, through the Messiah, promised of old to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. I think now that this earthly Temple will be destroyed, that the spiritual kingdom of the Christ, the Divine Son of God, may be established throughout the world. Jehovah has honored me in allowing me to be a high priest, chosen according to our sacred laws; for this great privilege I thank my God with reverent heart, and do now prepare myself to meet the doom which shall befall me in the coming struggle, hoping for an entrance into the Higher Temple, even though I be there but the humblest door-keeper, in which Heavenly Temple the Christ shall be forever the Great High Priest."

As the majestic old man pronounced these solemn words, his careworn face was lifted towards the starry heavens, and his trembling hands were outstretched, not towards the desecrated Temple on Mount Moriah, but to the heavens
above, where, with the eye of faith, he beheld the glorious Temple of the New Jerusalem, filled with the effulgent light of the Everlasting Shechinah.

Then did Ananus go forth to meet the assembly of the people gathered in the Xystus, if, peradventure, he might yet restrain their frenzy by prudent words of counsel. Berachiah and Aziel accompanied him thither, whither we will follow them.

In the midst of the people Ananus lifted up his hands, and thus spake:—

"Verily it had been good for me to die before I had seen the House of God full of so many abominations, or those sacred places, which should only be trodden by the unsandalled feet of priests, pressed by the unholy feet of blood-shedding rebels. I, who am clothed with the vestments of high-priesthood, and am called by that most venerable name of High Priest, would glory in such death, in my old age, as should help to purify these desecrated courts, if, by my death, this might be accomplished. Will ye bear to see your Sanctuary trampled on? And will ye lay steps for these profane wretches, upon which they may mount to higher degrees of insolence? Will ye not pluck them down from their exaltation? For even by this time they would have proceeded to higher enormities, if they had been able to overthrow anything greater than the Sanctuary.

"Perhaps ye wait for the Romans, that they may protect our holy places. Are we come to that degree of misery that our enemies themselves are expected to pity us? Did not our people of old undergo many and great wars for the sake of liberty; nor were they so far overcome by the power of the Egyptians or the Medes but that still they did what they thought fit, notwithstanding their commands
to the contrary? Verily, if the Romans should conquer you, what could ye suffer worse or more grievous than what ye now endure at the hands of these Zealots? — for whereas the Romans went not into the Holy Place, which it is not lawful but for the priests to enter, these men, being as they say, Jews, profane it daily. Wherefore, rise ye against these rebels who pollute the Holy Temple! and if there should be danger in the attempt, it is a right thing to die before these holy gates, and to spend our very lives for God's sake, and the sake of His Sanctuary. I will assist you both with my counsel and with my hand, and shall count not my life dear unto myself, if so be that I may help to purify the House of Jehovah."

Then were the people moved by these words of Ananus to take up arms against the Zealots, and they cried out to him to lead them against those wicked violators of the peace and holiness of the beloved city of Jerusalem.

Then Ananus, aided by Berachiah and Aziel, proceeded to choose out such men as should be put in array for fighting the Zealots; but the rebels, having come to know of his purpose, at early day sallied forth from the Temple, and slew such of the populace as they met.

Now Ananus did not think fit to make any attack upon the holy gates of the Temple, and also deemed it unlawful to introduce the populace into the court before they were purified; he therefore chose out six thousand armed men, and placed them as guards in the cloisters; so there was a succession of guards, one after another, all the citizens being obliged to take their turns.

Thus passed the ensuing day, when Ananus was betrayed in the following manner. John of Gischala, being a man crafty of speech, and double-faced in bearing, did pretend to be of the party of Ananus, cultivating the greatest
friendship for the chief men of Jerusalem, but being, meanwhile, a spy upon them, revealing to the Zealots all the plans he learned when counselling with the moderate party, of which Ananus was leader. And so far did Ananus and his party believe in his good faith, that they made this same John their ambassador into the Temple with the Zealots, that, peradventure, they might come to some terms without bloodshed and further profanation of the Sanctuary.

Now this John did so belie his trust that he inflamed the Zealots against the moderate party, falsely accusing Ananus to the rebels, as having sent messengers to Titus that he should come without delay and take the city. "Wherefore," continued this base betrayer, "ye must either submit yourselves to Ananus, or seek help from without. If ye submit yourselves, ye know well what mercy ye may look for, remembering what things ye have already committed against the populace and against the Temple."

Wherefore Eleazar and his followers determined to defy Ananus, and send for help to the Idumæans, which they did in the following letter, despatched by secret messengers to Idumæa, which land is also Edom. Thus wrote the Zealots to the Idumæans:

"Being informed that Ananus, the High Priest, having deceived the people, is ready to betray the city to the Romans, and we, having rebelled against him, are besieged in the Temple, and must perish speedily unless we have succor, we pray you that ye come to our help, and to the help of the city against the Romans."

This letter was sent by two fleet runners, who failed not to deliver it to the chief men of Idumæa, who forthwith gathered an army of two thousand men, under Simon,
son of Cathlas, and they marched with all haste to Jerusalem.

Then ran Aziel, who had gotten news of the coming of the Idumæans, to Ananus, who, with Berachiah, awaited events in the council-hall in the Xystus, and he cried,—

"John of Gischala hath betrayed us, and hath summoned an army from without, who even now approacheth the walls!"

"Command that the gates be closed to all comers!" ordered Ananus; which being done, Ananus declared that he purposed not to fight against the Idumæans, but would win them over, if possible, to their side, without bloodshed.

Whereupon Ananus commissioned a certain Joshua, who was next to himself among the priests, that he should go up on a turret of the wall and speak peaceably with Simon, the leader. Moreover, Ananus, Berachiah, and Aziel did also accompany Joshua, being fearless of their own safety when their presence might speed the welfare of their city. Then did Joshua thus address the Idumæans:—

"Know ye that this accusation of treason which they bring against us is altogether false; and indeed no proof can they show of any letter which we have sent to the Romans. But as for the deeds which they have committed against our people, and against our Holy House, come ye in now, not as conquerors, but as friends to the right and to justice; and ye shall see for yourselves, for our houses are made desolate, and our streets are full of mourners; and even the Holy Place doth run red with blood, and is profaned by the unhallowed feet of wicked rebels, who seek to lay Jerusalem in the dust."

To these words Simon, the leader of the Idumæans, made reply,—
"We are come to defend the Holy City against traitors and enemies, and we will not depart thence till this has been accomplished."

Perceiving the treachery lurking in these defiant words, Ananus commanded that the gates of the city should not be opened; and Aziel was despatched to double the guards at all points, while Ananus retired with Berachiah to the headquarters of the army, formed of those citizens desirous of protecting their city from these enemies within and without.
CHAPTER XVI.

THE TERRIBLE TEMPEST, AND THE DEATH OF ANANUS,
THE HIGH PRIEST. — JESSICA IN THE ROBBER'S CAVE.
— RIOTS AMONG THE ZEALOTS. — TITUS BEFORE THE
WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

Now it came to pass, as the night advanced, that a tremen-
dous storm broke over the city; and so great were the
thunderings, and so fierce the torrents of rain, that Ananus
deemed the city would be secure from attack on account
of this terrible tempest. And this was the picture of
Jerusalem on that momentous night.

Without the walls were gathered the Idumæans, joining
their shields one to another above their heads, that thus
they might be protected from the floods of rain, which
now fell from the black skies, broken now and then by
blinding flashes of lightning, while the artillery of thunder
boomed through the air like the cannons of Jupiter let
loose upon Mount Olympus, to the pagan ear, or like the
awful voice of the Great Jehovah, thundering forth His
displeasure upon a disobedient nation, to the ears of the
devout Jews, while the windows of heaven seemed opened
to pour down upon the wicked world another deluge, and
the finger of Elohim wrote upon the battlements of the
clouds, in the flashes of lightning which blazed forth, His
protest against the sins of His rebellious people. Added
to these convulsions of nature, the hosts of the power of
darkness, and spirits of evil, were profaning the Hallowed
House, and the demons of wicked passions were inflaming the souls of men, and goading them on to their direful destruction. Jerusalem was indeed possessed with legions of devils, more deadly to its peace than Roman cohorts and Thracian spears.

In the Temple on Mount Moriah, fierce robbers, with hands dyed with their brothers’ blood, held a high carnival of crime; and one could almost imagine the leering faces of devils to be peering forth from the sacred veils of the Holy Place, laughing to scorn these dupes of their infernal schemes, for even the devils acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth; for had not the unclean spirit cried out, —

"I know Thee who thou art,—the Holy One of God!"

Yet these blinded men failed to perceive Him who had been sent from Heaven as the Redeemer of the world.

But the echoes of the holy footsteps of the Christ could be heard by believing ears, above the convulsions of nature, and the revels of devils, and the conflicts of bloodthirsty men.

On Zion’s Hill, in the midst of the awful tempest rocking the earth and lashing the heavens, and the tumults of men desecrating the Holy City, and flooding its sacred sites with rivers of blood, three believing women knelt in prayer; and to the hearts of Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel, the Divine Christ sent His Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to pour the healing balm of faith into their anguished souls.

As the hour of midnight was cried by the watch in the city, the guards in the cloisters, thinking the storm would prove a sufficient safeguard, and being overpowered by wearying vigils, dispersed themselves in the porches of the Temple to sleep. Whereupon the Zealots took the sacred saws out from the Temple, and cut through the bolts of
the gate that was nearest to the Idumæans, for the noise of the sawing was not heard for the roaring of the wind and the loud pealing of the thunder; and through this gate straightway the Idumæans were admitted into the city, and joining with the Zealots in the Temple, they set upon the sleeping guards, and slew many of them, while the remainder fled.

Then was the noise of battle more terrible than the raging of the storm, and all the courts of the Temple were swimming with blood; then was the rage of the Zealots and Idumæans not abated, but they forthwith rushed towards that part of the city where Ananus, together with Berachiah and Joshua the priest, were gathering their troops to defend the city.

"Where is that arch-traitor Ananus?" cried the Zealots.

"So, forsooth, he would open the gates to the Romans, and not to us!" exclaimed the Idumæans; "let him learn now how traitors are slain!"

Thus the cry rang through the streets, and the rebels sought wildly for Ananus.

"Quick! flee for thy life!" importuned Aziel, as he ran to the High Priest, standing with calm dignity to meet his bloodthirsty foes.

"Nay, my son!" replied the old hero; "a high priest of Jehovah never flees from his post of duty! If thou loveth me, flee thyself to my house, and protect my daughters, while their father must needs stand at his post. Go thou also, my friend!" he continued, turning to Berachiah; "thy duty detains thee not here; save thyself!"

"Nay, verily!" exclaimed Berachiah, "let the youth go to protect those who need his strong right arm; but let the aged fall where their death will be worthy of their country and their God!"
“Come, I beseech ye both!” cried Aziel, resolute to brave danger, but thinking flight not unseemly when death could avail nothing in behalf of Jerusalem, and life was so valuable to those he loved.

But at this moment the frenzied mob came rushing towards the group, and again the brutal cry for the blood of Ananus rang upon the air. The High Priest cast one imploring glance at Aziel, and exclaimed,—

“If thou dost love me, save my daughters!”

And even as Aziel turned to do his bidding, the Idumæans sprang upon the aged priest, and slew him with their bloody swords; so also did they to Berachiah, and to the priest Joshua. Nor was the thirst for blood thereby satiated, for the Idumæans fell upon the noblest of the people, and cut their throats, as though they were so many beasts for slaughter. And many of the youth and noblemen of Jerusalem did they also scourge and torture until death was to them a happy release. And no man durst mourn for his brother or his father, nor dared those related to the dead even bury their friends. Thus twelve thousand of the chief men of Jerusalem perished miserably by the brutal hands of the Idumæans and Zealots.

Now was the villa on Zion’s Hill turned into a house of mourning. It being no longer safe to remain on the roof-terrace, on account of the many darts and arrows and stones of the rebels flying through the city, Miriam sat with Jessica in the darkened hall beneath, and wept for her father, so ruthlessly destroyed, while old Rachel, with streaming eyes, ministered to her young charges, now doubly bereft, and Aziel guarded the house night and day, for fear of their enemies, not forgetting the lamented Berachiah, but feeling that he most truly honored the dead by caring for the living.
Miriam sat and wept in heart-broken sorrow; but Jessica walked the floor like a caged lioness, uttering indignant exclamations against the brutal slayers of her father. Miriam would suffer grief in silence, daring not to attempt redress; but Jessica laughed at obstacles, scorned opposition, when she knew herself to be in the right, and was not even overwhelmed by irrevocable events. If bear them she must, it would be with head lifted high in disdain of their power to curb her dauntless spirit; and only afflictions permitted by an over-ruling Jehovah would be submissively borne by her. Had she been a general, defeat would have been her opportunity; being a woman, her will would be mastered only when life should end. Such natures make heroes and heroines of the loftiest types when their proud spirits are enlisted in the cause of right; such natures make also tyrants, if their strong wills are swayed by self, or governed by ignorance or wrong.

Miriam was a woman to be always loved; Jessica was a woman either to be adored with irresistible infatuation, or to be hated with intensity. She would be the most loyal of friends, and the bitterest of enemies. But she would never be hated for petty selfish deeds nor unkind words; her enemies would be the foes of truth and right and justice. She would be hated by the vile and weak for her courageous and unwavering allegiance to the cause of truth and honor; and while her enemies might hate her with deadly hatred, they could not but admire her unconquerable spirit and her queenly nature.

She was now but a maiden of sixteen; but in those eastern climes the young develop quickly, and in her girlish breast there was beating a woman's heart, bold to do or dare, quick to think and act, keen to perceive sincerity or falsehood, gifted with rare tact and subtle
intuitions, and guarded by a supreme faith in God, and a firm allegiance to the God-Man.

Now as she paced the apartment with a light and agile step, her loving heart was busy with a daring plan.

Among the Jews, the reverent burial of the dead is held most binding, and Jessica had learned with horrified indignation that the corpse of her honored father had been refused burial by the brutal murderers of Ananus, and that it now lay among the heaps of slain like the despised carcass of a beast. Jessica thought quickly and deeply, and rapidly resolved upon action.

Giving Miriam a loving caress, she retired from the room, as Rachel and her sister thought, to gain the seclusion of her own apartment. But we may follow this dauntless girl, and learn the secret of her plan.

Hastily gathering from the household stores many folds of white linen, and also boxes of precious spices,—the sweet frankincense and fragrant myrrh,—she noiselessly left the house, having enveloped her form and face with a dark mantle, and shod her feet with coarse and heavy sandals. Thus disguised, she passed in the early morning unchallenged through the Gate of the Fountain, and proceeded to the tomb of her mother, which lay beyond the walls of the Upper City, on the slope of Zion’s Hill.

She had revealed her secret to no one,—not even to Aziel; for she desired that he should guard her sister rather than accompany her in her hazardous undertaking. Though her face was very pale, her eyes shone like stars, and her step was cautious, yet fearless.

Though she met many wayfarers, they noted her not, supposing she was some poor woman seeking herbs for food, for the famine had already threatened the city; for the Zealots, in their many conflicts, had heedlessly burned
huge stores of corn, and had wasted large quantities of provisions with an unexampled want of prudence.

As the sun gilded the golden turrets of the blood-stained Temple, Jessica arrived at her mother's sepulchre, where she intended leaving the fine linen and spices, while she went on her further mission.

As she approached the entrance, she was startled, but not dismayed, to perceive that the vault had been desecrated by the Sicarii, as one of their robber caves; and there, within the sacred chamber, one of the formidable Sicarii sat upon a stone cleansing his sword, which the night before had been steeped in the blood of many of the chief men of Jerusalem.

Most maidens would have fled in horror from such a ghastly sight; but Jessica, having once determined on her course of action, would brave all dangers, even death itself, in the fulfilling of her self-imposed and filial mission.

Just then the robber, glancing up from his revolting work, beheld the maiden, and thinking to have some sport with this helpless prey thus unexpectedly placed within his power, he said,—

"Who art thou, prithee, who thus darest to beard a bold robber in his den?"

"This is my mother's tomb," replied Jessica, "which thou thus desecratest. I am Jessica, the daughter of the High Priest Ananus, whom the Idumæans so foully slew; and I seek the body of my father, to give it reverent burial."

"Dost thou not fear to risk thy tender feet in such bloody paths?" asked the robber, amazed at the fearless dignity of the maiden.

"I would ask thee if thou hast a mother or a sister, or
if, peradventure, thou hast gazed upon thy mother’s bier, or looked into the eyes of wife or child? And if so, I beseech thee, by those holy memories, that thou tell me where my father’s body lies dishonored in the dust.”

“Art thou not afraid of my sharp sword?” rejoined the man, moved, in spite of his brutal nature, by such a reference to the pure memories of his former life, and yet loath to be thus conquered by a helpless maiden.

“I care not for thy sword!” said Jessica, calmly, with white face but flashing eyes. “If thou dost kill me, then I shall die in the performance of my sacred and filial duty. Death hath no terrors to those doing their appointed mission, who believe in the New Jerusalem beyond.”

The hardened robber, touched by the very helplessness of the girl, and, in spite of his lawless and brutal life, filled with a sort of half-ashamed admiration for such purity of soul, and awed by the recollections of a better life which swept over his mind as the maiden stood there, the personification of his early dreams of an angel, roughly responded, for he would hide his emotions by harsh tones,—

“Well, if I kill thee not, thou mayest thank thy childish face, and be glad that I once had a sister who somewhat resembled thee! Else would thy pretty form be a soft cushion for this bloody sword of mine.”

“Thou wilt not kill me, and I trust thee!” said Jessica, perceiving, with her keen intuitions, the softening of his brutal nature, and knowing that even the most wicked are better led by trust than suspicion.

Then did the robber quickly draw his turban down to his shaggy brows, that by the action he might conceal the unaccustomed mist which gathered in his piercing eyes; for even a devil might feel the force of the guileless and
childlike eyes of one trusting to some good impulse not yet wholly and hopelessly destroyed. The robber rose, and as gently as his gruff voice could adjust itself to unfamiliar civil word, he said, —

"If thou dost not fear so rude and uncouth a companion as myself, I will help thee find the body of thy father, and aid thee to give it decent burial. By my dead mother's face, I swear to harm thee not!"

"Jehovah will protect all those who are in the path of duty," replied Jessica; "and I thank thee for thy offer, and will most gladly accept thine aid. If thy mother was a believer in the Almighty Jehovah, and in His Divine Son, and therefore is now within the New Jerusalem, may her spirit abide with thee until thou dost repent of thy past deeds of blood, and turn to the Christ, even as did the thief upon the cross."

"Thou art a Christian, then?"

"I am indeed a believer in the God-Man, the Messiah of the world."

The robber had by this time accompanied Jessica back into the city through the Gate of the Gardens, which was only a few paces from the Hill of Calvary.

Passing into the Tyropoeon Valley, they reached the Xystus, now filled with multitudes of the people, both men and women, so that Jessica and the robber were not liable to be noticed.

As they neared the council-hall, Jessica perceived a disguised figure at her right hand, whom she instantly recognized as Aziel, and he the same moment discovered her identity, and would have called her name in consternation; but Jessica quickly prevented him, saying, —

"Hold thy peace and follow me!

"Wherefore art thou here?" whispered Aziel.
"To seek the body of my father, to give it burial."

"It was for that also I came thither, and to inter also the remains of my father," Aziel softly replied.

"I perceive thou art disguised," said Jessica; "it is well. Speak not! Remember thou art my servant to all questioners. My robber will protect me."

Aziel glanced at the formidable member of the fierce Sicarii with dire distrust; but prudence forbade speech, and he could but watch Jessica in anxious amazement.

At this moment another robber came their way, and the escort of Jessica accosted him with the question,—

"Where is the body of the High Priest Ananus?"

"What wouldst thou with the carcass of that traitor?" inquired the other.

"What is that to thee, if I wish to identify the body of our past enemy? For I was not present when the deed was done."

"If thou wouldst know for truth whether our foe be slain, behold! He lies there midst yonder heap of dead without the city walls, hard by the Fish Gate."

The robber and Jessica thereupon retraced their steps, followed by Aziel, through the crowded Xystus, and passing through the Fish Gate, near by the market-place, they beheld a sickening sight. Hundreds of corpses lay in the sun; for twelve thousand of the inhabitants of Jerusalem had been slain upon the fatal night when Ananus and Berachiah met their doom.

Hopeless seemed the task of finding the body of either amidst these piles of the decaying dead, and a fainter heart than that of Jessica would have relinquished the project in despair. The tender maiden, who had hitherto shrunk from the sight of a wounded bird or suffering pet, now nerved her woman's heart to heroism, and stood by un-
flinching, though her cheeks were blanched, and her eyes were filled with tears, which she dashed constantly away, that her sight might be keen to recognize the venerated form of her beloved father, as the robber and Aziel turned up the ghastly faces, one after another, seeking for the bodies of Ananus and Berachiah.

Even the savage robber, accustomed to scenes of horror and bloodshed, hesitated to proceed with the sickening labor, under the sorrowful eyes of that undaunted girl; and in tones as nearly gentle as his rough voice could assume, he said,—

"Wilt thou not stand a little aside from this vile place, and leave it to me to find thy father's body?"

"Nay, verily!" she gasped, with quivering sobs; then mustering her bravery with a superhuman effort of will, she continued: "My eyes will perchance recognize some mark of identity a stranger's might fail to see, if the remains be much disfigured; and my servant, here, will lend his aid; he also knew my father well, and is commissioned also to bury the body of my father's friend, who perished with him, even the citizen Berachiah." Thus did her woman's wit screen Aziel from discovery; for even the good faith of the robber might be doubted, if he thought that such a prominent citizen as Aziel were near.

Under pretense of seeking her orders, Aziel approached the heroic girl, and whispered,—

"Jehovah bless thee, noble Jessica! While there are such Jewish maidens left to Judah, even though Jerusalem fall, our nation shall not utterly perish!"

With one piercing glance from her true eyes, Jessica commanded aloud, as though an order to a slave,—

"Quick! to thy work, man! The day advances, and my father must be buried ere the city gates be closed."
For three long hours the brave girl stood there with eyes bent on that revolting sight, nor flinched, nor fainted, at the horror of it.

At length the body of the High Priest was found beneath the pile of dead, and near by lay Berachiah. The face of Ananus was not disfigured, and a calm smile rested upon the noble features. Though the cheek of Berachiah had received a cruel sword-thrust, Aziel quickly recognized his revered father.

The robber, calling some of his associates to assist in the removal of the bodies, satisfying them by telling them he wished to secure some valuable papers from the clothing of the bodies, which could be more easily accomplished by their removal to his cave, they consented without further information to obey their leader, and thus the bodies were carried without opposition to the burial vault of the family of Ananus, which this robber had chosen for his headquarters; and this fact rendered their present purpose to be unsuspected by the Sicarii whom the robber had called to his aid.

As soon as the bodies were deposited in the cave, the robber, on some pretence, called away his comrades, leaving Aziel and Jessica alone with their dead.

By the tender hands of Aziel, the bruised bodies of their loved parents were decently arrayed in the clean linen grave-clothes brought by the thoughtful Jessica, and wrapped with the sweet spices. When this sad office was completed, Aziel allowed the courageous girl to enter the vault and view, for the last time, the serene countenance of her father, ere the robber returned.

As it was nearly the hour of closing the city gates, Jessica had no time to linger on that sacred spot, where all that was mortal of her parents, and where the body of
Berachiah, her father's friend, lay in the sleep of death.

The return of the robber warned Aziel and Jessica that their departure from this grave must now take place; and with his better nature somewhat awakened by the brave heroism of the maiden, the robber saluted her deferentially, and said,—

"Fear not, maiden, for thy sacred dead! By my mother's grave, I swear to protect this cave from all intrusion! If thy servant will help me roll the great stone to the entrance, which my ruthless bands had removed from its place, I will see to it that no hand of man shall again disturb this sacred spot while my life is spared from fatal dart or sword-thrust. Go in peace, and know that one of the wicked Sicarii can still hold sacred a solemn promise!"

"May the forgiving Jehovah pardon thy past offences, to whom we must all look for mercy!" replied Jessica, in thrilling tones; "and may the Christ reveal Himself to thee as the Saviour of all sinners! In the Holy Name of my God, I thank thee for thy kindness in this hour of extremity. Farewell!"

As Jessica and Aziel passed within the Gate of the Gardens, the robber wiped the tears from his eyes with his rough hands, and taking his short dagger from his girdle, which had been used in so many bloody deeds, he said,—

"Henceforth no innocent blood shall be shed by my right hand! By my mother's grave I swear it! So help me, Thou Jehovah of the Jewish maiden!"

By this time the Idumæans had repented of their coming to Jerusalem, being at length sick of bloodshed, and ashamed of the wicked deeds of which, together with the
Zealots, they had been guilty. For the Zealots revealed to them that in truth they had no grounds for believing in the treachery of Ananus and the chief citizens. This confession was made by the Zealots, not in compunction of conscience for their crimes, but on account of their desire to be rid of the Idumæans, whom they feared would prove too strong for them. The Idumæans thereupon retired from Jerusalem, having first set at liberty about two thousand of the populace, whom they had unlawfully imprisoned.

By this time, John of Gischala was beginning to tyrannize over the remainder of the rebels. Therefore Eleazar revolted from John, drawing many of the Zealots with him, and these seized the inner court of the Temple, which part of the Sanctuary was well furnished with stores; neither did Eleazar and his bands hesitate to appropriate any sacred thing. Now because they were fewer in number than the followers of John, they went not forth from the enclosures of the Inner Temple, but did constantly beset the men of John with darts and arrows, who, though they were more numerous, were in an inferior position, having their enemies above them, whom they could not attack, only as the bands of Eleazar should show themselves beyond their defences. Between these two parties there were daily conflicts, so that the Temple ran constantly red with fresh blood.

Moreover, there was still a third party in the city; for there was one Simon, the son of Gioras, who had laid waste the country of Idumæa, and came even to the gates of Jerusalem, with whom the Zealots had many combats, but could not overcome him. "So it came to pass that those who ran away from John were captured by Simon, who was the more bloody of the two; and he who had escaped the tyrant within the walls was destroyed by the
other that lay before the gates; so that all attempts of flying and deserting to the Romans were cut off as to those who had a mind so to do."

So the chief men of Jerusalem who were still left alive from former assaults of the Zealots within the city, took counsel how they might overthrow John, and thereupon determined to admit Simon, who entered the city with lordly bearing, as the protector of the people against the Zealots. But he took good care to secure his own authority, and soon looked upon those who had invited him within the city walls as his enemies, no less than those whom he had been called upon to attack. Thus did Simon get possession of Jerusalem, in the third year of the war.

Simon held possession of the Upper City, on Zion's Hill, and also a great part of the Lower City, and his situation was beneath that of John, as John's was lower than that of Eleazar. As for John, he drove back those who assailed him from below, and defended himself from those who attacked him from above, by means of his engines of war and artillery; for this John of Gischala had taken of the consecrated timber which the priests of the Temple had collected in times of peace, intending to raise the Temple walls by twenty cubits. These beams of wood had been brought down from Mount Lebanon by King Agrippa at great cost, and were of marvellous size and perfection. These had John seized, and built of them towers on the west side of the Temple, hoping by these towers that he would prevail against his enemies.

Then were the inhabitants of the city in despair, as they found themselves helpless victims of all these three parties; wherefore the old men and the women began to pray for the coming of the Romans; for so great were their trials with these civil strifes, that a foreign foe seemed
rather a hope of deliverance than a thing to be deplored. For all about the Temple had been burned by fire, and the wheat stored in the city granaries had been ruthlessly destroyed, and famine stared them in the face, and destruction seemed certain from within, whatever might be their fate from foes without. Such was the condition of Jerusalem when Titus approached the city.

It was now the spring of the year A.D. 70, and being the time of the yearly Passover, crowds of pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem, notwithstanding its menaced condition. Thousands of Jews, having been driven out by the Romans from the districts of Galilee, Samaria, and Pææα, had sought the Holy City for shelter from their foreign foes, and thereby the population of Jerusalem at this time was computed by some at six hundred thousand souls, by others at from two to three millions.

Titus, advancing from the north, planted his camp on the ridge called Scopus, from which point the city was in full view. He had six legions of soldiers, the Fifth, Tenth, and Fifteenth, which were previously in the country, subduing various parts of Palestine, while there were added the Twelfth from Syria, and the Third and Twenty-second from Alexandria. Titus had also twenty cohorts of auxiliaries, with eight squadrons of cavalry. He was joined by bands sent by Agrippa, Sohemus, and Antiochus, king of Commagene, together with numbers of Arabs. The forces under Titus were computed at eighty thousand. Such was the army of Titus, and he had for chief counsellor Tiberius Alexander, who had been Governor of Egypt, and was a man of years, and skilled in the tactics of war.

The force of the Jews in Jerusalem was comprised of twenty-four thousand trained and well-armed soldiers,
together with multitudes of irregular combatants, who rushed forth from the various sections of the city to man the walls, or sally from the gates.

The Tenth Legion was detached to take up its position on the Mount of Olives, to prevent the escape of the Jews, and intercept any succor sent to the besieged.

Aware of the strength and resolution of his opponents, Titus prepared to conduct the siege with patience and prudence, according to the rules of the art of war. As the city was defended in some parts by triple lines of ramparts, the Romans proceeded cautiously and laboriously to erect banks, and fill in ditches, making ready to employ their huge battering-rams, and other engines of war, against the formidable battlements which rendered Jerusalem almost impregnable.

Then said the Zealots, one to another, as they beheld this threatening array of armed men encompassing their city walls,—

"Verily, we do not well to suffer the enemy to build these great works for our destruction, while we war with each other, and use not our arms against the Romans."

Thereupon, joining their bands together, the Jews rushed forth from the city gates with mighty force against the Tenth Legion, if, peradventure, they might prevent the completion of the entrenchments upon the Mount of Olives.

At the sound of the trumpet of warning, the Romans flew to arms, for they had laid aside their weapons, deeming the rebels in the city too busy with their strife with each other to undertake such a sortie. For a time the Jews had the advantage, for the Romans, being accustomed to fight in set array, were thrown into confusion by this impetuous charge.
"On against these dogs of Jews!" cried the commander of the Tenth Legion, rallying his forces. "Do I see Romans fly from such hordes of unskilled combatants?"

Thereupon the Romans were brought quickly to their usual order, and did repulse the Jews so hotly, that they fled back into the valley, having suffered much damage.

After this, Titus bade his men fall back and complete their camp. Which, when the Jews observed, they supposed that the Romans fled in fright, and they again made an onslaught with such fury that the ranks of the legion were broken, and fleeing they left Titus almost alone in the midst of the foe; which danger of the general being perceived by certain Roman soldiers, they stayed their flight, and came to the rescue of their commander, and so retrieved their desertion by such a vigorous attack that the Jews were forced to give place.

Now it came to pass that one night Titus would go forth, attended by Placidus and six hundred horsemen, to spy out the strength of the city, hoping that it might prove weak enough to capture without a siege.

"What thinkest thou of the appearance of the enemy?" asked Titus of Placidus, as they came near to the city and saw no man, the gates being shut.

"From our experience before Jotapata," replied Placidus, "I should be wary of these Jews, who, though they are lightly armed, and seem unskilled in the proper tactics of war, are nevertheless most wily in stratagems, and are withal so reckless of life, that they prove most formidable foes."

Even as he spake, the Romans had approached the towers called the "Women's Towers," and a number of Jews sprang upon them through the gate which was over against the monuments of Queen Helena, and broke the
ranks of the Romans, separating the horses of Titus and Placidus from the rest of the cohort, who had fallen somewhat behind.

Now neither Titus nor Placidus were fully armed, having neither helmet nor breastplate, for they had gone forth not expecting to fight; but Titus, perceiving that his preservation depended upon his own courage, turned his horse about, and cried,—

"Romans, follow me!" and thereupon he rode into the midst of his enemies, followed closely by Placidus; and though Jewish darts fell about them in a shower, yet were they not harmed; and so valiantly did Titus and Placidus wield their swords, that they cut down all who pressed them near at hand; and this boldness of Titus and Placidus so astonished the Jews that they fled before them, and the remainder of the Roman horsemen coming to their aid, the Jews retired behind the walls, having slain with their darts and arrows many horses and horsemen.
CHAPTER XVII.

HEART-RENDING SCENES IN THE HOLY CITY. — THE SICARII
ATTACK THE WORSHIPPERS IN THE TEMPLE.

The Romans now being occupied with the erection of their embankments, preparatory to an assault of Jerusalem, the people within the city made ready to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, Eleazar and his party having opened to the populace the gates of the Inner Temple, previously held by them, and allowed such citizens as were desirous of worshipping Jehovah in the observance of the ancient religious ceremony of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to enter within the precincts of the Holy House.

But John of Gischala, being crafty and unscrupulous, made use of this festival to work out a most treacherous design.

Now it came to pass that Aziel had accompanied Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel to the Temple upon the chief day of the Feast; for though they were Christians, yet did they still observe such ceremonies of their ancient customs as in no wise conflicted with their faith.

This little party of worshippers had wended their way with reverent hearts to the Holy Sanctuary, mindful, not only of their obligations to worship Jehovah with repentant spirits, but moved, moreover, by their sad memories of the past connected with their revered parents, Ananus and
Berachiah. Therefore did they esteem it a special privilege to be once more permitted to enter the sacred Courts of the Temple.

Picture for a moment the impressive scene: Jerusalem surrounded by the "Abomination of Desolation," foretold by the Christ; the Holy Mount of Olives encompassed with Roman ensigns adorned with the images of heathen gods; the proud Roman eagles looking down upon the Holy City from the camp of Titus on the north; the gardens of the suburbs despoiled of their luxuriant groves, and the lilies of the field lying crushed and dying beneath the brutal feet of the fierce Sicarii, who had desecrated the tombs of the dead, held sacred by even savage hordes; the ancient groves of Olivet, — trees which, peradventure, had shaded Solomon, and which had surely bent above the Holy God-Man, now being felled by heathen axes, to form engines of war to destroy the glorious City of David, Jerusalem the Beautiful!

Within the city are more heart-rending scenes. Moriah's brow, heretofore crowned by the gleaming Temple, which appeared as a mountain of snow or a battlement of gold, as the sun shone upon white marble walls, or gates and roofs of dazzling gold; the immortal Temple, King of all fanes! most resplendent of all the works of man which adorned the earth! wonder of Jew and barbarian, Greek and Roman! — this Holy Temple, now blood-stained and desecrated, and used as a fortress of war, rather than the Holy House of Prayer of the God of peace.

And yet more. Zion's Hill profaned by engines of destruction, red with blood, and polluted by ghastly heaps of slaughtered men, women, and children, deprived even of decent burial; every house of the city a place of mourning, every man, woman, and child bereaved of some loved
one, not by the providence of God, but by the ruthless hand of man; palaces in ruins, or dismantled and pillaged by robber bands; the streets of the city thronged with wailing mourners, or coarse and cursing hordes of rebels, reckless of all woes, caring only to satisfy their thirst for blood or their avarice for unlawful booty; starving mothers, carrying in their feeble arms wailing infants, to whom they could give no nourishment, and crying children clinging to their skirts, whose hunger they could not appease even with a crust of bread; and if by chance they had procured a morsel of food to satisfy their starving little ones, brutal Zealots would snatch from them the kernels of corn, or the unpalatable herb, which they had obtained by weary efforts, and laugh in their blanched faces with horrid oaths to mock their misery. This did those cruel Zealots, not that they themselves were actually starving, but to add to their hoards of food against a future want.

All these scenes had Aziel, Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel been forced to witness as they passed through Jerusalem on their way to the Temple.

But greater horrors awaited them all. When the people had gathered in the Temple, the outer court was filled with a vast multitude, and the first division of Israelites entered into the Court of the Priests, for all the Jews were divided at this Feast into three divisions, each one of which in turn was admitted into the Great Court of the Temple, with their Paschal lambs, and this was the order of the ceremony.

"The first of the three festive divisions was admitted within the Court of the Priests. Each division must consist of not less than thirty persons, that being the symbolical number of the Divine, and of completeness.
Immediately the massive gates were closed behind them. The priests drew a three-fold blast from their silver trumpets, when the Passover was slain. Altogether, the scene was most impressive. All along the Court, up to the Altar of Burnt Offering, priests stood in two rows, the one holding golden, the other silver, bowls. In these the blood of the Paschal lambs, which each Israelite slew for himself (as representative of his company at the Paschal Supper), was caught up by a priest, who handed it to his colleague, receiving back an empty bowl; and so the bowls with the blood were passed up to the priest at the altar, who poured it in one jet at the base of the altar. While this was going on, a most solemn hymn of praise was raised, the Levites leading in song, and the offerers either repeating after them, or merely responding. Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while to each of the others they responded by a 'Hallelujah,' or 'Praise ye the Lord.' This service of song consisted of the so-called 'Hallel,' thus:—

"The Levites began: 'Hallelu Jah (Praise ye the Lord)!'"  
"The people repeated: 'Hallelu Jah!'"  
"The Levites: 'Praise (Hallelu), O ye servants of Jehovah.'"  
"The people responded: 'Hallelu Jah.'"  
"The Levites: 'Praise (Hallelu) the name of Jehovah.'"  
"The people responded: 'Hallelu Jah.'"  
"Levites: 'When Israel went out of Egypt.'"  
"People: 'When Israel went out of Egypt.'"  
"Levites: 'The house of Jacob from a people of strange language.'"  
"The people: 'Hallelu Jah.'"
"'Save now, I beseech Thee, Jehovah!' 
"'Oh, Jehovah, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.'
"'Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.'"

Then in the midst of this solemn Hallelujah song arose a dreadful tumult. In the Outer Court, where the gathered multitudes awaited their turn to participate in the sacred services in the Inner Court (even while the silver trumpets of the priests were sounding), arose a terrible cry and uproar, and gleaming daggers flashed forth in the hands of bloody Sicarii, who had been bribed by John of Gischala to disguise themselves with cloaks over their armor, and thus to enter with the worshipping people, that they might overpower the Zealots and the citizens, and thereby gain for him the coveted position held heretofore by Eleazar and his bands.

Then the Zealots leaped down from the battlements, where they had been guarding the gates of the Temple, and did flee into the subterranean caverns beneath the courts; and the people, helpless and unarmed, were at the mercy of this brutal mob of fierce robbers.

Miriam, Jessica, and Rachel found themselves surrounded by several ruffians, who, raising their bloody swords, threatened instant death if any opposition was shown by them.

"Touch me not!" cried brave Jessica, freeing herself from the grasp of a huge robber who had caught her arm; "wouldst thou kill an unarmed woman?"

"Not so fast, my pretty creature! I know a Roman captain who would pay me well for thy child's face for his slave," sneered the fiendish scoundrel, roughly seizing her wrist. "I have clasped some pretty iron bracelets on as tender arms as thine, and would grudge not to do it again,
if thou wilt not go peaceably with me; I would thrust
my dagger through thy soft flesh as carelessly as I would
bring down a bird with a sharp-pointed arrow, but that I
prefer to get gold by selling thee, rather than amusement
by killing thee."

Meanwhile Miriam and Rachel were both in the power
of certain other ruffians, and one, deeming the aged Rachel
not worth capturing, had just lifted his sword towards her
throat to give the fatal cut, when a voice shouted,—

"Hold there, man! I, thy captain, command it!"

And through the turbulent crowd of slaying men, and
dying women and children, necessarily even treading upon
piles of bleeding corpses, — for the marble pavement was
thick with them, — strode a towering form straight to the
side of Jessica, and, snatching her hand from the robber's
grasp, with eyes flashing with anger, and tones like
thunder, he exclaimed,—

"These women are my charge! Shame, men! Are ye
become such vile beasts as to slay women and helpless
babes? Be off! and if ye must kill, seek armed men, and
your enemies beyond the walls!"

"How long since thy dagger hath become so dainty in
its taste?" growled the coarse brute who held Rachel.
"If thou wert not the captain of our band, thy words
would fall on deaf ears!" and the ruffian slunk away,
while Jessica looked in surprise at their rescuer, and per-
ceived that he was the robber she had encountered in her
mother's tomb.

Softening his gruff voice as best he could, he said to
her,—

"Dost thou remember me? I have not forgotten my
oath to thee, and will guard now thy safe return to thy
home. Who are these women with thee?"
"My sister and my nurse," responded Jessica; "and sure am I we shall be safe in thy guidance."

"Then come quickly!" said the robber; "I may not be able long to protect thee from harm, but while I live, my right arm shall defend thee."

"Jehovah will reward thee!" answered Jessica, as she gazed into his face with trustful eyes, which so melted the heart of the stern man that he vowed to be worthy of such confidence, even to death, if it were needful; and taking Jessica and Miriam by the hand, he told Rachel to follow them closely, and over piles of the dead he led them, through such sickening and ghastly sights as to make them grow faint with horror; down to the caverns of the Temple by a secret passage he conducted them, and just as they breathed more freely, a scene burst on their vision which made their hearts stand still.

Where a din light fell into the cave, through a small aperture in the wall, they beheld Aziel struggling in the grasp of a brawny giant, whose gleaming dagger was lifted, and the sharp point even then touched the throat of the young man, who, coming to worship, not to fight, was unarmed, and at the mercy of his foe.

Again those tones of thunder rang through the vault,—

"Hold, man! By our secret oath I adjure thee, sheathe thy dagger!"

"Who dares command me?" cried the man, in rage.

"Thy captain, Joab!" responded the robber who had befriended Jessica. "Thou rememberest thine oath of allegiance, and the penalty of disobedience!" he continued; and again the dagger was lowered, and the victim freed.

"Aziel!" cried Miriam, as the youth came towards them, not recognizing in the dim light the sisters, but wondering much who this deliverer might be.
At the sound of that familiar voice Aziel ran forward, exclaiming,

"Oh, Miriam and Jessica, are ye safe? I was just hastening through this passage as the quickest way to reach the Court where I left you when I went with my Paschal lamb into the Court of the Priests, and heard the tumult, and feared for your safety."

"Owing to this former friend, whom thou rememberest we met in my mother's tomb, our lives have been protected," said Jessica; for, fearing to alarm Miriam, Jessica and Aziel had been silent regarding the incidents connected with the burial of their parents; and Joab the robber, now recognizing Aziel, whose robes, even in that dim light, revealed his rank, said to Jessica, with a slight emphasis upon the words,

"Thou hast, verily, a handsome and high-born servant!"

Aziel now took the arm of Miriam, while Joab gave one hand to old Rachel; and thus the party hurried through the subterranean caverns which honeycombed the hill of Moriah, beneath the Temple, and as the dusk was already sheltering them in their flight, they reached the house on Zion's Hill in safety.

"Wilt thou not accept our hospitality, poor though it be in these days of famine?" said Jessica, with a courteous civility, to Joab the robber.

"Nay, maiden! The threshold of thy habitation must not be crossed by such bloody feet as those of Joab the robber; but know thou, henceforth my hands shall never be dyed in the blood of the innocent! I have sworn it by thy Jehovah!"

And the robber, giving them no opportunity for further invitation nor thanks, disappeared in the deepening darkness.
By this treacherous plot of John of Gischala, the party of Zealots came under his control, Eleazar having submitted to the necessity of becoming one of the leaders of the rebels under John; and the Temple thus became the stronghold of John. There were henceforth but two parties in the city,—one headed by John of Gischala, and the other by Simon, son of Gioras.

Then did Titus proceed to pitch his camp nearer the city than the hill of Scopus; and in the accomplishment of this plan, the hedges and walls which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had built about their suburban villas were levelled with the ground, the many luxuriant groves cut down and the fruit-trees ruthlessly destroyed, the gardens trampled and the hollow places filled. To accomplish this, the surrounding hills were demolished. In this way did the Roman army level the country between Scopus and the city walls.

In truth, not a tree was left standing, even as far as Jericho, and also for long distances on all sides of Jerusalem; for the timber was used by Titus in building his engines of war, and the branches in forming his hurdles and raising his banks. With the wholesale destruction of a like nature which Vespasian had already accomplished in Galilee in subduing that district, and in the regions of Samaria, there was naught left in the countries of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee which the hand of man had not ruthlessly marred, save only the mountains, the skies, and the waters; and two of these also had been grievously shorn of their charms, for the mountains had been robbed of their groves and gardens, and the waters of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee had been polluted by the blood of the slain. Even the skies were not left by man as God made them, for the volumes of smoke from burning cities
had defiled the clear sunlight, and the profane oaths of brutal men had befouled the pure air, hitherto resounding with the echoes of the hymns of praise from devout men and innocent birds, which went up as a sweet savor from the hills of Judea and Galilee, in honor of the Almighty Creator, Elohim-Jehovah.
CHAPTER XVIII.

FAMINE AND BLOODSHED. — THE SISTERS’ SACRIFICE. —
JESSICA’S TERRIBLE ADVENTURE.

In the house on Zion’s Hill, famine also reigned. The rich could buy no food, for there was no food to buy; moreover, there were no longer any rich in the city, for the robbers and Zealots had stolen everywhere, and John of Gischala had not even respected any of the sacred vessels of the Temple, but had taken of the cups and golden bowls, and silver and golden pitchers, among which were the gifts offered by the Emperor Augustus and Livia, his wife. John had melted these for coining money. He took also of the holy oil and of the sacred wine, which was kept for the use of the priests only, and he gave them to his soldiers, who hesitated not to drink the wine, and anoint themselves in mockery with the consecrated oil.

Meanwhile, the Zealots had slain the High Priest Matthias, who had been chosen in the place of Ananus. He was put to death, together with his sons, being falsely accused of treason in a purpose to deliver the city up to the Romans. When the aged priest prayed them to slay him first, they refused, and murdered his sons before his anguished eyes, and then killed him.

Then did a grievous punishment befall some of the inhabitants; and it would appear to have been a judgment for the former guilt of Jerusalem’s people. All food was exhausted in the city. Even the soldiers were so hard pressed by hunger that they ran like greedy dogs through
the streets, devouring that which even the vilest of beasts would not eat; gnawing their girdles and sandals of leather, and wisps of dried grass. Even the leaves of the few trees left in the city were sold for their weight in silver. Many of the people parted with their entire possessions for a peck of wheat or barley; and multitudes stole out at night without the city gates to gather such herbs as they might find, or to dig up the roots of shrubs, or stray spears of grass; and even such were robbed of these poor morsels by the greedy Zealots, who watched their return. At length it came to the ears of Titus that crowds were thus stealing forth from the city, and he perceived that the number of those who came out was daily increasing; and deeming it dangerous to let such crowds go free, and not wishing to have the care of so many captives, he commanded that all such as were captured should be crucified. This was accordingly done, and so many were thus executed that the Romans could not secure sufficient wood to make enough crosses for the many bodies. Peradventure, the Jews had brought this judgment upon themselves for the crucifixion of the Christ, their Messiah.

Now the engines of the Romans were admirably contrived, and did throw such huge stones withal, that the Jews could in no wise withstand them, and the walls of the city were constantly threatened with destruction, by reason of the stones and darts hurled against them by the Roman machines of war.

At first these mammoth stones were white in color, and were plainly visible to the Jews even afar off, so that the watchmen on the city walls, when the Roman engines began to play their horrid game of ruin, observing from their watch-towers the coming of the missile, cried out
with a loud voice, "THE STONE COMETH!" whereupon the Jews threw themselves down upon the ground below the range of the machine, and thus many escaped death. Which when Titus learned, he caused the stones to be made black, that so their advance might not be thus heralded to the advantage of the Jews.

Moreover, the Jews being rash and careless of life, knowing that death was certain to them whether by famine in the city, or by the weapons of their enemies without, determined that the death best to choose betwixt these double evils was that of being slain in battle, rather than one of starvation, which now stared every inhabitant in the face. For the Zealots had, with inhuman cruelty and unheard of barbarity, snatched the morsels of food from the very mouths of the starving populace, and even put them to most indescribable tortures to extract from them confessions regarding some hidden ear of corn, or small measure of wheat, or scanty loaf, or bit of raw meat. They had also broken into houses, and plundered any remnant of food, gathered by the parents for their hungry children; until so great had become the famine, that mothers even snatched the petty crumbs from the lips of dying children, and children seized the few kernels of corn from famished parents; and the Zealots killed the rich to grasp their gold, and slew the poor to gain their last supplies of food. The dead lay everywhere. Ghastly famine stalked through the city, and the red hand of murder threatened the life of all classes. Death was welcomed as the only friend left to the anguish and tortured populace.

Miriam and Jessica and old Rachel were wan with hunger, and weakest of all seemed Miriam. Jessica then discovered the self-sacrifice of her loving sister, for she
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beheld her putting back her yet untasted allotment of food into the general store, that thereby her younger sister might have sustenance the longer. Then Jessica, with eyes dimmed with tears, sought her chamber, silently resolved not to be outdone in generosity.

Jessica had still one much prized pet left—a yellow canary,—the favorite of all her former cherished creatures. All else had one by one been sacrificed for food, until this golden songster only remained to cheer her sad and lonely hours. To feed this tiny pet Jessica had robbed herself of food, and now she held the pretty birdling on her wasted finger, and gazed upon its golden glory for the last time, while thus she murmured:

"My dainty, golden darling, I must bid thee farewell! Thy gentle life must be yielded up that generous Miriam may have food for one day more. Sweet pet, I sorrow to take thy lovely life! And I shall miss thy morning carols and thy evening chirpings. I will shut my eyes while I seem so cruel. There!—Oh! It hurts me so to wring thy golden neck, and hush the song within thy swelling throat. Forgive me, darling! I would not take thy life if I knew where to find a single morsel of food for starving Miriam! 'Tis done! Farewell, my pretty pet. Perchance I shall once again find thy song in some angel's throat in the New Jerusalem!"

With eyes filled with tears, Jessica prepared the tiny bird in as dainty a manner as her poor kitchen stores would furnish, having merely a pinch of salt, and drop of oil, and one fragrant cassia bud, to add flavoring to the cup of soup made from the little bird. This she carried to her sister, and smiled as she placed it in her hands, saying,—

"Taste this, dear Miriam! I fear thou art faint!" for Jessica was too considerate to distress Miriam by showing that she had discovered her unselfish deed.
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"Where didst thou obtain this delicate soup, my Jessica?"

"Oh, a stray birdling flew into my window," answered Jessica smiling, and Miriam knew, when she an hour later missed the golden canary from Jessica's room. And thus both sisters sacrificed for each other.

That night Jessica stole forth upon an errand alone. She remembered that in a certain place, near the Pool of Siloam, the white stars of Bethlehem were wont to grow thickly; and knowing that the bulbous roots of these flowers were palatable, and hoping that the secluded spot had not been discovered by others, she departed, not even taking Rachel, for fear Miriam would object to such a hazardous undertaking. The moon was shining, but the frequent clouds obscuring the silver disk were welcome to Jessica, as serving to hide her from any hostile eyes. She had found the clustering stars, gleaming amid that scene of desolation like pitying eyes of angels, and had gathered her girdle full of the bulbous roots, being obliged to sacrifice the white starry blossoms in so doing.

"Must I ever thus destroy the beautiful, to obtain the vital?" she sadly asked herself, thinking of her golden canary, and the sweet flowers lying now dying on the sand. "Are my flowers of love and songs of gladness likewise forever to perish?"

Rousing herself from her gloomy reveries, she started towards her home, clasping the precious roots closer to her bosom than she would have held costly diamonds or shining gold.

Just then she espied a band of soldiers staggering towards a house near by. At first she thought them drunk, but afterwards discovered that they reeled faint from hunger. They broke open the door of the house with brutal oaths; and just then the odor of cooking food was wafted to
Jessica, and she drew near. But the sight she beheld petrified her with horror.

"Give us food!" cried the famished soldiers, to a woman standing by a stove eating a piece of meat; and she pointed to the remains of a roasted babe upon the table, and with frenzyed eyes and maniacal shriek, exclaimed,—

"Come, eat of this food, for I have eaten of it myself. This is my own son, and what hath been done was my own doing! Why should ye be softer than a woman, or more merciful than a mother? But if ye scruple to eat of my sacrifice, then as I have eaten the half, let the rest be left to me also."

Jessica turned faint at this awful sight, and would have fled immediately; but her head was dizzy, and her limbs trembled so violently with horror, that she was forced to linger until she somewhat regained her strength, and thus became an unwilling listener to those terrible words and an observer of the dreadful scene.

Even the brutal ruffians were dumb with horror at such a revolting deed, and slunk from the house trembling and affrighted; and Jessica fled from the awful abomination as fast as her tremulous limbs could carry her. Having reached her home, and tottered into Miriam's presence, she fell in a swoon at the feet of her terrified sister. When she came to herself, she told the shocking story, with blanched cheeks and horror-stricken eyes. Not even the ghastly piles of the dead beyond the Fish Gate, before which she had stood unflinchingly, had so unnerved her. This was the most atrocious of all the abominations witnessed in that doomed city.

"Verily, Jehovah must have departed from this miserable and wicked city!" exclaimed old Rachel, as she listened to the dreadful story.
CHAPTER XIX.

TITUS CAPTURES THE OUTER WALL. — AZIEL ARMS IN DEFENCE OF THE TEMPLE. — JESSICA IN HER WATCH-TOWER. — A GORGEOUS SPECTACLE.

On the fifteenth day of the siege, the Romans conquered the outer wall of the city, for Jerusalem was fortified with three walls, on all sides not encompassed with impassable valleys, for on those sides it was defended with only one wall.

The Romans had built five towers, each fifty cubits high. On every embankment erected by them was a tower, and these were of such height that the Jews could in no manner assail them, whereas the Romans from them could harass their enemies, by means of the slingers and archers stationed in these towers. Neither could the Jews destroy these towers with fire, for the Romans had covered them with plates of iron.

Titus had now brought his engines close to the outer wall of the city, and one huge battering-ram, called by the Jews Nico, meaning The Conqueror, had broken a breach through the wall, and through this opening the Romans had entered that part of the city which lay between this and the second wall. After this Titus moved his army within the outer wall, and there formed his camp. This was not accomplished without many conflicts with the Jews, the men under John of Gischala joining with those of Simon for the defence of the city, having at length
decided to thus combine their forces against their foreign foes. John defended the Tower of Antonia and the Temple, and Simon the remainder of the city.

Neither did the Romans find the Jews unworthy combatants for their boasted legions to encounter. The Jews fought with such fury and contempt of life, and were so prodigal of stratagems and wily plots, as to keep the Romans always in watchful suspense; and the Romans were so disciplined and skilled in the art of warfare that the Jews could only hope to gain an advantage by bold sallies, where their impetuous onsloughts would give no play for Roman weapons or cavalry charges, and their knowledge of the many secret outlets beneath the city walls enabled them to make unexpected sorties, or gave them an opportunity for destroying the banks and engines of their enemies by fire.

In truth, this first wall had not been taken without many a bloody hand-to-hand combat, and much discomfiture of the hitherto invincible Roman forces. The Jews fought like wild beasts, caring not if they perished, if only they might tear their enemies to pieces; while the Romans were inspired with the thought that their eagles had always been victorious, and therefore defeat seemed impossible; and as Titus exposed his life in the most dangerous situations, it ill became Roman soldiers to hesitate to follow where a Cæsar led.

As long as there was strife between the seditious parties in Jerusalem, Aziel was unwilling to join either faction, being greatly horrified at this internal contention. But when both parties combined against their common foe, Aziel thought it his duty to lend his strong right arm in the defence of Jehovah's Holy Temple. He therefore consented to be one of the commanders under John of Gischala,
hanging thereby to use his authority against such a profanation of the Holy House as had heretofore shocked his devout heart.

He would fain help to preserve this sacred fane from pagan desecration, and endeavor to inspire the Jews with the true patriotism of those who were willing to risk their lives in defence of their glorious Temple and the freedom of their ancient city, but deemed it beneath them, and moreover most wicked in the sight of Jehovah, whom they professed to reverence, to turn their swords against their brothers' throats in civil conflicts. And by words of noble counsel did he inspire the soldiers under his authority, speaking thus,—

"Let us use our swords only in such a cause of right and honor, as shall give us hope of receiving the help of the Great Jehovah, who lent His Almighty Arm in defence of our fathers against their enemies, but never in behalf of wicked oppression or selfish aggrandizement. Let us defend this Holy Temple with our lives, praying to Jehovah that he may forgive the awful profanation of His sacred Sanctuary. If this Temple fall, as perchance it must, as a punishment to this nation for rejecting the Holy One of God, then will we perish doing the only duty possible to us in this our great extremity; looking towards the New Jerusalem, where the 'Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it!'"

Thus did Aziel infuse the ardor of his own brave spirit, and a righteous zeal, into the hearts of his soldiers. As he donned the red military mantle in place of his purple robe of state, he fought not for his own glory, but as a Soldier of the Cross.

Thus were the Hebrews armed: Aziel carried a Tzimah, or shield, and from his side was suspended the Magen, or
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buckler, to be used in hand-to-hand conflicts. To protect his body, he wore the Tachara, a quilted doublet, put on over the head. Over this was the Shiryon, or breast-plate. Upon his head was the Cobâ, or helmet, while the Mitzchah, or greaves, protected his limbs. In a sheath slung to his girdle, was a Chereb, or sword, resting upon the thigh, wherefore the phrase, “girding on the sword.” Fastened upon his back, when not in battle, was the Cidron, or javelin, and in his right hand, the Shelach, or dart.

The bow carried by Jewish archers was the Kesheth, which was bent by the foot, hence, “to tread the bow.” The Chitzim, or arrows, were placed in a quiver termed Ashpah. “Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper,” referred to the Jewish practice of using arrows with burning materials attached. The slingers in a Jewish army carried the Kelâ, or sling, provided with sling-stones.

When Aziel made known to Jessica this step taken by him, and expressed his concern that this performance of what appeared to him his bounden duty would leave them more unprotected, and this had made him hesitate, until he could no longer satisfy his conscience while delaying, Jessica rejoined,—

“Thou hast done the only right thing, Aziel! Were I a man I would take a sword in defence of Jehovah’s Temple; and though I am only a woman, fear not for us, for if needs be, I can gird on the sword, as did Deborah of old when she went up with Barak against Sisera, and did overcome the enemies of Israel. Peradventure, Jerusalem might yet be delivered by the hand of a woman; but methinks the displeasure of Jehovah is great against this nation, for the terrible wickedness thereof, and the rejection of His Holy Son, and therefore shall no arm be found strong enough to deliver the Holy City from the Romans,
seeing it appeareth to be the will of the Almighty that this city should be utterly destroyed."

"Dost thou regret that thou didst not flee with the Christians, while yet there was opportunity?" inquired Aziel, gazing with astonishment upon the daring maiden.

"Nay, verily! I would choose the same again," rejoined Jessica, with kindling eyes. "My duty was here; and where duty lies, there only is the path, though it lead to death!"

"But Miriam hath not thy stout heart, and I sorrow much to leave ye lone women!" sighed Aziel.

"I will defend Miriam!" cried Jessica, "even though with my heart's blood. Moreover, remember Jehovah rules!"

When Miriam learned of the decision of Aziel, both she and Rachel applauded his action, and Miriam gazed at him with prouder eyes than ever before as she softly whispered,—

"May Jehovah shield thee! And should we never meet again on earth, may God unite us in the New Jerusalem!"

When Aziel departed from the house on Zion's Hill to his post of duty in the Temple, Jessica went upon the roof, and stationed herself as watchman for the safety of the household, even at the risk of being wounded by the flying dart or hurling stone. When Miriam remonstrated against such an exposure, Jessica replied:—

"I am the soldier of this house! Look thou and Rachel to the gathering of such scanty food as may be procured! I guard these battlements, and moreover shall not hesitate to use my bow and arrows against lurking foes. My practice in archery may now come into good use, and I am keen of eye and sure of hand."

So the daring maiden, girding a small dagger to her
slender waist, took bow and quiver, and placed herself as sentinel on her watch-tower. And this was the scene visible to her.

Titus had pitched his camp within the outer wall of the city, at one place called the Camp of the Assyrians, for it was on that spot where Sennacherib and his Assyrian army had encamped 780 years before, when Jehovah provided that miraculous escape for the Jews from their Assyrian foes. This outer wall was the third wall, having been built by King Agrippa to enclose the suburbs on the northern sides of the city.

Titus was thus in possession of a part of the city lying north of Mount Moriah and Mount Zion.

John of Gischala defended that portion of the city protected by the Tower of Antonia, and the cloisters of the Temple; while Simon held Mount Zion, and concentrated his forces at the Tower of Hippicus. From her roof-terrace, Jessica could behold all these fortifications, and could watch many incidents connected with the siege.

Then Titus prepared to take the second wall of the lower city, which enclosed the hill called Acra, which hill was north of Zion. This second wall also surrounded Bezetha, upon which was the New City, this Bezetha being separated from Moriah by an artificial ditch, while the first, or old wall, built by David and Solomon, enclosed Zion, and part of Mount Moriah.

As Titus stormed the second wall, the followers of both John and Simon combined to resist the attack. And in the taking of this wall many valiant deeds were performed both by the Romans and the Jews. For there was one, Longinus, a Roman knight of valor, who leaped alone into the very midst of the Jews, who were fighting hotly before the wall, having sallied out for the discomfiture of the
Romans, and notwithstanding the host opposed to him, being withal expert in the aiming of their sharp-barbed darts, yet Longinus feared them not, but signalized himself by great valor, and did slay those who opposed him, and then retreated to his own side. This sight Jessica beheld from her roof, and she cried aloud,—

"Bravely done, courageous Roman knight! Would that the Jews possessed many of thy kind!"

Now as the Jews were inferior to the Romans in point of war machines and armor, and were moreover weakened by famine, whereas the Romans had plenty to eat and to spare, it was indeed surprising to behold their bold rashness and unwearied fighting; and they were withal most fertile in wily stratagems, which oft deceived their foes.

There was one, Castor, a crafty Jew, who lay in ambush in a tower of the north wall, against which Titus brought his engines of war to bear with such effect that the tower was shaken, and threatened to fall. Then did Castor resort to a cunning scheme. There was with him in the tower but ten men, and Castor commanded five of them to make believe with him that they desired to surrender to the Romans; the others, meanwhile, were to appear to resist, even to the point of threatening to kill themselves rather than be conquered. Also Castor did send word to Simon, that he would, by this stratagem, delude the Romans for a time, that by thus doing, Simon might have opportunity for consultation regarding what was best to do.

Titus was beguiled by Castor, even as he intended, and commanded the Romans to cease for a time their assault, pitying their calamity, and being willing to listen to their proposals.

"Wilt thou surrender?" asked Titus, by the mouth of one sent as his envoy.
"Such is our desire," replied the wily Castor; "but these our comrades, as thou see'st, will slay themselves rather than submit."

For five of the Jews, according to the plan, did leap upon the wall, and brandish their naked swords and point them to their throats in sign of refusal.

At that moment a Roman archer shot a dart at Castor, and pierced his nose. Whereupon, Castor pulled out the dart and showed it to Titus as a sign of treachery. Then was Titus angry at such an unfair deed, and reproved the archer, and asked Josephus, who stood beside him, to go and parley with the Jews, and to give to Castor his right hand in token of security.

But Josephus, knowing well that this was but a Jewish ruse, refused to go; and another offering to go to Castor, Titus despatched the man, who no sooner approached the tower than Castor displayed his enmity by casting a great stone at him. When Titus was thereby convinced of the ill-faith of the Jews, he commanded the assault to be renewed; and thereupon Castor and his companions set fire to the tower, and when it began to fall, leaped through the flames into a hidden vault beneath, and thus escaped,—the Romans meanwhile giving them credit for remarkable bravery, thinking that they had cast themselves into the fire to perish.

Then Jessica, as she watched, saw the taking of the second wall, and the advance of the Romans into the doomed city. And from her outlook, she was witness to a bloody sight. For Titus, not wishing to destroy the city, but only to capture it, did with forbearance command that none of the inhabitants should be killed, nor their houses burned. This humanity was looked upon by the Jews as a sign of weakness; so they threatened death to any one who
should talk of surrender, and did moreover rally their forces, and attack with fury those Romans who had entered through the second wall. These being heavily armed, and set upon in narrow streets and lanes, were for a time worsted; and had it not been for the courage of Titus, the Romans would have been cut to pieces. But Titus and Placidus, standing at the upper ends of the narrow lanes, ordered the archers to shoot their darts, which rally was successful in driving back the Jews; but the Romans were forced to retreat without the second wall.

Jessica noted the noble Roman knight, standing so bravely at the side of Titus, whom she recognized by the glory of his armor, and the authority evinced by his bearing; and she wondered if peradventure he might be Placidus, the friend of Aziel, who she had learned was with the army of Titus; and she was somewhat comforted by the thought that Aziel had such a stanch friend among the Romans, in case the city should be captured. But little availed it that any in Jerusalem had friends without the walls, for they were helpless to aid them. Even Josephus, with all the favor shown him by Titus, could not accomplish the freedom of his mother and wife, who were shut up within the besieged city. For none within could now pass beyond the walls, and none without could gain an entrance.

Just at this moment, as Jessica was watching the conflict around the second wall, she was startled to discover a man slyly ascending the outer stairway of the house, whom she instantly recognized as one of the terrible Sicarii, bent on plunder.

But her woman's wit did not desert her, nor was her hand made unsteady by the menacing danger; but quickly raising her bow to her shoulder, she let fly an arrow with so
sure an aim, that it struck the robber's eye. Blinded by the spurting blood, he staggered down the stairway, cursing; and thus was that little household spared from being robbed of the few morsels of food and petty store of gold still left to them.

But womanlike, after the danger was over, Jessica turned, and retreated, faint and trembling, to the lower apartments, to gain courage by a sight of the loving faces of Miriam and Rachel, to whom she revealed naught of the visit of the robber; but she described at great length the scenes she had witnessed from her watch-tower on the roof.

Now, on the day following, Jessica beheld from her terrace such an imposing sight that in hot haste she summoned Miriam and Rachel to her side.

And in truth it was a gorgeous spectacle upon which they gazed; for it was the entire Roman army in magnificent battle-array, with armor shining, and spears gleaming, and the horses of the cavalry brilliant with gay trappings, and every legion marching in true order, and the tribunes and decurions and centurions each at his post, and the golden Roman eagles blazing at the head of every legion, and every eagle encompassed by the glowing ensigns adorned with images of many noted gods.

All day long, those legions marched before the eyes of the astonished Jews, who crowded all the Temple walls, and towers and housetops, to witness the magnificent display. For thus was the Roman army put in line of parade, that each legion might receive the subsistence-money due the soldiers for their wages.

For four days this grand review continued, Titus hoping that this display of the strength and numbers of his host would so impress the Jews, that they would conclude that
it was hopeless longer to withstand the Romans; and thus the siege would come to an end, before the city and Temple were destroyed, for Titus was anxious to preserve so famous a city, and such a glorious edifice as the Temple.
CHAPTER XX.

JOSEPHUS EXPOSTULATES WITH THE REBELLIOUS JEWS.—SHOCKING BARBARITIES.

Then did Titus also send Josephus to speak to the Jews in their own language, and persuade them of the uselessness of further resistance; and thus Josephus spake:

"Can ye hope, after two walls have already been taken by the Romans, that the third will hold out? And why do ye disdain to be subject to Rome, which has conquered the world? Will ye not be wise, and surrender while the Romans are willing to have mercy upon you? — for ye must indeed succumb in the end,—if not by the force of arms, then verily by the continuance of the famine. Hath not God also manifested His intention to give Rome the victory, since the springs without the city, which have in years past been dried up, are now affording the Romans an abundance of water? And do ye not remember, how when Zedekiah, King of Judah, would fight with the Babylonians contrary to the word of the prophet Jeremiah, the Jews were allowed to be led into captivity and their Temple destroyed? Why will ye longer rebel? When your fathers were removed into Egypt, and were subject to tyranny from foreign kings for four hundred years, yet did they not attempt to defend themselves by war and fighting; but did commit their ways unto God, who delivered them out of the hands of their enemies."
"And now also ye have desecrated the Holy Temple, and given yourselves over to wicked seditions, when ye ought to have sought help from Jehovah and repented ye of your past transgressions, if, peradventure, He might please to turn from your city the armies of foreign foes.

"And verily, if the Great God did see fit to deliver your city, then would that be accomplished in spite of all the armies of the world. But plainly Jehovah purposes to allow the Romans to continue to hold dominion over this land for some wise plan of His own Omniscient Will, else would He not give Rome this constant victory. Therefore no longer fight against God, but submit while there is yet mercy to be meted out to you."

The Jews, for answer, threw their darts and stones at Josephus, and one wounded him so that he was borne away by the Romans unconscious. Thus did the Jews press on towards their own destruction.

Then did Titus summon his commanders for consultation regarding the best mode of procedure to hasten the taking of Jerusalem. At the council-of-war, Titus thus addressed the tribunes and centurions, gathered within his tent,—

"Romans! I have called ye thither to seek your advice. What would ye counsel in the present emergency?"

Then answered Longinus, who was of a warm temper and impatient of delay,—

"I would say, O mighty Cæsar, that it would be well to bring the entire army against the city, and storm the walls; for hitherto only a part of the legions have been engaged in battle."

"What sayest thou, Placidus?" asked Titus.

"I would counsel, Great Cæsar," replied Placidus, "that a wall should be raised by the army around the entire city; for it is impracticable to cast up any more
banks for want of materials. Moreover, the banks have been frequently destroyed by the Jews. There are so many secret passages, known only to them, through which they sally forth, and even procure provisions from without, and thus prolong the siege; therefore it seems such a wall, entirely shutting in the Jews on all sides, will be the only sure way to convince the inhabitants of Jerusalem that it is useless longer to hold out against the Romans."

When some of the commanders objected to this plan of Placidus as being too difficult to accomplish, Titus responded: —

"If any one should think such a work to be too great, let him consider that it is not fitting for Romans, after their past conquests, to undertake any small thing; and therefore I give orders that the army be distributed to their several shares of this work, and thus shall it be accomplished."

Such was the energy of the soldiers, inspired by the words and presence of Titus, that this great wall was completed in three days. The city being thus encompassed, Titus put garrisons in proper places, and divided the three watches of the night, in this wise: Titus himself taking the first; Alexander, the Egyptian, the second; and the commanders of the legions, the third.

Thereupon, many deserters from the Jews leaped from the walls, and fled to the Romans, from the famine in the city; but these met with a terrible fate. For the Syrian and Arabian auxiliaries, being informed that many of the fleeing Jews swallowed their gold to keep it from the robbers, and pieces of gold having been found in the dead body of a Jew, — these Arabians and Syrians, in their avarice, did straightway cut to pieces two thousand of these Jewish deserters in one night, hoping to find that gold had been swallowed by them.
Now when Titus was informed of this shocking barbarity, his anger was very great, and he would have ordered that the men who had committed such savage deeds should be shot dead by the archers; but as the number of the guilty was very large, and some were his own Roman soldiers, he therefore threatened that any again found guilty of such wicked practices should be put to death.

The suffering in the city of Jerusalem had now indeed become terrible. Such vast numbers died of starvation, that their bodies could no longer be given burial, and six hundred thousand are reported to have been thrown out at the gates, and lay in heaps around the city walls, presenting a horrible and ghastly sight, and filling the air with pestilential odors. Over these dead bodies must the Jews tread, when they made sallies out of the city. Thus Jerusalem the Beautiful became the abode of every unclean thing, and never before were such shocking scenes witnessed by the eyes of men.

Then as Titus rode round the city, he was filled with horror, and exclaimed,—

"I call God to witness that this is not of my doing; for I have had compassion on the people, and would save their city from destruction."

Titus, at this time, set his army to erect banks against the walls of the Tower of Antonia, knowing that this famous fortress commanded the entire city. And it came to pass that the Romans put their battering-rams over against the walls, and began to hurl stones against the bulwarks, and to strike upon the battlements with the great iron rams; and the Jews shot darts from their defences; and the noise of battle was tremendous, and the cries of the dying rent the air, and the shouts of the combatants joined the thundering of the stones. Then for a moment,
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

a lull in the terrible tumult occurred; and then was heard again that direful cry, rising above the noise of battle and the shrieks of the dying,—

"Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the City and to the Temple and to the people! A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem and against the Temple; a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides; a voice against the whole people! Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to the Temple! Woe also to myself!" and the mournful cry ceased, for a stone from one of the engines of the Romans struck the Prophet Joshua standing upon the city wall, and cast him down, and he died. Thus was his warning prophecy fulfilled.
CHAPTER XXI.

TITUS CAPTURES THE TOWER OF ANTONIA.— JESSICA AND MIRIAM VIEW THE CONFLICTS FROM THEIR ROOF-TERRACE.

Then John of Gischala, with many of his followers, among whom was Aziel and his company of soldiers, issued forth from the Temple and sought to burn the siege-works of the Romans, that the Tower of Antonia might not be captured; for this fortress defended the Temple. But the Romans put out the fires; and though the Jews left upon the battlements poured boiling oil upon their enemies, and shot showers of arrows, and hurled sharp-pointed darts without number, and the slingers constantly threw stones and other missiles at the forces battering the walls, yet were the Romans not routed; but closing their shields over their heads they took no hurt from the darts and stones, and did undermine the wall, having moved four of the great stones from their places. Whereupon during the night, the wall fell down with a mighty crash; but John had built a second wall within, so were the Romans not yet masters of the Tower.

"By Hercules!" cried Titus, determined not to be thus baffled. "A thousand denarii to the soldier who shall first dare to scale the wall!"

But for a time the Romans hesitated, until one Sabinus exclaimed,—

"O Cæsar, willingly do I offer myself for this work, and think naught of the danger, if I may win thy favor!"
Accordingly this courageous man drew his sword, and holding his shield above his head, he ran forward, followed by eleven others who had been fired by his words.

The Jews, being astonished at his daring, at first fled before him, thinking a host would follow; but ill fortune happened to him, for when he had gained at so much risk the top of the wall, he stumbled on a stone and fell. Whereupon the Jews covered him with javelins, and he died.

But at the ninth hour of the second night twenty Romans took with them a standard-bearer, a trumpeter, and two horsemen, and silently approached the wall; and finding the sentinels asleep, they slew them, and gained the top of the wall, when the trumpeter blew a blast, and the guards, thinking a host had won the citadel, fled. Titus, hearing the trumpet, came in haste with a company of soldiers, and took possession of the Tower of Antonia. But when the Romans would then have taken also the Temple, John and Simon joined forces, and drove them back to the Tower; and the battle waged hot for ten hours between the Jews and the Romans.

Then a brave Roman named Julianus, a centurion, who was standing by the side of Titus in the Tower of Antonia (from which point Titus commanded the troops), when he saw that the Romans gave place to the Jews, straightway leaped down, and with his own arm he drove the Jews into the Inner Court, and would have put them still farther to flight. So great was his daring that Cæsar gazed on him with wonder, and the enemy regarded him with terror; but as he ran across the polished pavement of the Temple, the nails in his shoes tripped him, and he fell. Aziel, though astonished at his courage, knowing so daring a foe to be dangerous, did straightway hurl at him a dart, which
pierced his heart; and other Jews also assailing him, he soon was killed.

Titus then determined to destroy the Tower of Antonia, so that the army might more easily approach the Temple. This was done, the Tower being levelled, save one watch-tower. Then ought the Jews to have remembered that the destruction of their Temple was nigh, for they had a certain oracle which said, —

"The Temple and the City shall be taken when the shape of the Temple shall be four-square."

And this indeed came to pass, for the destruction of the Tower of Antonia made the form of the Temple four-square.

Moreover, Titus reverencing the Temple more than the Zealots who had profaned it, once more appealed to the Jews, saying,—

"Why do ye trample upon dead bodies in this Temple? And why do ye pollute this Holy House with the blood of both foreigners and Jews themselves? I appeal to the gods of my own country and to every god that ever had any worshippers in this place; to my own army I also appeal, and to those Jews who are now with me, and even to you, yourselves, that I force you not to defile this your Sanctuary; and if ye will but change the place whereon ye will fight, no Roman shall either come near your Sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will seek to preserve your Holy House whether ye will or no."

But the Jews thought that this exhortation of Titus proceeded from his fear of them, and so they pressed on to their ruin.

Then Aziel remonstrated with John and said,—

"If the Romans thus swear by their right hand that they will not destroy the Temple of Jehovah, let us not by our
stubbornness cause its destruction. If this Holy Sanctuary will be respected by our enemies, let us take heed to the words of Titus, and meet the Romans in battle on ground less holy than the sacred Courts of the House of Jehovah."

But John and his followers cried out against Aziel, and accused him of treachery. So Aziel, finding his protestations were of no avail, returned to his place, determining to meet his doom with his right arm still defending the sanctity of Jehovah's Temple.

This was the terrible scene which now presented itself to the eyes of the ill-fated inhabitants of Jerusalem; and part of these heart-rending conflicts were plainly visible to Jessica, Miriam, and Rachel on their roof-terrace.

For now Titus delayed no longer, but brought his battering-rams and machines of war against the wall of the Inner Temple.

"On, Romans, to the conquest!" cried Titus.

"In the name of great Jupiter and Osiris, conquer these dogs of Jews!" shouted the Egyptian Alexander.

"Let us see if their Jehovah will save them now!" exclaimed Longinus, as he rushed onward at the head of his cohort.

"Up, Romans! to the walls of the northern gates with your engines!" commanded Placidus, leading his legion forward.

"Fight, men of Israel! for your Temple and your homes!" shouted Aziel, placing his band of soldiers before the Gate of the Holy Place.

Then the clangor of war deafened the ear, and a mighty cry rose from the city, like the roar of thunder; and the flashing of swords cut the air like the darts of the lightning.

"Fight, ye Jews, for your lives!" yelled John of Gischala, rushing to the cloisters, where the Romans were placing ladders to the wall, and mounting thereon.
"Fire the mines in the Chamber of Burning!" commanded Simon, son of Gioras; for the Jews had previously filled certain of the cloisters with dry materials covered with bitumen and pitch, and had thus prepared an immense funeral pile for the unconscious Romans, who scaled the walls, by means of ladders, and rushed upon the top with confident delight at this apparent victory. Suddenly the flames burst forth beneath them, and the walls fell, and multitudes of Romans were buried in the flaming ruins. Then were many daring deeds performed by the Romans thus overtaken by this dire calamity. One noble youth, named Longus, being a soldier of rare courage, standing on the burning walls, was promised safety by the Jews if he would surrender to them. But the brave knight, for answer, lifted his sword and slew himself in the sight of both armies, being unwilling to tarnish the glory of the Roman name by saving life at the risk of that reputation craved by a Roman knight, of never yielding to an enemy.
CHAPTER XXII.

THE FALL OF THE TEMPLE. — THE CAPTURE AND DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

While the flames shot upward from the cloisters of the Temple, and the glorious Porch of Solomon blazed from end to end, a Roman soldier seized a burning brand, and being lifted on the shoulder of a comrade, he threw the lighted torch through the golden window leading to the Holy Place. This sacred Court was soon in flames; perceiving which, Titus ran to the entrance, and cried to his fighting soldiers, —

"Quench the fire! I would not that this most glorious of all the works of earth should be destroyed!"

But the frenzied soldiers heeded him not, but rushed within the sacred portals, crying, —

"Down with the priests!" and flashing forth hundreds of swords, they slew the priests, and multitudes of women and children who had fled there for safety; and the steps leading to the Altar of Burnt Offering ran red with rivers of blood; and the shrieks of the dying filled the air, which cry was taken up by all the Jews in the city, who, from housetops and walls, beheld the destruction of their honored Temple. And the wail of desolation was echoed by the hills; while the roaring of the tongues of fire, and thunder of the engines of war, and the shrieks of the vast multitudes of dying men, women, and children, with the shouts of the victorious Romans, and the groans of despair, and the outcries of the defiant Jews, raised a
tumultuous clamor, such as was never before echoed by the hills of earth.

When the Temple burst forth into flames, Jessica, on the housetop, cried, —

"The doom has fallen! The Temple of Jehovah is destroyed!"

While Miriam echoed, with a gasp, —

"Oh, where is Aziel?" and sank sobbing into her sister's arms.

"To the Chamber of the Fountain, Jews!" shouted Aziel; "and draw water from the well to quench the flames which envelop the Courts; perchance we may yet save the Holy Place!" Whereupon his band, rushing towards the Court of the Priests, seized the great brass basins, prepared for the ablution of the priests and the washing of the sacrificial victims; then they ran to the Chamber of the Fountain, where they filled them with water, and labored strenuously to quench the fierce fires already licking with huge, red tongues the magnificent pillars of the Holy House, while the monster dragons of fiery destruction writhed onward towards the Holy of Holies.

Then Aziel placed himself within the Inner Court, and, with sword in hand, stood guarding the purple veil before the Holy of Holies, looking like the angel protecting the gate of Eden with a flaming sword, as he cried, —

"Death to the Pagan hand that dares to touch this sacred veil!"

While the fire-serpents hissed toward him, and devils revelled in a carnival of ruin, and rivers of blood ran red at his feet, and the demons of Hades seemed let loose within those sacred walls, and human beasts wild with fury slaughtered each other upon those hallowed pavements, and the air quivered with the piercing shrieks of
woe, there stood Aziel, like an angel of light, guarding the Holy Shrine.

But the efforts of the Jews to quench the flames were of no avail; for when the fires were put out in one spot, straightway a Roman soldier again seized a burning brand, and threw it through the hinges of the golden gate leading to the Holy Place, and immediately the flames were renewed, and waged hotter than before.

"But thou shalt roast thyself for that foul deed, thou Pagan!" cried a Jew who had observed the act. "Throw him into the flames which he has kindled!" he shouted to his comrades. Whereupon they lifted the Roman and flung him into the very midst of the fire, crying, —

"Taste the fire thyself, thou heathen dog!"

Before the fire had completed its awful destruction, Titus went into the Holy Place with his commanders, and they gazed, astonished at the glory of it, wondering at the richness of its adornments, the beauty of its marvellous veils, the dazzling splendor of its many gates overlaid with gold and silver plates, the magnificence of its vessels of gold and silver; and, above all, they stood entranced before the colossal vine of gold and precious stones, blazing, like an arch of glory, over the gorgeous Babylonian curtain, resplendent with rainbow tints, hanging before the golden gate which opened into the Holy Place. Hoping still to save this glorious Inner Court, Titus endeavored to restrain the fury of his troops; but their hatred of the Jews leaped all bounds, and their greed of plunder, when they beheld the glittering treasures of the Temple, was greater than their awe of Cæsar, and they would no longer heed his words; and the Holy Place, and more sacred Holy of Holies, was utterly destroyed.
Then did John of Gischala, with certain of his followers, take refuge in the caverns beneath the Temple, hoping to escape; while the Romans carried their ensigns to the site where lay the ruins of the glorious Temple, and they made loud acclamations of joy, and saluted Titus *Imperator*. They had taken such vast quantities of spoils from the Temple, that a pound of gold was sold for only one half its former value.

After this, Titus took also the Upper City with little effort, the Jews being weakened by famine, and discouraged by the destruction of their Temple. When Titus beheld the strength of the walls of the city, and the immense size of the stones in the foundations, and the formidable position of the towers, he exclaimed, in amazement,—

"We have certainly had God for our help in this war! And it was no other than God Who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any other of his machines, do towards overthrowing these towers?"

Then did Titus command that the city should be destroyed, and laid level with the ground, save only the three great towers, left as proof of the formidable battlements which had been conquered by him.

Thus fell the glorious Temple of Jehovah! It is a memorable fact that within eight months of each other the two national Temples of the Romans and the Jews were destroyed by fire. For eight months before the final ruin of the Temple on Mount Moriah, the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus was consumed in the raging conflagration on the Capitoline Hill, when the soldiers of Vitellius waged warfare with the adherents of Vespasian.

Now Titus gave orders that the Romans should kill none but those with arms, and should take the remainder of the
Jews alive; which command was only partially obeyed, for the Roman soldiers and auxiliaries went through the city and burst into every house, killing many, and taking many prisoners. And often, when they had broken into the house, they beheld only heaps of the dead, for multitudes had died of the famine; while in the streets also were piled the dead. Yet, for all these numbers already slain, or dead from starvation, there were yet carried captive by the Romans ninety-seven thousand souls.

Then a certain priest, when he had been assured by Titus that his life should be spared, delivered up some of the choice ornaments of the Temple, which had been seized by him in the confusion of the conflagration. Among them were two candlesticks of gold, like to those in the Holy Place, and also golden tables and cups, together with the Book of the Law, gorgeous curtains from the Temple, and costly garments of the priests,—tunics and richly embroidered girdles,—and many precious stones, also stores of purple and scarlet dyes of great value, together with abundance of cinnamon and other spices used in the making of the fragrant incense, and many other ornaments and rare objects from the Holy Place.

After this, Titus called together his entire army, and praised them greatly for their valor, and rewarded many who had performed notable deeds, bestowing upon them crowns and chains of gold, and spears with golden shafts, and ensigns of silver, and promoted many in rank, and gave to his soldiers a great feast.

Then Titus prepared to depart from the city with several legions, leaving the Tenth Legion to guard Jerusalem, and appointing one Fronto, his friend and officer, to complete the destruction of the city, and the gathering of the prisoners.
Inasmuch as Placidus was ordered by Titus to attend upon him, he failed to find his friend Aziel amid the captured Jews, and to interest himself in his behalf.

Now, as Placidus was passing through the Upper City, and when near the house on Zion's Hill, he beheld a young maiden struggling in the grasp of a rough Arab soldier, who had captured her. The Jewish girl was half dead with fright, and did implore most pitifully that she should not be separated from her sister, whom other bands had captured. Then was Placidus moved with compassion for the sorrowful maiden, and he offered the Arab a large price as the ransom of the girl. Whereupon the Arab, being more fond of gold than of a useless and troublesome slave, released the maiden as he received the coveted money. Thus Placidus became unwittingly the rescuer of Miriam, whom he now took under his especial care, knowing not who she was, but intending to take her to Rome, as an attendant for his mother and sister in the Cælian villa.

Meanwhile Jessica and Rachel had been seized by other ruffians; and being borne to the place where Fronto apportioned the captives as slaves to the Roman commanders, they fell to the share of a Syrian captain.

Then was Aziel also brought to Fronto, by a Roman who had captured him as he was fleeing from the burning Temple; and the Roman declared that Aziel was one of the rebel Jews, all of whom were condemned by Fronto to be slain. Then spoke up another Roman and said,—

"I did overhear this young man expostulating with John of Gischala, and importuning him to fight no longer against the Romans; wherefore I deem his life worth saving."

Whereupon Fronto was moved with admiration for so handsome a young man as Aziel, whose imposing form
and rare type made him to be noted among all the Jews; and, moreover, deeming that so knightly a figure would grace well the coming triumph of Titus in Rome, Fronto was disposed to save him, and thus accosted him,—

"Didst thou take arms against the Romans?"

"I fought only in defence of the Temple of Jehovah," replied Aziel, looking calmly in the face of him who held in his power the destiny of life or death; then, fearing he might be thought wanting in courage, he continued,—

"Think not I would not have fought the Romans, or any other enemy of my country, if I had deemed it to be my duty so to do. While my countrymen quarrelled amongst themselves in civil warfare, I withheld my sword, and counselled moderation; but when the Temple was menaced, I was willing to give my life in defence of the Holy House of God."

Then Fronto commanded that Aziel be placed among the young men chosen from the captives to grace the Triumph; and as for many of the Jews who were over seventeen years of age, Fronto ordered them to be put into bonds, and sent to labor in the Egyptian mines; thereby unconsciously fulfilling an ancient prediction against the Jews, that if they became obstinate in their wickedness, they should be sold again into Egypt.

Fronto also sent many thousands of the Jews into the Roman provinces, to be destroyed in the amphitheatres by wild beasts. And those who were under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves. As for the leaders of the rebels, John of Gischala, being compelled by hunger to surrender himself to the Romans, was kept alive and imprisoned by them for many years until his death. As for Simon, finding that he could not escape from the city through the caverns into which he had retreated, and
hoping to astonish the Romans, he clothed himself in a
white tunic and purple robe, and arose suddenly from the
earth, in the place where the Temple had stood. But the
Romans not being terrified at the apparition, as he had
hoped, he was captured and reserved among the prisoners
for the Triumph.

Thus was Jerusalem the Beautiful utterly destroyed,
and all her glory laid in the dust; and from the time of
David to this destruction of the Holy City were one thou-
sand one hundred and seventy-nine years. The Temple
fell in August, A. D. 70, on the same day of the month
when it had once before been demolished by the Assyrians;
and this final destruction occurred one thousand one hun-
dred and thirty years, seven months, and fifteen days
from its first foundation by Solomon, and five hundred
and thirty-nine years and forty-five days from its restora-
tion under Cyrus; while it was only in 64 A. D. that the
restoration of the Temple of Herod the Great was com-
pleted under Herod Agrippa II. So it had only stood in
its full glory for the short space of six years before its
final overthrow.

Oh, Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
The Beautiful, the Fair!
Thou wert Jehovah's Holy City!
The Beloved, the Rare!
Midst the Lilies of the Valley, and Rose of Sharon sweet;
How fair wert thou, Beloved Dove, how beautiful thy feet!

I am come into my garden fair,
My sister and my spouse!
I have gathered myrrh and spikenard rich,
And offered solemn vows.
O Daughter of Jerusalem, with eyes like stars of night!
Thou wert to me more glorious than aught within my sight!
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

White as snow-capped range of Lebanon,
Is Zion’s Daughter fair!
Where in Gilead, or in Hebron,
Can aught with her compare?
As she looketh forth in the morning, bright as the star of dawn,
As she smileth in the evening, radiant as the moon-lit lawn.

O fair Daughter of Jerusalem!
Enthroned amidst thy hills;
With thy gardens and thy fountains pure,
Thy zephyrs and thy rills!
And Siloam’s sacred waters, and Mount Olive’s sacred shade;
Thou wast, of all earth’s daughters, for great Israel’s glory made.

O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Thou liest in the dust!
There are ashes on thy sacred head!
Thy gold is turned to rust!
Mourn for Zion’s Daughter fallen! wail for her departed throne!
For she sitteth clothed in sackcloth, and with all her glory flown.
CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF VESPASIAN AND TITUS IN ROME. — JESSICA IN THE ARENA OF THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE.

And now we must follow Titus to Rome, and behold his magnificent Triumph.

Vespasian had been Emperor for nearly two years, and did decree that the Triumph of himself and his son Titus should be celebrated at the same time.

Then was Rome gay with garlands, and the streets were thronged with the populace gathered to behold the glory of their Emperor and his victorious son.

Vespasian and Titus, according to custom, spent the night before the grand ceremony at the Temple of Isis, guarded by the entire Roman army. As soon as the day dawned, Vespasian and Titus issued forth from the temple, clothed in royal garments of purple, and crowned with wreaths of laurel; and, escorted by the soldiers, came to the terraces of Octavia, where the Senate and knights and principal officials of Rome awaited them. A tribunal had been erected near the cloisters, and ivory chairs were placed upon it; and Vespasian and Titus, attired in their silken robes, being unarmed, did seat themselves upon the curule chairs of state, while the soldiery shouted their applause.

Then Vespasian made a signal for silence, and when peace reigned, he arose and covered his head with his mantle, and offered prayer, as did also Titus. Then Vespasian addressed the people, and bade the soldiers
departure to the splendid banquet which had been prepared for them; while Vespasian and Titus retired to the Gate of Triumphs, through which all such pompous shows were wont to pass. There, having taken food, and put on their gorgeous triumphal garments, they sacrificed to the gods, and then ascended their triumphal chariots; and the procession being formed, the gorgeous pageant marched through the theatres, that all the populace might view the splendors, the like of which had never before been witnessed; and thus passed on through the Forum to the Temple of Jupiter, which had been rebuilt on the Capitoline Hill.

And such was the dazzling magnificence of the scene, that it can scarcely be portrayed in language; for the richest treasures from all parts of the known earth were gathered there; and articles of rarest workmanship carved in the precious metals and in ivory, and adorned with glittering gems, and gold and silver, did appear so plenty as to cease to cause surprise, and the gorgeous array of matchless splendors did but demonstrate the wide dominion of the Romans, and the glory of their conquests.

There were to be seen the rarest of Babylonian tapestries, embroidered by the subtle art known only to that nation; and there were carried also crowns of gold, blazing with dazzling jewels, and images of the gods, wonderful for size and workmanship, formed either of gold or ivory, and other costly materials. The men also who bore on their shoulders these precious objects, were clothed in purple robes, interwoven with threads of gold, and wearing crowns of gold priceless in value. The long rows of captives were also attired in festive garments, which contemplated little with the sadness of their countenances. Among the captives walked Aziel, with kingly mien, head
erect, and flashing eye. So noble was his bearing, and so marked his beauty, that all beholders noted him, and wondered from whence he came.

There were likewise marvellous carriages, two or three stories high, borne along in the procession, and these were adorned with carpets of gold, draped with glowing hangings, and ornamented with strange devices in gold and ivory. On the sides of these amazing structures were mammoth pictures representing various scenes of war: here a burning temple; there a country laid waste by fire. The battles were portrayed with terrible vividness,—huge machines of war, armies entering besieged cities, bloody conflicts, horrible scenes of carnage, fleeing multitudes of men, women, and children, the torturings and crucifixions of captives, and other heart-rending incidents of grim and direful war. There were many other spoils of war; but most notable of all were the golden candlesticks and vessels of gold from the Temple at Jerusalem, and the table of gold weighing many talents, and the purple veils of the Holy Place, and the sacred Book of the Law.

After these spoils came many carrying images of Victory, made entirely of ivory and gold. Then rode on Vespasian in his gorgeous chariot and triumphal robes, Titus following, magnificently arrayed, together with his brother Domitian; and thus the glittering pageant passed through the Imperial City, amidst the shouts of the wondering populace.

Now when this imposing procession reached the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, it halted; for it was an ancient Roman custom that the triumphal spectacle should pause here, until word was brought to the general that the captured chief of his enemies was slain. So Simon, the son of Gioras, who had been led in the Triumph among the
prisoners, was taken to the steps leading down to the Mamertine Prison, and was there slain; which being known, the people set up a great shout for joy, and offered sacrifices to Jupiter.

After this Triumph Vespasian built a noble Temple to Peace, and adorned this fane with priceless statues and costly pictures gathered in his conquests. In this temple he placed the golden vessels and tables and candlesticks taken from the Temple at Jerusalem; but the purple veils of the Holy Place, and the Jews' sacred Book of the Law, he kept in his own royal palace.

There was to be a gladiatorial show in the amphitheatre in the Campus Martius. It was a year after the destruction of Jerusalem. Miriam was kindly treated in the house of Placidus, and was received by its inmates as one of the family, though, according to Roman law, as a prisoner of war, she was in truth a slave. But by no act nor word of Virgilia or Myrtilia was she made to feel that she was aught but an honored guest in their home.

She was indeed borne down with a hopeless grief, for of neither Jessica nor of Aziel had she heard any tidings since they were separated in the distribution of prisoners at the fall of Jerusalem, save when she had beheld Aziel walking before the gorgeous chariot of Titus in the triumphal procession. Even then the head of Aziel was proudly erect, and his eyes alight with unflinching courage, denoting that his heroic spirit was unquelled by the calamities which had fallen upon him. Since that time the fate of Aziel had been unknown to Miriam, she being aware only that he was a slave of the conqueror Titus.

Miriam had been prevailed upon by Placidus and Myrtilia to accompany them to this festival in the amphitheatre, and, led by some strange instinct, which after events explained, she had consented.
In the podium of the amphitheatre sat the Emperor Vespasian and his victorious son Titus, by whose side sat Queen Berenice and King Agrippa, whom Titus had brought to Rome. And so much was he in love with the handsome Berenice, that he fain would have married her, but that he feared the displeasure of the Romans, who would have thought it unseemly that one belonging to the conquered nation of the Jews should be raised to the proud position of Cæsar’s wife. So Titus made Berenice his favorite among the women in his household, and gave her the honor due an empress. Near the Imperial party were the Vestal Virgins, while Placidus and his ladies occupied seats among the Roman knights, who were arrayed in glittering armor, and their brilliant military togas were clasped with jewels.

Myrtilla, who appeared more often in public since the profligate Nero no longer sat on the throne of Rome, was attired in a Grecian dress of white and silver; and many eyes were turned in admiration, not only upon the beautiful Roman lady, but upon her companion, the lovely Jewess, whose scarlet mantle and white gauze veil only partially concealed her exquisite face and lithe and graceful figure. Her dark eyes were overshadowed by a pathetic sorrow; her sweet mouth rarely smiled, and then with an expression so pitifully sad that the smile was more touching to behold than tears.

Fierce had been the gladiatorial combats, and bravos rang upon the air; but Miriam saw naught of the exciting show, heard not the shouts of applause, and only raised her sad eyes when an exclamation from Placidus reached her ear.

"By Jupiter! a maiden! and so beautiful!" he cried.

Though Vespasian was not cruel, and sought not to per-
secute any, yet he could not entirely restrain the brutality encouraged and practised by his infamous predecessor, Nero; and now, unknown to the Emperor, some of the panderers of vice and crime in Rome had arranged a horrible spectacle for the diversion of the populace.

One of the Syrian captains who had fought with Titus in Judea, and hated the Jews with deadly hostility, had obtained a Jewish maiden as a part of his share in the spoils of war, and she had been his slave. Finding her resolute in a determination not to worship any god save only Jehovah, the Syrian captain had bethought him it would afford a goodly sight to Roman crowds, who gloated upon scenes of blood and cruelty, that this dauntless maiden should be forced to a public test of courage. She was too beautiful to sacrifice in secret. He would therefore add to the attraction of this great public festival by forcing her to face a tragic death, should her stubborn will still refuse obedience to his commands.

Therefore the test had been arranged for one of the scenes in the amphitheatre, as a surprise to Rome’s populace. And now, at a signal, the maiden was led forth into the centre of the arena by brutal bands of Lanistæ, while a murmur of astonishment from the assembled multitudes reached the ear of Miriam. Lifting her eyes, she gave one glance into the arena, and with a wail of anguish, cried, “Jessica!” and fell into a swoon.

Yes, it was Jessica, standing unmoved in the midst of that hostile crowd, lifting her head haughtily towards the Emperor, as though she would defy all Rome by her own imperious will.

“Wilt thou renounce thy God, and worship Jupiter?” she was asked by a Roman soldier, who guarded her.

“Nay, never!” answered Jessica, with calm courage.
Then, glancing at the Emperor, whom she regarded as akin to Nero, and of the same brutal character, she proudly said,—

"Never will I bow to any God save only to the Great Jehovah, God of my people Israel, and to His Son, the Christ, Whom now I recognize as the Messiah of the world."

"Throw her to the hungry lions!" yelled the bands of brutal murderers selected for this bloody work. As they started toward her she stood with eye undaunted, head erect, and holding her manacled hands crossed before her beating heart. Then Placidus sprang from his seat, crying,—

"Hold, there! In the name of the Emperor I demand a hearing!" and, rushing to Vespasian and Titus, he exclaimed,—

"Surely great Cæsar knoweth naught of this nefarious action! Command that the maiden be sold to me! I will pay one thousand denarii to the man who owns this captive Jewess; and as that is the price of a brawny gladiator, it will, forsooth, suffice to him in exchange for a helpless maiden."

"That were indeed well spoken, father!" said Titus; "and moreover this Placidus, thou rememberest, was thy brave tribune, and my most worthy soldier in the war in Palestine, and thus may rightfully claim from us this favor, which, in truth, is only humane justice."

"So be it!" said the Emperor; and forthwith a herald announced that by word of the Emperor the maiden was to be delivered to the Roman soldier Placidus, who would straightway generously indemnify her loss to her present owner by one thousand denarii, which, by the command of the Emperor, should be received as full ransom for the Jewish captive.
Exciting gladiatorial combats being then commenced in the arena, the multitudes quickly forgot the late scene, and turned with zest to the contest between two famous wrestlers. Myrtilla and her friends left the arena.

Miriam had now recovered consciousness, and Myrtilla, with tender sympathy, related to her the present fate of her sister, and they hastened from the public assembly, and betook themselves to one of the side porticoes, where Miriam beheld brave Jessica, relieved of her cruel chains. The sisters embraced with tears and fond words of affection; and Placidus, Roman soldier though he was, did not deem it unmanly to evince his sympathy, while Myrtilla's tear-dimmed eyes looked lovingly upon the Jewish maidens. Placidus quickly placed his charges in closed litters, and they were speedily carried to the Cælian villa.

Jessica, knowing not yet who her benefactor was, but realizing only that she was freed from chains, and was in the arms of her long-lost sister, lay in the palanquin, too weak for a time to speak, as the reaction of her strained nerves came upon her. Arrived at the atrium of the villa, she allowed herself to be lifted out in silence and laid upon a divan in the gorgeous hall.

When she opened her eyes, her own Miriam stood before her, and by her side a Roman lady and a handsome soldier, who to the weary girl seemed naught but strangers.

"Where am I, Miriam?" she faintly whispered.

"Safe, Jessica, beloved! In the home of Placidus, the friend of Aziel, thou rememberest."

"Wherefore are we here?" she weakly asked. "Where are my brutal masters?" she added, with a shudder.

"Thou art free from them forever, Jessica, my sister!"

"How knowest thou they will not seek me here as their slave, and capture me again?"
"Because thy freedom from them was obtained by command of the Emperor," said Miriam, laying her hand with loving touch upon the shining head.

"Ah, I am, then, the Emperor's slave!" cried Jessica, rising, with anger in her eyes, and contempt upon her lips, knowing naught of Emperors but the awful rumors she had heard of Nero's infamy.

"Nay, Jessica, beloved!" rejoined Miriam; "thou dost now belong to Placidus, who obtained thy freedom by paying thy ransom." She would not say that Placidus had purchased her.

Jessica now sat up and pushed the golden hair back from her deep blue eyes, and gazed long and piercingly at the Roman soldier, standing there before her in an attitude of friendly pity. And well might the handsome Placidus have appeared charming in the eyes of a less defiant maiden, as he leaned in manly pose against one of the marble columns of the atrium. He was clad in an armor of glittering links of flexible gold, his shining helmet was surmounted by the image of an eagle, skilfully wrought in that same metal, while a full plaited tunic of white wool fell beneath his coat-of-mail, revealing the finely shaped limbs below the knee, down to the well-turned ankle, where the straps of his sandalled boots were fastened with golden buckles. On one shoulder was draped a red mantle bordered with threads of gold, and on his left side hung a jewelled scabbard containing a short sword. His hair and eyes were black, the former clustering in short thick curls around his broad, full brow, the latter, piercing as an eagle's, undaunted by sight of danger, as the eye of that proud bird when flying towards the blaze of the noon-day sun. His skin, touched by the breath of southern winds, was olive in its tint; but the
shade was pale, not dark, and was like unto ivory when time has mellowed it to creamy richness. His arms were bare to the shoulder, as became a Roman, who, like the Greek of those days, scorned a tunic covering limbs or arms as a sign effeminate; and in those brawny arms the muscles swelled like whip-cords, and in that valiant, brave right hand the soldier's sword would be wielded fearlessly in any cause his noble nature should deem worth his patriotic devotion. Every inch a gallant Roman soldier, he stood there with his piercing gaze softened to pity as his eyes rested upon Jessica.

"So I am thy slave!" she slowly said, in tones of half-concealed dignity and pride, gazing at the young man with a glance which riveted his eyes upon her face.

"Nay, nay, not my slave!" he interposed, while a hot blush of shame flushed his handsome face; but she, noting not his interruption, continued,—

"Verily, Aziel said Placidus was a true friend, and I think him right. I thank thee for my life, preserved by thee! But know thou," she continued, with fire deepening the blue of her eyes, and the blood flowing from her heroic heart to her soft, round cheeks, "even for Placidus, I will not bow the knee to Jupiter!"

The soldier gazed spell-bound at the maiden; blue eyes and black sought each the depths of the other's soul, and Placidus thrilled before the earnest gaze which seemed to read his very thoughts. He had deemed his heart was touched by Miriam, and had battled with himself between his love for his friend Aziel, and the fascination which Miriam exercised over him, when he had reluctantly acknowledged to himself a growing conviction that Miriam's heart had been given to Aziel, though no betrothal existed between them. But now one glance from
the true eyes of Jessica had thrilled his being as had never woman's presence before, and this discovery, which came to him as a lightning's flash, made his position as master to slave all the more embarrassing and revolting to his high sense of honor.

The girl still looked at him with unabashed steadfastness, betokening no unmaidenly boldness, but the inflexible will of an unconquered spirit, who would test well the nature of her new captor. Her scrutiny ending with a seemingly favorable result, she said,—

"Aziel did describe thee well." And with a touch of her old sportiveness, added,—

"I told him I was glad thou wert a dark man, and not one of the golden curls, and I am still content. I could not so well have obeyed one so like myself; Aziel and I always contended, and between slave and master such contentions cannot prevail."

"Still dwelling on that hated slavery!" thought Placidus, while Miriam came to his relief by saying,—

"Jessica dear, I too am the slave of this noble Roman soldier, taken his captive in the war; but among these tender friends I know naught of slavery."

"I am glad indeed, my sister!" cried Jessica, lifting her proud head with indignant horror at past memories. "Thanks be to Jehovah! Thou hast not had such lessons in slavery as have been meted out to me since last we parted at the gates of the fallen Jerusalem. Thou rememberest when we were torn asunder by those brutal Roman soldiers, old Rachel clung to me, and so was apportioned to the captain, to whose share of spoils of war I fell. Then were we taken to Cæsarea, and among the multitudes of captive Jews slaughtered in the amphitheatres of Cæsarea and Berytus, in honor of the victory of Titus, and
the birthdays of his father and brother, was old Rachel, who was torn by wild beasts before my very eyes, as a spectacle well pleasing to the Roman brutes who gloated in such scenes of bloodshed. Forgive me!” she said to Placidus and Myrtilla; “I have learned that some Romans are most noble, and worthy of high regard; but at that time my knowledge of Romans was only of my captors. I was not slain in Cæsarea, because my master reserved me for a Roman spectacle such as thou hast witnessed to-day.”

Miriam and Myrtilla were sobbing aloud in sympathy with Jessica as she told her dreadful story; and Miriam could only cling to her, and kiss the poor thin hands she held in hers, and smooth the long wavy locks, which had lost none of their shining lustre, though the face of their owner had grown less round and dimpled through those months of anguish of suffering. But the fair countenance had lost none of its witchery, and was more exquisite than ever in its martyr-like purity.

“Where is Aziel, knowest thou?” she inquired of Placidus, as she returned her sister’s caresses.

“I have learned but to-day,” responded Placidus, “that Aziel is among those Jewish slaves set to work by the Emperor’s orders to erect the great Coliseum, which Vespasian is building in honor of his triumph over Jerusalem.”

“Aziel a slave! Toiling in the gangs of manacled Jews in the making of bricks and the cutting of stones for the Emperor’s triumph, and thou his friend?” exclaimed Jessica, her eyes lighting with an angry flash. “I myself will go to this Emperor, and give myself as his slave in place of Aziel; though my hands cannot make brick, peradventure my woman’s face may give me a hearing,
and the Emperor may be willing to add to his captive maidens, and release one of his Jewish laborers."

A quick pang of jealousy pierced the heart of Placidus, as he answered, —

"Lovest thou this Aziel so well?"

At this Jessica gave him a glance as keen as the light reflected from a blade of burnished steel, as she haughtily replied, —

"'Tis for Miriam, my sister, I would free Aziel; it matters not what becomes of me, so they may be united;" and the cold light faded from her eyes, and was replaced by a warm glow of love as she rested them upon Miriam. Then the warmth faded, and a tear dimmed their brightness as she added, —

"Forgive me; I forgot I was not my own to give away, even to Rome's Emperor."

"The girl gives me the anguish of Tantalus!" muttered Placidus, under his breath; then aloud, —

"Be sure, fair Jessica,—so may I peradventure call thee?" he added deprecatingly, in tones rather those of a suitor to a maiden than a master to his slave—"verily, I have employed already all measures possible to secure the freedom of Aziel. Think me not so base a friend," he continued, "as to suppose that one hour elapsed after I learned the bitter news, ere I sought the presence of the Emperor in behalf of my Jewish comrade, and petitioned, with many offers of indemnity, that Aziel be released from such servile bondage and laborious toil. Thus far I have been unsuccessful, for Vespasian declares that Aziel has proved himself to be the most valuable of all his Jewish captives, being a cunning workman in metals, and withal strong of arm, and faithful in discharge of duties imposed upon him."
Noting the anguish depicted in the face of Miriam by these tidings regarding Aziel, of whose fate she had been hitherto ignorant, Placidus was convinced that Miriam, not Jessica, was the beloved one of his friend Aziel; and wondering much to himself at the strange and unexplained relief such knowledge had brought to his own heart, he straightway comforted the afflicted sisters, and promised to leave no effort untried for the securing of the speedy release of Aziel, in which endeavor the tender Myrtilla ably seconded him, as she reassured Miriam and Jessica with fond words of sympathy. The stately Virgilia entering the atrium at this moment, and being informed by her daughter regarding the Jewish maiden, she clasped Jessica to her heart, exclaiming,—

"Thou poor afflicted child, thy troubles are ended! Let me be a mother to thee!"

And Jessica lifted her shining head from the arms of the noble lady and glanced archly at Placidus, while her blue eyes were brimming with tears of joy, and the smiles were contesting for victory on the quivering lips; and from him she turned to her sister Miriam, flashing forth her old childish sportiveness, which no sorrow could obliterate as long as her imperious will was unbroken, as she artlessly cried,—

"And this you call slavery, Miriam! Come, teach me how to obey my new master!" and with a darting glance at Placidus, she was conducted by her sister and Myrtilla to their own more secluded apartments.

"What a lovely child!" said Virgilia.

"What a bewitching maiden!" thought Placidus to himself, as he proceeded to give to his mother an account of the strange and tragic events of the day.
CHAPTER XXIV.

DAUGHTERS OF ROME AND JERUSALEM.

In the porticoed nymphaeum of the Cælian villa sat the four daughters of Rome and Jerusalem, now all sisters in Christian faith: Virgilia and Myrtilla, typical of the purified golden grains of truth, gathered from the dross of false beliefs, purged from alloy by the fires of Christian faith and love; Miriam and Jessica, exemplifying the realized faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who saw but the fore-shadowings of those blessed realities which had already come to pass, when the promised Messiah of the Old Dispensation blossomed in the effulgent glory of the Redemptive Mission of the Risen Christ.

"I had hoped to have seen thy beautiful Jerusalem ere it was destroyed," said Virgilia to Miriam; "I have longed much to follow in the sacred footsteps of the Christ along the shore of Galilee, by the banks of the Jordan, and through the streets of Jerusalem. I deem it a great privilege to have been permitted to have gazed upon the buildings which overshadowed His sacred form as He walked through the Holy City, and to have rested beneath the shade of those olive-trees which had bent over His Divine head."

"Thou art right," responded Miriam. "I prize much my recollections of those sacred places; but none again will ever enjoy a like privilege, for, during the sieve of the city, Vespasian and Titus cut down all the sacred trees to
construct their war machines, so that not one tree was left standing in the city. Even Jericho's palms were demolished, and Jordan's banks laid bare. Naught but the sky, the water, and the hills of Palestine now remain as Jesus saw them. Even the sacred olives of Gethsemane were turned into the battering-rams of the Roman army, whereby to break down the walls of the immortal city."

"Knewest thou any in Jerusalem who had seen and talked with the Christ?" inquired Myrtilla.

"Yes; my old nurse, Rachel, lived at Bethany, near the home of Mary and Lazarus, when a child; and she had often beheld the Christ when a young girl, and heard many of His matchless words."

"She was wont to tell me wondrous stories," interjected Jessica. "For hours she would sit and weave the flax, and talk of scenes in Bethany, and recount the many marvellous miracles, as told to her by those who saw the deeds performed by Jesus in the towns and villages of Palestine."

"Did they accord with what Matthew and Luke relate in their precious scrolls, treasured so greatly by the scattered and persecuted Christian churches?"

"They were, in truth, the same," replied Jessica; "only, as Rachel told the stories, they were more in detail, such as a simple woman's heart would gather, and made doubly impressive by the divine face, the thrilling voice, and pitying, loving eyes of the Christ Himself. Thus was Rachel a witness of His kindly deeds, a listener to the heavenly music of His tones, as he uttered some high message from the Father's kingdom, or spoke comforting words to sorrowing hearts, or touched with an angelic caress the head of some young child, drawn to His knee by wondering amazement and irresistible attraction."
"Canst thou tell us aught of those things thy Rachel spoke to thee?" questioned Virgilia. "Though I have read the scrolls, I never weary of their wondrous story, and fain would hear again the incidents; for much I hunger to catch some other little word which, peradventure, those disciples thought not of mighty moment, when they had so many deeds of love and words of tenderness to choose from, but which nevertheless would add much blessing to a woman's heart."

"I will recount some that come to me," said Jessica, "and Miriam can prompt me if I go astray, or have failed to catch the full import of the incident."

"How looked the Christ? Did Rachel tell thee that?" asked Myrtilla.

"Now and anon she gave me glimpses of His marvellous appearance: so like to man, so different from all men; so truly similar to ourselves as a human being, yet so dissimilar by all the awesome stretch between our features and frames, marred by our own sins and those of our imperfect ancestors, and His pure, spotless nature, which, though human, subject to our weaknesses, yet, never sinning, left not slightest stain upon that human nature which He bore, and glorified by wearing it thus sinlessly. From what old Rachel said, I gather that the Christ was royal and imposing in His presence, like some Godlike One, yet with such gentleness as should draw a veil over His too great awesomeness. Thus did the Divine Majesty of the God-Man, curtained by the veil of mortal flesh, flash forth athwart the blue twin lakes of His deep eyes, otherwise mildly hyacinthine in their tint, like the blue flax flowers of Palestine."

"His eyes were blue then, and not black, as are the eyes of most of those belonging to thy race of Jews? though
I note with wonder the color of thine eyes, and those of Aziel."

"Jessica likes not her blue eyes," said Miriam; "but sometimes those descending in certain lines, and born in northern climes,—for Jews are scattered in many lands, thou knowest,—some few amongst our people have the blue-gray and violet eyes."

"Why thinkest thou the eyes of Christ were azure in their tint?" asked Virgilia of Miriam.

"Such is the received report," she answered. "David was fair and of a ruddy countenance, and Mary, the mother of Christ, was descended from the House of David; moreover, Solomon is reported to have had hair with the gold in it, and eyes which reflected the blue sky. And then," she continued, "methinks the reason why the Christ should have those gold-brown locks, and eyes like Heaven's truth, was that He should appear a most rare type midst Jewish swarthy men, thus marking Him as matchless amongst the sons of that peculiar people, whose great heritage it was to give the human mother to the Babe Divine."

"How dressed the Christ?" inquired Myrtilla of Miriam.

"As Jesus was of lowly earthly birth, he wore not the fine linen and sumptuous apparel of those who live in king's houses," said Miriam; "neither did he wear the long flowing robe of the scribes and Pharisees. As the turban was used alike by rich and poor, Rachel described Him as wearing a white turban, binding back his flowing locks of gold, which hung in waving half curled ringlets; hair holding in its gold a deeper tint and warmer glow, like shell of freshly-fallen chestnut, dropped from the open burr; not shading on the auburn, but with brown maroon shadows midst the locks, lighting to gold where the sunbeams kissed the waving masses."
"Rachel said never did such light beam forth from human countenance," remarked Jessica. "Not only was it the beauty of perfect features, and godlike mould of brow; mouth pencilled with lines of deathless love; nostrils delicate of arch; brows and lashes darker in tint than hair and beard, yet nowise losing all their glistening gold; lips mobile as a woman's, resolute as a conqueror's, gentle as a mother's, pure as an angel's; cheeks somewhat pale from laborious toil in doing good, — but over every feature, and glowing in his eyes, there shone a light divine and awesome, and above His head one seemed to see a shining circle, as though Heaven's rays of glory crowned His kingly brow."

"What color was His robe?" questioned Virgilia.

"His tunic, the vesture underneath, was woven without seam, and therefore more valuable than the usual chaluk of white linen," answered Jessica. "Rachel thought it was, perchance, a present from some of the women who had become His disciples, and 'ministered to Him of their substance.' Over this under garment He wore the talith, loose and flowing. This mantle was often white; but as in the Transfiguration we are told by Mark 'that His raiment became shining exceeding white as snow,' it is thought the color was not white before. It was not red, for that was the military color. When Rachel saw the Christ, His mantle was a deep blue, fringed at the four corners by the ġîq'îth, according to Jewish law and custom. Sometimes His mantle may have been white with brown stripes, which was the usual talith of the poor. He wore shoes or sandals on His feet, for John the Baptist says of Him, 'There cometh One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.' Around His loins He wore a girdle of linen or
of skin; and when walking He carried a staff in His hand."

"What of His voice?" asked Myrtilla.

"Rachel said His voice was of all sounds most marvelous to hear," said Jessica; "like unto a mother's for loving tenderness, like unto a god's for commanding authority."

"What was the manner of the Christ?" inquired Virgilia.

"He was gracious and gentle to all; as courteous to the poorest beggar as to the high born; careful of the smallest and weakest of God's creatures,—for He would step aside to give way to the humblest worm or ant lest He should harm them; nor would He tread on the tiniest floweret growing in His pathway, and would often stop to lift a birdling fallen from the nest, or give a drop of water to a fainting blossom, or bind up a broken tendril of a vine. Rachel said it seemed to her the lilies always bloomed with greater beauty in His presence, and the birds twittering in the branches would break out in rapturous song at His approach, and animals fawned at His feet, and appeared endeavoring to show Him reverence."

"How spake He to the multitudes who thronged Him?"

"Like as a loving Father to His children, anxious to help them, and soothe their sorrows, and comfort them, and with untiring patience teach them, and lead them to love the right and true. He was considerate of their ignorance, and spoke in simple words, drawing pictures from the humble life around them, and from their homely duties, and from their most familiar objects, so that even a child could understand His loving message. But yet, so profound was His knowledge of all things, that the most learned and haughty scribes and Pharisees, who prided
themselves upon their keen intellects, could never confound Him, but He would put them all to shame with the marvellous depths and skill of His replies, until, amazed, they would exclaim, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?'"

"I have here upon this leaf of ivory," said Miriam, "a description of the Christ, written by a Latin historian in the days of Tiberius Cæsar. When Aziel was in Rome, before the fall of Jerusalem, he found in one of the libraries a valuable piece of parchment, upon which these words were written. He copied them, and one day I borrowed his tablets and wrote the description of the Nazarene upon this ivory leaf. I read it to Rachel, and she said it was a truthful picture of the Christ. It is as follows:—

"'News to the Senate of Rome, concerning JESUS CHRIST, in the days of Tiberius Cæsar the Emperour, as the governours of sundry provinces under the Senate and people of Rome, used to advertise the Senate of such news as chanced in diverse countries.

"'Publius Lentulus, being at that time president in Judea, wrote an epistle to the Senate and people of Rome, the words whereof were these:—

"'There appeared in these our days a man of great Virtue, named JESUS CHRIST, who is yet living amongst us, and of the Gentiles is accepted for a Prophet of Truth, but his own disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both love and fear; his hair of the colour of philbert full ripe, and plain almost down to his ears; but from the ears downward somewhat curled, and more orient of colour, waving on his shoulders.
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

In the midst of his head goeth a seam or partition of his hair, after the manner of the Nazarites; his forehead, very plain and smooth; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a comely red; his nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his beard somewhat thick, agreeable in colour to the hair of his head, not of any great length, in the midst of an innocent and mature look; his eyes blue-grey, clear and quick. In reproving, he is terrible; in admonishing, courteous and fair-spoken; pleasant in speech, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. In proportion of body, well-shaped and straight; his hands and arms right, and delectable to behold; in speaking very temperate, modest, and wise. A man for singular beauty surpassing the children of men."

"This description was written before the crucifixion of Christ," continued Miriam, "and is said to be the only authentic account in history of the appearance of Jesus Christ."

"Did Rachel behold the Christ when He raised the dead?" asked Virgilia.

"She stood by the tomb of Lazarus when the Master called him from the grave to life," answered Jessica.

"I have read in a Christian scroll," said Myrtilla, "that 'Christ is not the influence of a memory only, but Christ is the power of an abiding presence. The best proof of the Divinity of Christ is the divinity which Christ puts in a man. Living faith is the acceptance of the love of God; no matter about ourselves; no matter about our fitness, but acceptance of the perfect love of God which covers us.'"

"And this acceptance of the love of God," rejoined Virgilia, "is as real, as much a fact, as the acceptance of
the love of our earthly friend. 'All friendship, all love, human and Divine, is spiritual;' but we do not therefore call earthly love only theory. 'God clothes His great truths in our weak human speech; and this is Inspiration. God would educate men, and so through centuries of time He deals with nations, moulding them to His plan; and this is History.' If we search for truth through Christ, we simply cannot fail to find it. 'If thy son ask bread, will ye give him a stone?' the Christ said to His disciples, as it is written in Luke's Gospel scroll; and if we ask light and truth from our Heavenly Father, will He give us a lie? Verily, if we doubt God's word, we have simply to doubt everything; and if we doubt the world beyond, we might just as well shut ourselves up in a cave, and doubt the light and the sun, and the trees and the flowers, and the winds and the waves."

"But we have seen and felt these," interjected Myrtilla. "But you would never have known of them if you had always been shut up in a cave," responded Virgilia; "and those who will shut themselves up in the dreary cave of doubt will never know the reality of spiritual things. The infant has eyes and ears, and senses of touch and taste, and yet how little he knows of the facts of his existence. And if he would never learn to exercise any of his faculties, of what value would all the facts be, so far as he was concerned? We have spiritual eyes and ears and faculties; but those who shut their eyes, and close their ears, and refuse to use their spiritual faculties, are as unconscious as the infant of the spiritual realities which shine with heavenly radiance in their pathway. Unless God's greatest work—man—is an utter failure!" continued Virgilia, with deepening emotion; "unless this world is a myth, like Jupiter, and we are but phantoms, like the legends of
the Grecian poets; unless destruction holds the helm of
the ship of life, and chaos is the master of the universe,
as the Stoics teach,—then as certain as that God reigns,
as certain as that naught that He has created has failed
of the purpose intended by its Creator, just so certainly
will the Christian find in the beyond the realization of
those powers of soul and spirit, of which he is conscious
here, but which, if this world were all, would be but a
cheat and a delusion; and man, of all God’s creation,
would be the most terrible, the most awful, failure.”

“No wonder the heathen are in despair,” said Miriam;
“no wonder that their pagan philosophies offer them only
the terrible alternative of suicide and annihilation, when
the burdens of this life grow too great to be borne; without
God, the Jehovah, and Christ, the Messiah, what hope
have they either in this world or in the beyond?”

“By those very laws of God, which work out the facts
of science here,” rejoined Virgilia, “by still higher laws
of God, which are none the less facts, and not any more
theories, will the Christian fulfil his glorious destiny in
the life beyond, even though he may pass through the fiery
flames of a martyr’s death.”

“The ‘many mansions’ for the Christian,” averred
Miriam, with sparkling eyes and exultant voice, “are as
sure by the word of Jehovah as the rocks are facts, created
also by the word and power of the same God. Thanks be
to Elohim-Jehovah, that it was the word of the God-Man
which declared the reality of the ‘many mansions;’ not
word of prophet, apostle, priest, nor king. ‘If it were not
so, I would have told you,’ is a challenge to all doubt, to
all unbelief. We simply must believe it if we know what
it is to believe anything. If it is not true, then God would
belie His own Word, and therefore would cease to be God.
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

And so, the ‘many mansions’ for the believers in the Christ are surer than the sun and moon and stars,—surer than the earth beneath our feet, and the sky above our heads; for all these things may pass away, but Jehovah’s word can never fail!"

“And though the glorious Temple is no more,” exclaimed Virgilia, “and the Holy City is destroyed, the Cross is uplifted, and Calvary has become the Holy of Holies.”

A Christian Jew in Rome thus states it in an impressive hymn:

THE TEMPLE AND THE CROSS.

On Mount Moriah’s radiant brow,
The Temple gleamed resplendent;
Before this fane all nations bow,
Awed by its strange enchantment.

No Grecian famous Parthenon,
Can claim an equal glory;
No Roman pagan Pantheon,
Boasts such a wondrous story!

Matchless midst all the shrines of earth,
The Holy of Holies stood;
Unseen by those of mortal birth,
Save one from the High Priesthood,

Who, once each year, in sacrifice
Might that sacred veil uplift;
Lighting the incense which should rise
As Israel’s prayerful gift.

Most sacred of all things on earth,
That glorious Temple glowed;
Till a rich gift of greater worth,
Was by God on man bestowed.
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

A Cross upraised on Calvary,
Towers high above that shrine;
For on the Cross there hangeth One,
The God-Man The Christ Divine!

That Temple, all so glorious,
Lies shattered in the dust!
That Cross, proudly victorious,
Is the shrine of all the Just!

When on Calvary, they lifted
The Christ on that Cross of shame;
They wot not it would be gifted
With such everlasting fame.

When the Veil before the Holies,
Was by unseen fingers torn;
Then the Cross became the Temple!
And Moriah's brow was shorn!

As the shadows of twilight deepened, and the evening star hung like a tear of joy glistening in heaven's blue, and the air seemed hushed, as though listening to catch the voice of God, those four Christian women sat silent for a time, each heart communing with itself, black and blue eyes lifted with reverent gaze towards the delicately tinted clouds, still flushed from the sun's last kiss.

For on each brow glowed the star of Faith, life's greatest gift to woman.
CHAPTER XXV.

QUEEN BERENICE AND PLACIDUS.

In the Palace of the Cæsars Queen Berenice held high court, and received imperial honors as the favorite of Titus, who shared with his father, Vespasian, in the homage accorded by the Roman people to the present and future emperors of Rome. Placidus, as Tribune of Titus, was frequently summoned to the Imperial Palace on military affairs. Berenice had not forgotten the handsome soldier. The remembrance of his studied coldness in Cæsarea-Philippi piqued her woman's vanity, and she, who ruled kings and emperors, determined to bring this haughty tribune to her feet, even though she must condescend to a seeming deference to a subject in so doing.

Had wounded vanity alone been the motive of her purpose, she would have plotted his disgrace by whatsoever method it might be swiftest accomplished; but while planning to ensnare him by her coquettish wiles, she herself had been made Love's slave, and for the first time her haughty heart bowed as a suppliant, where her imperial rank would otherwise have asserted her prerogative of royal command.

Since Berenice's residence in the palace of Titus in Rome, she had often been present when Titus held audience with Placidus on affairs of State, and she had condescended to offer to his mother and sister many marked attentions, which would have flattered women of less
exalted character. But Roman courts were distasteful to Virgilia and Myrtilla, and beyond their necessary compliance with court etiquette, they failed to avail themselves of the royal patronage of Queen Berenice.

Berenice had observed Miriam with Placidus and Myrtilla, when the presence of Jessica in the arena of the amphitheatre of the Campus Martius occasioned such horrified surprise. Nor had she failed to note the surpassing beauty of the Jewish maiden saved by Placidus from the awful fate of martyrdom.

It was the hour of sunset. Berenice, in all the royal state of a Roman Empress, was reclining upon a gorgeous divan in the peristyle, or courtyard, of the Palace of Titus. This peristyle, open to the glowing Italian sky, was surrounded with arcades ornamented with statues, while flowers bloomed in costly crystal vases, birds caroled amidst the blossoming shrubs, fountains cooled the air with opal-tinted sprays of delicious perfumes; crimson silk awnings threw a rosy light over the white marble columns, while the pavement of Oriental alabaster was set with star-mosaics of lapis-lazuli and chrysolite.

Titus had given audience to Placidus in the Basilica beyond, and had withdrawn for his evening ceremonies into the lararium, or private chapel, for the worship of such imperial dead as had received the honor of being deified.

Placidus meanwhile passed through the tablinum, or family picture-gallery of the Cæsars, where huge statues of porphyry and basalt lined the walls.

Placidus had improved this opportunity of gaining the ear of Titus to plead in behalf of Aziel, then toiling as a Jewish slave amidst the thousands employed in erecting the Coliseum. Titus had listened favorably to the appeal
of his tribune, who had offered to substitute two of his own slaves in the place of Aziel, and to pay a thousand denarii as ransom for his friend.

Berenice, who played the imperial empress right royally over the susceptible Titus, had learned by experience that neither magnificent pomp nor dazzling beauty could allure the upright Placidus.

As she reclined upon her gorgeous divan, surrounded by her attendant maidens, her woman's heart quickened its beating at sight of Placidus approaching by way of the portrait gallery. She determined that he should not pass through the colonnaded portico without his usual cold obeisance to her rank and imperial prestige, though his demeanor always piqued her impulsive nature; for by his very studied courtliness he stabbed to the quick her selfish vanity. For his manner was so dignified and distant that it betokened unmistakably that it was only to the royal rank he bowed, as a good Roman subject, not to the woman. It was merely military etiquette that constrained his obeisance, not subjection to her woman's charms and fascinations. To make this man bend the lover's knee at her feet had become her absorbing thought.

Now, perchance, an opportunity had arrived to carry out her purpose. She had learned of the object of his visit to Titus, and she thereupon determined that she would take advantage of his interest in his friend Aziel to make her power felt. What Berenice willed Titus was usually ready to grant. She would espouse the cause of Aziel. Peradventure this kindly condescension on her part might win the gratitude, and later the love, of Placidus. She had hitherto lacked opportunity to test her fascinating wiles upon him.

This intervention in behalf of the Jewish slave would
bring the Roman soldier to her presence on a plausible pretext, and she doubted not that her vaunted beauty would cast its usual spell over this man, as it had never failed before to assert its powerful sway.

Berenice hastily despatched a maiden after the departing Placidus, with the message that the queen summoned him to her presence. She awaited his approach with strange flutterings of her heart, which awakened in her commingled emotions of surprised delight, that she could yet experience such thrills of hitherto unknown joy, and also a bitter self-reproach, that she, a queen, must acknowledge herself vanquished by a man who scorned her proffered advances.

But love ruled, and the woman — not the queen — reigned sovereign of that hour. Aye, more, the queen must play the part of servant to her woman’s heart; for as she knew her rank would forbid all approaches from one in lower station, her royal prerogative should even be made the slave of love, and as a queen, she would sue for what her woman’s heart desired. As queen, she would break down the barriers, which, as woman, she would otherwise have been forced to wait for other agencies to level.

As the handsome tribune, summoned thither by her messenger, paused before her, awaiting in silence her command, she gazed into his eyes with impelling allurement, which had never before failed to work a potent charm; but the dark eyes of the noble Placidus looked with calm coldness upon her royal beauty, which stung her so deeply that for a moment she trembled, shaken by the wild tumult of emotions waging bitter warfare in her heart between her pride and her love. Pride conquered for a moment, and with queenly hauteur she said, —

“Roman, knowest thou not that the fate, not only of thy friend, but thine own fate also, lies in my hands? With Titus my imperial wishes are law. Beware!”
The soldier bowed, still silent; but his manly dignity was more imposing than kingly crown and royal sceptre. Berenice the woman recognized and admired his regal bearing; Berenice the queen resented it, and hated the subject who dared to ignore her imperial sway. But the woman conquered, and Berenice spake once again with tones of thrilling cadence,—

"I will free thy friend Aziel;" and as Placidus looked up with grateful glance, she added,—

"Nay, more, O Roman; thou hast taught a queen how to admire a noble man; and for love of worthy men, queens have relinquished even royal rank, and have listened to the promptings of a woman's heart. How much wouldst thou relinquish for love, Placidus?"

"All but honor, Queen Berenice; for love is next to honor in the estimation of a Roman soldier."

"And what if love should give thee higher honor, Placidus?"

"If love and honor go together, 'tis well," replied the soldier.

"And would it not be honor to be beloved by a queen, O Roman soldier?—one who could make thee a Roman general, or place thee next to Cæsar himself in rank and power, even as I will do for thee if thou—"

"Beware, O queen! I am the tribune of noble Titus; I plot not even with his favorites!" exclaimed Placidus, with flashing eyes.

"Perchance it is that Jewish maiden slave thou wast so anxious to ransom who has enslaved your boasted Roman honor," sneered Berenice.

But she was quelled by the scornful contempt of the proud Roman's glance; for it was not the slight of queen to subject that he so indigantly resented, but the insult
of woman to woman. And now he rose in kingly majesty, and voiced the imperial honor innate in every noble nature, irrespective of rank or power; and his words were as dagger-thrusts to her heart, as he cried,—

"Beware, O queen, how thou dost cast a stain upon a woman's name!—and, moreover, on one so pure, with whom lives like thine compare not favorably in point of truth and honor! I will acknowledge to thee, that if I can gain the love of that pure soul, I shall esteem it greater boon than imperial favor; for royal womanhood ranks higher than queenly title. A Roman knight does not tarnish his cherished honor when such a royal woman has gained his heart's allegiance!"

Berenice's face paled and flushed with alternate anger and shame. In spite of her intense indignation, the emotion uppermost in her heart was one of supreme regret that she had failed to merit the allegiance of so noble a nature, and this regret was tinged with envy of the Jewish slave girl, whose exalted character had inspired such stanch devotion.

Placidus had boldly defied her displeasure, knowing full well the risk he incurred. But Berenice determined to show him that, though his political prospects might be irretrievably marred by her hostile influence, should she so resolve, she would merit his future respect by exercising her royal prestige in his favor. Had she loved him less, she would have sought the swiftest means for his downfall; had he been less noble, he would not have called forth her better nature.

"Thy friend Aziel shall be free!" were the words she spoke.

"I thank thee, Queen Berenice!" said Placidus; and for once his glance was tender, as he bowed and lifted her
hand to his lips. It was no lover's caress, and she knew it, though the touch of his lips upon her jewelled fingers thrilled her.

It was the obeisance of nobility to nobility. One look she gave him through blinding tears. For a moment the woman reigned.

Then the queen resumed sway, and with royal dignity she recalled her maidens, who had retired during the interview beyond the crimson canopy.

Placidus departed with pity in his heart for the misguided woman, with gratitude to the generous queen; but all his dreams of love and happiness were centred round the glorious character of Jessica.
CHAPTER XXVI.

MIRIAM AND AZIEL. — PLACIDUS AND JESSICA. — SCENE IN THE COLISEUM. — THE BRAZEN BULL.

MIRIAM sat one day weeping in the garden of the Cælian villa; she was mourning for Aziel, and praying for his deliverance. Now that Jessica was safe, her constant thought was of Aziel. As she sat there in sorrowing meditation, the voice of Placidus cried behind her,—

"Behold thy friend!"

And turning quickly, Miriam saw only Aziel, for Placidus had fled.

With a cry of joy she rose and stretched out her arms to him, and he folded her to his heart, murmuring,—

"Miriam, my beloved!"

"How didst thou obtain thy freedom?" she eagerly inquired.

"Placidus paid my ransom, so I also am his slave," he smilingly added.

Then, tenderly kissing the white brow of Miriam, he continued,—

"We need not a long betrothal, my Miriam; we have no parents living to make formal arrangements according to the custom of our nation. I have waited for thee many weary years, beloved, and our love was sanctioned by our fathers; therefore we will be wedded without delay in the Christian church in Rome, by the Bishop vested with authority to perform the marriage ceremony. Besides,
I am in haste to set about my mission; for though I am by Roman law the slave of Placidus, who is also thy legal master, he desires that we shall be free to carry out a work to which I have given my life, having determined to go to Egypt, and preach the Gospel of Christ among the Jewish slaves sent into the Egyptian mines after the destruction of Jerusalem; for they have no Placidus to ransom them, and no hope in the Christ to comfort their afflicted hearts. Wilt thou be my wife, and accompany me thither?"

And for answer, Miriam said,—

"I am thine; do with me as thou wilt. 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!'"

Thus were Aziel and Miriam betrothed, and shortly after they were wedded. So did Jehovah send another deliverer to the Jews in bondage in Egypt.

This leader should not, like Moses, bring them forth into an earthly Palestine; but he would point them to the New Jerusalem, "where God should wipe away all tears from their eyes, and where there should be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying neither should there be any more pain."

And to the sorrowing hearts of those sad Jewish slaves, mourning the destruction of their beloved Jerusalem, there would arise a glorious vision of "the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, having the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone clear as crystal; and a wall great and high, and twelve gates; and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon,
which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

"And the wall of the city hath twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

"And the city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth.

"And the building of the wall is of jasper, and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city are garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

"And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate of one pearl; and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

"And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, nor maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

So Aziel founded a Christian Church in Egypt; and our last glimpse of Aziel and Miriam reveals them devoting their lives to the Jewish slaves: Aziel, preaching to them
of the glorious liberty wherewith Christ maketh the soul free, and Miriam ministering to the sick and sorrowful.

Moreover, as the large wealth belonging to the families of Aziel and Miriam had been lost to them in the destruction of Jerusalem, they were now poor, and Aziel labored with his hands at the trade of engraving in metals, which he had been taught in his youth, that thereby he might supply food for his family, and be chargeable to no man. Thus do we leave them, consecrating their lives and talents to the cause of Christ, preaching to the downtrodden the glad tidings of the Gospel of Peace.

And what of Placidus and Jessica, and Myrtilla and Virgilia?

Placidus had learned to love the Jewish maiden with deep devotion, and had wooed her oft, but he could not win her; for Jessica had answered, as her truthful eyes gazed into the piercing black orbs, now so persuasive in their tender love-light, —

"I cannot wed a pagan; and though I owe to thee the life of my sister and friend, and my own life also, I give thee honor, and respect, — yea, love, for I am not ashamed to acknowledge my love for thee; still I must obey the injunction of the Gospel, which says, —

"'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers!' So, though I would give my life for thee, I cannot wed any but a believer in the Christ."

Then was Placidus forced to wait, and he again departed to the wars.

Now, though Jessica laughingly declared that she was a slave in the Cælian villa, yet did she in truth reign there as queen; for natures such as hers do always control others, and can never bow but to the one being on earth who has captured their will by love. Myrtilla and Virgilia,
to whom Jessica showed the most unbounded reverence, 
were yet subject to her by this law, and were most willing 
to be led by so strong a spirit, ever loyal to the right, and 
true, and noble.

Jessica, having lost her much prized jewels in the many 
robberies committed by the rebels in Jerusalem, when 
every house was pillaged, and having been a slave, clothed 
in coarse garments till she found a home in the Cælian 
villa, and had been supplied with raiment fitting to her 
youth and beauty by her kind friends, had yet firmly 
refused to accept the beautiful gems offered to her by 
Myrtilla and Virgilia, saying sweetly,—

"I thank you warmly for the offer of those costly gifts; 
but I myself have known the pangs of starvation, and 
henceforth I should not deem it right to wear on neck and 
arm those costly jewels, the price of which would provide 
so many meals for those who hunger."

And following her self-denying example, Myrtilla and 
Virgilia were moved also to sell their sparkling gems, and 
many costly articles in their luxurious home, among which 
were rare citrus-tables, and vessels of the much-prized 
murrha, and vases of Corinthian bronze, which brought 
large sums of money into the treasuries of the Christian 
churches, to be distributed amongst the poor. For in 
those early times the Christians were mostly lowly born, 
and ill supplied with this world’s goods, and those pos-
sessing wealth ministered generously to those in need.

So Jessica was always attired in simple white garments, 
but gratified her intense love of the beautiful by wearing 
many flowers; and Myrtilla and Virgilia learned to read 
her various moods according to the color or variety of the 
blossoms which were always fastened in her girdle.

Thus did Jessica go about among the suffering Christians
of Rome, appearing in the eyes of the sick and sorrowful as a ministering angel; and the faces of many would brighten at the sight of the sweet flowers which she wore, and which she never carried home when visiting those to whom the fragrant sprays would be a much prized gift.

On a certain day she entered the nymphaeum, wearing in her girdle a bunch of glowing blush roses; and Myrtilla, noting the color of joy, whispered to her mother,—

"Jessica is prepared, you see, for the surprise we have to give her."

Then Myrtilla, approaching the beautiful Jewess, and twining her arms around her slender waist, said lovingly,—

"Come with me into the garden; there is a surprise awaiting thee beside the fountain."

The two were soon lost to the view of the loving eyes of Virgilia, who watched them from the porticoed nymphaeum. Reaching the arbor twined with myrtle, starred with white blossoms, Myrtilla kissed the cheek of Jessica, murmuring,—

"Behold thy surprise!" and vanished.

And Jessica, looking up, gazed into the glowing eyes of Placidus, who clasped her hand, and whispered,—

"I have come once more to woo thee, Jessica, my idol; and ere thou answer, listen! Some months ago, while I lay one night in my war-tent, I had a marvellous dream. I thought I was hunting in the forest, and I saw before me a stag of wondrous beauty, and I pursued it eagerly. Then the stag fled before me, and ascended a high rock, where it stood at bay. And looking up, I beheld between the branching horns of the stag a cross of radiant light, and on the cross the image of the Crucified Redeemer; and being astonished and dazzled by this vision, I fell upon
my knees, when a voice, which seemed to come from the crucifix, cried to me, saying,—

"'Placidus, why dost thou pursue Me? I am Christ, whom thou hast hitherto served without knowing Me. Dost thou now believe?'

"Whereupon the voice ceased, and I fell with my face to the earth, exclaiming,—

"'Lord, I do believe!'

"Then the voice answered,—

"'Thou shalt suffer many tribulations for My sake, and shalt be tried by many temptations; but be strong, and of good courage! I will not forsake thee.'

"Thereupon I seemed to murmur in my dream,—

"'Lord, I am content. Do Thou give me strength and patience to suffer!'

"And when I lifted up my face again, lo! the glorious vision had departed. But," continued Placidus, in solemn tones, "I believe now in thy Christ, and am willing to obey His commands, and enlist under His banner. Wilt thou help me, Jessica, my beloved, by giving me the joy of thy presence and thy sympathy as my wedded wife?"

As the blue eyes of the maiden gazed into the depths of those glowing starry eyes, now radiant with the light of a heavenly, as well as an earthly love, the proud will of the girl bowed with delight before the one being to whom she deemed it great honor to bend her heart in queenly allegiance. Henceforth she, whose haughty nature could be broken by no obstacles, and mastered by no terrors, would, with proud joy, submit the hitherto unconquered will. And thus did Jessica answer the manly and persuasive appeal of Placidus,—

"As I have quoted the words from the Gospel scroll of Holy Writ before, when I gave refusal to thy pleading, I
will be again guided by their teachings; for it is there written,—

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

And Placidus added,—

"It is written also: 'A man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'"

Thus were Placidus and Jessica betrothed; and soon there was a quiet wedding in the Cælian villa, and the hearts of Virgilia and Myrtilla were content regarding the heart-happiness of their cherished son and brother.

Looking into the records of those times, we find one later glimpse of Placidus and Jessica.

The magnificent Coliseum (begun by Vespasian, and finished by Titus just before his death, the external walls of which, raised by twelve thousand captive Jews, cost for the walls alone seventeen million francs) then existed in all its grandeur; and if the ruins can excite the rapturous admiration of the world, what must have been the glory of it?

"Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine
As 't were its natural torches, for divine
Should be the light which streams here, to illumine
The long-explored but still exhaustless mine
Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

Hues which have words, and speak to ye of heaven,
Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
And shadows forth its glory. There is given
Unto the things of earth, which Time hath bent,
A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant
His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
And magic in the ruined battlement,
For which the palace of the present hour
Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower."

The name Coliseum was first found in the writings of the Venerable Bede, who quotes a prophecy of Anglo-Saxon Pilgrims, —

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall:
And when Rome falls, the world!"

"The Coliseum consisted of four stories: the first Doric, the second Ionic, and the third and fourth Corinthian. The entrance for the Emperor was between two arches facing the Esquiline. The arena was surrounded by a wall sufficiently high to protect the spectators from the wild beasts, which were introduced by subterranean passages closed by huge gates, from the side towards the Cælian.

"The podium contained the places of honor reserved for the Emperor, and his family, the Senate, and the Vestal Virgins. The places for the other spectators, who entered by openings called vomitoria, were arranged in three stages, caveæ, separated by a gallery, præcinctio. The first stage, for knights and tribunes, had twenty-four steps; the second, for the common people, sixteen; the third, for the soldiery, ten. The women, by order of the Emperor, sat apart from the men, and married and unmarried men were also divided. The whole building was capable of containing one hundred thousand persons. At the top,
on the exterior, were the consoles, which sustained the velarium, which was drawn over the arena to shelter the spectators from the sun or rain. The arena could on occasions be filled with water for naval combats; the podium was protected from it by a metal screen, over which the wild beasts were unable to climb.

"The dedication of the Coliseum afforded to Titus an opportunity for a display of magnificence hitherto unrivalled. A battle of cranes with dwarfs representing the pigmies was a fanciful novelty, and among the combats of gladiators were women, though no noble matron was allowed to mingle in the affray. The capacity of the vast edifice was tested by the slaughter of five thousand animals in its circuit. The show was crowned with the immission of water into the arena, and with a sea-fight representing the contests of the Corinthians and Corcyreans, related by Thucydides."

The time of our scene was in the reign of Adrian. To commemorate his birthday, the Emperor gave a gorgeous entertainment in the Coliseum. Among many splendid spectacles was the representation of a mammoth forest, when the entire arena was suddenly planted with living trees and blooming flowers, and in their midst the ground was made to open, and wild animals appeared from yawning clefts, which were instantly re-covered with shrubs and bushes. To add excitement to the scene, thousands of beasts were slaughtered, and two hundred African lions fought with each other in wild fury. Then in the midst of this brutal show occurred a still more horrible and blood-curdling sight.

There had waged another persecution of the Christians, and to amuse the Roman people, grown savage again under the wicked emperors who had succeeded Titus, the following shocking spectacle had been prepared.
THE DOOM OF THE HOLY CITY.

Through the city, from the Mamertine Prison, through the Forum, walking under the magnificent arch of Titus, spanning the Via Sacra, between the Forum and the Colosseum, came a band of Christians doomed to martyrdom.

On to the arena were they led by their cruel jailers, when they were greeted by the brutal crowds with jeers and shouts of mockery. At the head of the little band of Christians walked an aged man, the Bishop of Antioch.

When brought into the arena, he knelt down, and exclaimed,—

"Romans, know that I have not been brought into this place for any crime, but in order that by this means I may merit the fruition of the glory of God, for love of Whom I have been made prisoner. I am as the grain of the field, and must be ground by the teeth of the lions, that I may become bread fit for His table."

Whereupon the lions were let loose upon him, and they devoured him before the cruel eyes of the multitudes.

Next followed four Christians,—an aged man and his wife, and two noble sons. As these enter the arena, we recognize in one of the sons the likeness to Placidus, and in the golden hair and blue eyes of the other, the features of Jessica.

This family of Christian martyrs are, in truth, Placidus, Jessica, and their sons. The white hair and emaciated face of Placidus denote his age and privations; but his dark eyes are yet full of holy fire, and his step is still martial and his form erect. His wife, though her head is crowned with snowy locks, has still the true blue eyes of Jessica, undimmed by age, and her mien is now as queenly as when once before she faced the lions in the amphitheatre.

But with all her heroic fortitude, there is visible a
tremor as her eyes seek the faces of her husband and sons. It is not for herself she trembles, but for those so dear to her.

The awful cry is given,—

"Throw them to the lions!"

But consternation seizes the crowds of savage spectators as the wild beasts crouch at the feet of the Christian martyrs, and refuse to touch them.

But their awe does not soften the hearts of those brutal monsters, who are determined not to be robbed of their diabolical amusement, and the command is given,—

"Bring in the brazen bull!"

And thereupon a mammoth image of a bull made of brass, and filled with combustibles ready to be kindled, is rolled into the arena, and a large bronze door in the side of the image is opened, and Placidus and Jessica and their two sons are forced to enter this huge oven; then the door is closed upon them, and the fire lighted under-neath, and the human fiends shout,—

"Thus do we roast the Christians whom the beasts refuse to kill!"

And now, in the city of Rome, near the Pantheon, stands the Church of S. Eustachio, in commemoration of the martyrdom of Placidus and Jessica, canonized in the records of the saints under the names of SS. Eustace and his wife Theopista.

THE END.