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THE

LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL;

OR,

The First of the Red Men.

"The sublimest Work of our Creator
Is the glorious race of Man."

PHILADELPHIA:

1861.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is a well-known fact that, when Christopher Columbus first set foot on America's soil, he found it already tenanted by a people which, though differing from his own race in customs and color, were as perfect specimens of humanity as himself and followers.

Only intent upon new discoveries, and animated but by the desire of subjugating whatever new countries he might find to the crown of Spain, the great explorer regarded this new and strange people merely in so far as they might be used in furthering his own plans, troubling himself little about their rights or origin.

The extreme darkness in which the earlier history of our Red neighbors is involved, renders it next to impossible to penetrate the veil which enshrouds their origin; while it is almost needless to say that all that has been said or written about this certainly interesting subject is based only on conjecture and fiction. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it is almost certain that the history of the earlier inhabitants of this country concerns us much more than hitherto we may have supposed, for, unless we regard that Book of books, the Holy Bible, as a mere work of romance and fiction, it is

not to be disputed that the first and only human beings ever created by the Almighty without the agency of man, were Adam and Eve, from whom all mankind are descended, and, allowing this to be a fixed fact, our aborigines must have sprung from the same parent root with ourselves.

If we follow the Holy Scriptures, we see the gradual development of the human race until we come down to the period of the patriarch Noah. We all have read of the deluge, and we have seen that all mankind were destroyed, with the exception of Noah and his family. How these latter were saved, we all know; but is it not wonderful that a man who never before even dreamed of a ship, or of the possibility of crossing a large expanse of water, should all at once have become possessed of the idea of building the Ark? It most undoubtedly is, and the only way in which we can possibly account for it, is that of the Bible: it was brought about by divine inspiration, and under the special direction of Jehovah. Here then we have a striking instance, that even in the oldest times, when science was in its infancy, God sometimes, in a single lesson, would teach and reveal to his creatures things which at a later period it took years and all the patience and ingenuity of man to accomplish; and in perusing the history of the Israelites, the chosen people of Jehovah, we find that similar revelations have been very frequent.

When the ten tribes of Israel seceded from the tribe of Judah, the favors of the Lord were equally divided

between the two nations, both of whom either prospered or were punished according to their deeds; and the Bible continues to speak of either as the chosen people up to the period of the Assyrian captivity, when the record of the Israelites abruptly closes. Some time after the destruction of Samaria, the kings and the people of Judah adopted the same evil course, followed by the Israelites; and they in turn were given into the hands of their enemy Nebuchadnezzar, who carried them captive to Babylon. But after a season of suffering, and when, it seems, they began to repent of their evil doings, the children of Judah were liberated and permitted to go home and to rebuild their destroyed cities, whereas of the ten tribes of Israel it is written, They were carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. And now the question arises, Were the Israelites so utterly debased, so utterly abandoned, as to be unable to return to the God of their fathers? I cannot and do not believe this; for not unfrequently we see that the greatest and most obstinate sinners repent of their wickedness and are pardoned. Why could not this have been the case with at least a part of the once chosen people of the Lord? and why should it be impossible that in the Red men of our forests we behold the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel?

The physical differences, particularly that of color, between our Red neighbors and our own race it is not very difficult to account for, if we take into consider-

ation, firstly, That the sons of Jacob, in all probability, were not so delicately organized, nor so white, as ourselves, but most likely were a medium between us and our modern Indians; and, secondly, the many powerful agencies at the command of nature. Sometimes these agencies are perceptible, as, for instance, the difference of climate; but oftener they are secret; and now and then we see a person who has been rescued from the very brink of the grave, whose appearance and color, after such restoration, are so much changed that recognition becomes almost impossible. But let all this be as it may, so much is certain, that our aborigines belong to the one great family of man, and, if the Bible is right, they must be descendants of Adam and Eve.

In the following pages I have followed the children of Israel into their captivity, and, after a season of almost unendurable hardships, I have seen them brought to a just sense of their situation.

I have shown how they repented of their former sinful life, and how in consequence they were informed, in a vision sent by Jehovah, of the only means by which they might escape their cruel oppressors.

As the Ark had been the means of preserving Noah and his family when all mankind were destroyed by the deluge, so a ship or ark became the means by which the Israelites were freed from their enemies. In a vessel constructed after a model seen by one of their number in a dream, the captives sailed down the river Tigris, and, under the direction and guidance of divine Provi-

dence, they at last came to this country, where they became the founders of the race of Red Men.

I am not presumptuous enough to assert that my book has been written by divine inspiration; yet I may be permitted to say that, as all our faculties and thoughts belong to and come from our Creator, it may not be regarded as presumption when I say that there is every possibility of my being as near the truth as most writers of ancient history.

THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA, February, 1861.

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THE

LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE COT OF THE OLD ISRAELITE.

It was about six years after the destruction of Samaria, that, on a dark and stormy night of the latter part of the month of April, there were assembled, in a small building near the ancient city of Nineveh, three men, whose unmistakable types proclaimed them children of subjugated and captive Israel.

The house, a dilapidated one-story frame structure, situated in the midst of a well-cultivated and extensive garden, was inhabited by Mordecai, an old Jew with bald head and long, flowing beard of snowy whiteness, whose skill in the art of horticulture had secured for him this tenement at a reasonable rent, payable in flowers, fruit and vegetables, and where he

managed to lead a comparatively free and comfortable life.

His only assistant and companion, a handsome youth of eighteen years of age, in whose veins coursed the royal blood of Jehu, and who called old Mordecai "uncle," might have been seen, about two hours before the opening of my story, disguised as a beggar, and his face concealed by a slouched hat, wending his way through several dark and narrow streets of Nineveh, until he came to a small but strongly-fastened door in the rear of a magnificent palatial mansion fronting the principal street of the city.

Arrived here, he sought the shelter of some overhanging trees, and, putting both hands to his mouth, imitated the shrill cry of an owl; then, after slowly and deliberately counting one hundred, he repeated the cry, and, throwing himself flat on the ground, patiently waited.

At that instant footsteps were heard approaching his place of concealment, and, by the light of a shaded lantern, he recognised one of the guardians of the night, who since the arrival of the captive Israelites patrolled the small streets and alleys of the town after a certain

hour, and who generally were armed to the teeth, so as to be ready for any emergency. Lamech—for that was the youth's name—noiselessly glided into the deep shadow of a large wood-pile, and presently saw the man passing, cursing and swearing at the inclement weather and the uselessness of his toilsome task.

"Curses on these Jewish dogs!" Lamech heard him mutter: "curses on them, for a rascally, thieving set! Were it not for them, I now might snugly and comfortably sit by my own fireside, listening to the sweet voice of my dear Mulina. Ha! should I once be fortunate enough to find one of this detested race where I could lay my hands on him! But, by the beard of Shalmanezer, I believe it best for me to go to my home; for in a night like this no cowardly son of Israel will dare to cross his threshold. My watch is not to be ended before the breaking of another day; and then I shall be at my post again. So farewell storm and tempest, and welcome my own bright home!"

With this that trusty guardsman kept on his solitary walk; and soon the sound of his receding footsteps died away in the distance. Lamech

then came forth out of his place of shelter, and, again approaching the small door, uttered the sharp cry of a dog three times in rapid succession.

This time his patience was rewarded; for scarcely had the last note of his voice died on the air, when the startled cry of a frightened cat fell on his ear, at almost the same time a key was inserted in the afore-mentioned door, and a moment later Lamech found himself face to face with a swarthy man, apparently about forty years of age.

The new-comer, whose sinewy and well-knit frame might have been envied by a Hercules, was one of those rarely-seen men whose whole appearance inspires respect and confidence. His open countenance and noble, lofty brow spoke of goodness of heart, while his finely-cut but firmly-set mouth denoted a firmness of character and a strength of determination which were not to be shaken.

The first greetings over, and after a brief consultation, Harim, (such was the stranger's name,) who served as head steward in the king's own household, followed Lamech up several

other small streets, until they arrived at another small private door, which led to the mansion of the king's prime minister, Almanzor. Here they again succeeded, by means of the same signals used by Lamech at the king's gate, in quickly bringing out Nahum, the head groom of Almanzor.

Another brief consultation ensued, after which the trio, now hurrying on fearlessly, took their way straight to the eastern gate.

Suddenly the startling "Who's there?" of a night-patrol brought them to a stand, and the leader of the guard, whose weather-beaten and sunburnt face bespoke the soldier of many battles, confronted them, and would, without further ceremony, have consigned them to the custody of his followers, had not Harim uttered a commanding "Halt!" Then, thrusting his hand in his bosom, he produced a roll of parchment covered with curiously-shaped characters, and to the bottom of which was affixed the royal seal. At seeing this, the soldier bowed deeply, and, in an attitude of profound respect, offered to our wanderers the services of himself and followers. Harim, who knew what effect that

parchment would produce, was still pleased with this turn of affairs, and, requesting to be led out of the gate, then bade the guard return and resume their usual duties.

As the reader may, most naturally, wonder how a simple roll of parchment could produce such an effect on a personage of so much importance as the leader of a night-guard, I hasten to inform him that in those days of warfare, when the strictest watch was kept both by day and by night, there were some persons who, through some means or other, were favored with an unlimited passport, sealed with the king's own private signet, and which authorized the bearer to go, either single or accompanied by one or two friends, wherever he pleased, at any hour, night or day; and, as all persons so favored were naturally supposed to be on the best terms with the king, the attentions shown them by all public officials were generally equal to those shown to the ruler himself, as, moreover, it would have been punishment, dishonor, and even death to any one who should have dared to question or disregard the royal will.

Now, Harim had some time previous succeeded

in rendering the king a signal service in ferreting out and disclosing a conspiracy to assassinate the monarch by two of his chamberlains. The conspirators were secretly executed; and Harim was favored with an unlimited passport, at his own request,—this seeming to him the most useful and consequently the most valuable reward, as the Israelites in particular were subjected to the closest and not unfrequently most painful surveillance.

Safely out of the gate, our three friends hurried to old Mordecai's dwelling, where, on giving a peculiar signal, the two strangers were instantly admitted, while Lamech remained outside, and stationed himself in such a position as to guard most effectually the only approach to the house.

After being warmly welcomed by old Mordecai, Harim and Nahum were invited into an inner room, which was furnished in the simplest manner, and where the reader first made their acquaintance.

Nahum was a man about thirty-five years of age, of medium size, rather slender; but an attentive observer might have detected an un-

common strength of muscle. His noble forehead, finely-arched brows, overshadowing a pair of eyes fiery, and black as the raven's wing, a Roman nose, a mouth almost feminine in its exquisite cut, and a well-rounded chin, would have rendered him a fit model for the painter and sculptor as the personification of manly beauty. His hair and beard, both well cultivated after the fashion of his countrymen, were of the same color as the eyes; and, while his frank and open countenance spoke of goodness of heart, the determined curve of his upper lip denoted undaunted firmness and inflexibility of purpose.

He was the elder brother of Lamech, and perhaps would even now have sat on the throne of his fathers, had Israel not lost her independence.

Mordecai was an old man of threescore and ten, and apparently had been very strong and decidedly handsome in glorious youth; but now he was a mere wreck. Care and sorrow had bent that once powerful frame, the sight of his dark eyes was dimmed, and his once glossy black hair was now shaved off by the hand of Time, while

his still long and flowing beard, once of the same color with his hair, had assumed the color of fresh-fallen snow.

Harim is already sufficiently introduced to the reader, so as to make it only necessary here to say that he too was a descendant of the royal house of Jehu.

"Children," commenced old Mordecai, in a low and sorrowful voice, after all three had been seated, "I have once more called you to my humble abode, that I might speak to you of the trials and hopes of our unfortunate brethren.

"To us they look for consolation; in us all their hopes and trust are centred. You, my noble nephews, have already done much to lighten our burdens, to kindle anew the hopes of our desponding countrymen. By your perseverance and unflinching attention to your hard duties you have succeeded in gaining the esteem and the confidence of the two most powerful men of this heathen nation. Thanks to you, the severest trials of captive Israel have passed, the terrible persecution has ceased. But when will captive Israel be free? When will we be allowed to pray to Jehovah, after the manner of our

fathers, publicly, openly, without fear of molestation, ay, of even death?

"Shalmanezer and his prime minister are the two most powerful men of this nation, it is true; and equally true it is that through you we may call them our friends; but they dare not openly act against the will of the combined masses, and these, alas! are against us. When, oh, when will the hour of Israel's freedom strike?"

Here the old man ceased: overcome by his sorrow and bowed down by grief, he sank back in utter exhaustion.

A silence of about five minutes' duration ensued, after which Nahum arose and advanced to his aged relative, whose hands he took and carried affectionately to his lips.

"Uncle," he said, in a clear, melodious, and manly voice,—"uncle, nay, more than that, father, let not your sorrows affect you thus. Are not, as you said yourself just now, our severest trials passed? Are not we yet strong and healthy? Is not the whole universe a Canaan to those who but have the will to make it so? And, above all, have we not our respected, wise, and good old uncle Mordecai still

among us? Who has ever done more to raise the drooping spirits of a nation than you, my father? You have given a new impulse to our hopes. When, three years ago, you, disguised as an outcast and a beggar bereft of reason, traversed this country, regardless of death and dangers that beset you on every side, to console our despairing brethren and to devise means for lightening their heavy burdens, we trembled, and on our bended knees we besought Jehovah to watch over you and lead you safely back. Thanks to God, you did return; ay, and you succeeded in your noble mission.

"Two hundred strong and able men of Israel, with their families, are at this moment assembled in subterranean chambers, constructed under almost insurmountable difficulties and with almost superhuman efforts, beneath our feet.

"Thanks to your good management, all these people are sufficiently provided with every thing needful; and, although we do not know how you contrived to construct these subterranean vaults, or to bring so many human beings safely, and in spite of all the watchfulness of our enemies, to your so greatly exposed cot, nor what

your final purpose may be, still we know that the latter cannot but be for the good of Israel; and we here once more repeat the assurance that we shall be with you even unto death."

"Ay, unto death!" repeated Harim.

"What we may have done," resumed Nahum, "to gain the good will of our masters, was done by your advice; and happy are we if this will add to the interest of our unhappy countrymen.

"But, ha! what is that?"

CHAPTER II.

STARTLING REVELATIONS.

THE shrill cry of an owl was heard three times in rapid succession; and at the same time some one stealthily entered the outer room of the cot.

With an agility marvellous in one so old, the aged Mordecai jumped off his seat, and, hurrying to a corner of the room, he lifted a secret trap-door. Nahum and Harim fortunately understood the old man at once, and, without waiting for an explanation, disappeared through the aperture; whereupon Mordecai replaced the door, and, as if nothing had happened, quietly sat down and resumed the reading of an old manuscript, from time to time examining some rare plants placed in an earthen vase on a rude deal table before him,—an occupation in which he had been interrupted by the entrance of his nephews. Presently a knock was heard on the outer door of the cot, and, before it could be repeated, a sleepy "Who's there?" uttered by Lamech, greeted the

intruder. A hurried consultation between uncle and nephew followed, whereupon the door was opened, and the leader of the guard, who had led Harim and his followers out of the city-gate, entered, followed by three of his men. The glimmer of a light which was to be seen through the chinks of the inner door at once guided the visitor to the inner room, where he found the old man engaged with his plants and manuscript.

"Rather late for work," was the soldier's greeting.

"Better late than never," was the calm response.

"But," resumed our hero of many battles, "it seems somewhat unusual to find a man of your age working at a time when everybody else is courting sleep."

"It would not seem so to thee, if thou oftener didst leave the city-limits at this time of night. Old Mordecai's time is too precious to be thrown away by much repose, or by much interruption, either: so oblige me by stating to what I am indebted for this untimely visit, as I am just now engaged with some rare plants, to be introduced in our gracious king's private garden."

For a moment the soldier was taken aback by this coolness; but soon, collecting himself, he said, in a tone of severity, "The two Jews, Harim, the king's head steward, and Nahum, the prime minister's head groom, were seen about an hour ago to leave the city, in company with a lame beggar; and, as there is a strong suspicion of their being involved in a conspiracy to free their fellow-Jews at any cost, even by assassinating our most gracious sovereign and his ministers, which was revealed to Shalmanezer not half an hour ago, I just now received a royal order not to allow any one to leave the city. Now, the two very men thus suspected actually did pass the gate; which fact most naturally led us to the belief, ay, conviction, that the story of their being really involved is true; and, as you are known to be their friend, I have come to the conclusion that they must have come hither to ask, if not your co-operation, at least your counsel; and, unless therefore you are able to give the most reliable proof to the contrary, I shall be under the necessity of taking you with me, together with your assistant, whom I strongly

suspect to be more closely acquainted with the lame beggar than he may wish me to know."

Here was a sad predicament for old Mordecai. How could he prove to the soldier's satisfaction that the men named had not called upon him? and, furthermore, was there not every reason to suppose that Lamech had been recognized in spite of his disguise? To be taken by the guard would have been certain destruction, not only to them, but to all their friends; for, suspicion once thrown into that channel, it was not at all unlikely that the habitation of Mordecai would soon be levelled to the ground in quest of the fugitives, and then the entrance to the subterranean chambers would surely not escape detection, thereby frustrating their last hopes and rendering worse than vain the labor of years.

All this at once flashed upon the mind of the old man; and, although usually calm and brave, he was for the moment confounded. But soon he rallied, and, throwing himself, utter despair depicted in his countenance, at the captain's feet, he confessed all, and, imploring the soldier's mercy for himself and Lamech, he promised to show the retreat of his nephews.

It was a bold game the old Jew played; but here was an emergency, and all must be risked, or all would be lost.

Lamech was thunder-struck. Would he, the brave, the good Mordecai, really betray his friends? It passed all comprehension.

But this terrible doubt was to last only one moment; for, an instant after, on raising his eyes, he met the glance of the old gardener,—a glance so full of meaning, so full of confidence, that all his misgivings fled at once; and, uniting his lamentations and implorings for mercy with those of his uncle, they both succeeded in making the guardsman believe in their sincerity to such an extent that the leader kindly promised them all the assistance in his power if he should only find those he was after.

On the trap-door being raised a second time, the captain of the guard, whose name was Bareck, rushed past the old man, followed by all his men; and such were their impetuosity and haste to capture the two most hated of all the Israelites, who had succeeded in obtaining the most responsible as well as the most confidential situations in the households of the two most

powerful men in all Assyria, under circumstances which, to say the least, looked suspicious enough to hurl them from their high positions, that—fortunately for Mordecai and his friends—they never thought of securing a safe retreat; nor did they heed a shrill whistle sounded by Lamech, who followed on their heels.

Arrived at a point where the light from above failed to penetrate, Bareck found himself and followers enveloped in utter darkness. At the same time the trap-door again creaked in its hinges and, with a dull sound, fell back in its place, thus burying the four guardsmen in the bowels of the earth. Presently the faint glimmer of a light appeared in the distance, and, with an ejaculation of wild joy, the captain bounded forward; for he had recognized the person of our friend Harim; and, brandishing his cutlass, he ordered his followers to secure the Jewish dogs at once.

But his joy and exultation were destined to be of short duration; for, on nearing the place where Harim stood, torch in hand, he beheld Nahum, armed with sword and shield, at the head of a company of armed men, while at his

back the frightened cries of his followers told him that they were overthrown and now being secured by another party.

The bravado of the soldier at once took to its heels; and, sinking on his knees, he in turn now implored the mercy of old Mordecai, who had just joined his friends.

In a few words the old man informed his nephews how matters stood, and why he had thought it best to pursue the course he had taken,—when Nahum, who had been an attentive listener, after commending what his uncle had done, confronted the prostrate Bareck, and, with the air of a ruler, commanded him to arise.

Trembling in all his limbs, the captain arose and stood before the royal Nahum, as stands the wretched criminal before his stern judge, awaiting his last earthly sentence.

"Who sent you hither?" Nahum asked, in a deep, solemn tone.

No answer.

"Were you sent?"

Still no answer.

"I know you," Nahum continued. "I know that you were not sent. As true as my God

lives, we never were engaged in any conspiracy whatever,—least of all against the lives of our masters; and our masters know it. They did not send you. But we have enemies, cruel, unrelenting enemies, who will not hesitate at any thing to destroy us. You are one of those. You are the kinsman of Amalech, the arch-traitor, who would have imbrued his hands in the blood of his sovereign but for my friend Harim, who, happily, discovered and frustrated the hellish design. Twice have you sued for the position in Almanzor's household which I occupy, and twice were you disappointed.

"Cause enough for one like you for revenge, —deadly revenge: so you swore to destroy us; and I know that, had it not been for the royal passport, you would have assassinated us in front of the guard-house; but you feared the just wrath of your king, which would surely have overtaken you had he found his royal will set at naught. You therefore thought to work out your fell purpose surer and better by following us hither and slaying not only us, but also those here, who never harmed you, that it might seem as though we had fallen victims

to the unjust wrath of thy countrymen, like so many before us. But for once you have been grievously mistaken. You are in our power now; and although we disdain to take the life of such as you, still, a regard for the safety of these, of whom one is worth more than hundreds of you, compels us to keep you until you can harm us no more. Before consigning you to your temporary prison, however, I would first hear all thou knowest concerning us and those we love; for well am I aware that it is you above all who are in possession of more secrets concerning the court and its surroundings than any other man in Nineveh. Speak, therefore, if thou valuest whole limbs; for, by the living God of my fathers, I will have thee tortured until the torn fragments of thy polluted carcass strew the ground, if you conceal or disguise aught of what you know."

With this Nahum made a sign to some of his followers; whereupon four stout men brought forth a rude bench, covered with nails and screws of peculiar workmanship. At the sight of this contrivance poor Bareck again fell on his knees.

"Oh, have mercy!" he cried, in the most supplicating tones. "Spare me! do not torture me! I dare not disclose any thing; for I am bound to secrecy by the most solemn oath."

But Nahum was inflexible.

"What is your oath?" he said. "It is not sworn by the only living God, whom you do not acknowledge; and all other swearing is but profanation. Yet fain would I leave thee; for I do not like to make you break your word, in addition to your other sins. But the holiest interests of a nation demand that we should know all; and therefore, executioners, do your work."

The wretched captain felt himself lifted up by stout arms and thrown on the bench, on the sharp nails and screws. His feet were then thrust between two logs of wood, on each end of which were two screws, which the executioners began to tighten. Slowly the stout logs were drawn together: yet with some fortitude the soldier endured his pains. But the men continued their labor. Nearer and nearer the logs came together, until human nature could hold out no longer, and, with a last effort, Bareck cried out, "Stop! I will confess!"

The screws were at once loosened, the almost flattened legs of the unfortunate man bathed in cold water, and every effort was made to lessen the almost unendurable pain. Bareck had fainted; but, after an hour of assiduous labor, he opened his eyes and consciousness returned. At sight of the torturing-machine he shuddered, and at once signified his intention to confess all he knew.

"I am," he commenced, "as you know, the captain of the city-guard, but obtained that post only through the intercession of some powerful friends and relations, chief of whom was my kinsman Amalech, then first chamberlain of Shalmanezer.

"Before the capture of the Israelites, Shalmanezer was all we his subjects could wish him to be: he was in truth the father of his country. But after the destruction of Samaria, and when the captives had been brought to our city, our king one day met a maiden of your nation; and so smitten was he with her charms that forthwith his whole nature became changed. He only lived in the smiles of his beloved Abi; and not only was her every wish gratified, but from

that day Shalmanezer began to prefer the Israelites to his own Assyrians, and more than one hint was thrown out that he even forsook the gods of our fathers and turned to the religion of the despised Jews. Then it was that the king lost the love and confidence of his subjects; and on you and Harim being raised to the high positions you now occupy, the former love was turned into intense hatred. Conspiracies against the once-worshipped ruler were formed nearly every week; and the most prominent one—that of the two head chamberlains—would have succeeded beyond all doubt, but for the interference of Harim. From the first I was chosen by the disaffected people to ferret out all the secrets of the court and its immediate surroundings, and to spread the discontent as far as I could. My office as captain of the guard brought me in constant intercourse with the officers of the king's and his minister's households; and thus I was enabled to render many valuable services to my employers. I was not long in finding out the esteem in which your friend and you were held by your masters; and, after the explosion of the last conspiracy and

the subsequent execution of my friend and kinsman, I resolved to have you destroyed first, and this very night was to witness your final doom. When I saw you leave the city an hour ago, I would at once have detained and delivered you to your executioners, but I dared not. As yet Shalmanezer is our king; and it might have cost my head had it been found out that Harim had been slain or captured in spite of his having shown me his passport; and, as the porter then on duty at the eastern gate is known to be a staunch adherent of the royal house, my detection would have been certain. But I did the next best thing in my power: I despatched one of my men to follow you, and from him I learned, fifteen minutes later, where you had gone. Half an hour afterwards I was relieved by one of my lieutenants, and then without delay I selected the two best of my men in addition to the one who followed you, and, without even hinting where I was going, I at once turned my steps hitherward.

"This is what I know concerning you; but that is not all. I know one thing more. You

asked me concerning those whom you loved. And whom should you love but Hermione?"

"Ah!" cried Nahum, eagerly, "what of Hermione? Speak, and not a hair on your head shall be harmed, if you tell me truly."

"The king's daughter loves you most sincerely," Bareck continued. "When she first beheld you at work in one of the gardens of Almanzor, she was smitten with your manly beauty, but more so with the undaunted courage with which she saw you bear your humble lot, after she had learned what and who you were. 'Ah,' she cried, 'I knew he was royal: none but a descendant of royalty is capable of a fortitude so noble!' And from that day her heart has been yours. Through her intercession you soon rose to the office of head groom; and it has long since ceased to be a secret in both households that she will wed none but you. Her father's cousin, Abimelech, a young man of rank and princely fortune, had hitherto considered himself the destined husband of the maiden; and, on his becoming acquainted with the state of affairs, his rage knew no bounds. He would have slain you with his own hands, had he

dared. He tried the next thing: he asked Almanzor to discharge you from your high position. But here too he was disappointed; for the resolution of Hermione was no secret to her father, and he loved his child too well to allow a humiliation so public to be inflicted on the innocent object of her most affectionate regards. Abimelech then sought me, and, holding out a really princely reward, easily succeeded in making me the tool with which to rid the earth of his hated rival. Of the interviews you had with the lovely Hermione, and which she contrived to give you with all the ingenuity of her sex, I need hardly speak; but of many a one have I been a concealed witness, ready to plunge the steel into your heart, should a sure chance offer. You are alive,—the best proof that such a chance never offered; and that it did not is owing to the watchful care of Hermione, who suspected her cousin's designs from the first. Toward you her heart remains unchanged; but whether you will ever be so fortunate as to call her your own remains to be seen,—as all the people, and particularly the nobles, are strenuously opposed

to the match, and the king, as you know, has lost too much of his power to dare any thing against the people's will."

Thus far went Bareck's revelation; and Nahum knew it to be true in all essential points,—a fact of which the captain seems to have been well aware, as else it would appear most surprising that he should have spoken so openly and in detail.

CHAPTER III.

THE DREAM.

When Bareck had concluded, he was once more assured by Nahum that he and his men would be perfectly safe, but that his own and his friends' security demanded their being kept in durance up to a certain period, which was not far off; and then the four Assyrians were led to a remote part of the cavern, where a stout oaken door opened into a good-sized room, furnished with straw pallets, a rude deal table, and several blocks of wood which served as chairs; and this they were told would be their temporary residence.

After the prisoners had thus been disposed of, old Mordecai bade his friends follow him, and, going to the western boundary of the cavern, he touched a secret spring in the rocky wall, whereupon a huge stone slowly turned on one side and revealed to the eyes of his astonished nephews a flight of three steps, which led

into another subterranean chamber of vast dimensions.

This large cavern was almost wholly filled with a huge structure of a peculiar shape, now seeming very near its completion, and which Mordecai ascended by means of a ladder placed against its side. The bottom of this structure, composed of the soundest and best oak timber that could have been found, was made gradually sloping inwards until the two sides met in the middle and formed a perfect triangle, while the fore part, also gently sloping, resembled the fore part of a huge fish. The roof—to which the old man ascended—was almost flat, and had in it three large square holes, through which, by means of ladders, the interior of the building could be reached. This interior was divided by means of thin partitions into smaller apartments, some of which were filled with fruit, bread, and different kinds of meat, others contained water in goat-skin bags, while the rest seemed to be appropriated to bedrooms and various other uses.

The whole was put firmly and tightly together, and seemed perfectly proof against wind

and water,—thus resembling in all appearance our modern shore and canal boats of the largest size. On the sides of the vessel descended several long boards, about two inches in thickness, which were fastened to long poles reaching almost to the middle of the deck. These poles rested on pivots, and by means of them the boards could easily be raised and swayed back and forward. I have yet to add that the roof or deck was guarded by a stout railing four feet high, and my description of the first vessel that probably ever was built, with the exception of the Ark, is completed.

When the men were assembled on the vessel's deck, Harim and Nahum could conceal their wonder and surprise no longer, and various were their exclamations and eager inquiries.

But Mordecai, now raising himself to his full height, bade them be silent; and then, sinking on his knees,—in which he was imitated by every one on board,—he raised his aged hands on high, and, after thanking Jehovah for all his goodness and blessings, implored the divine assistance in their perilous undertaking.

Then he arose, blessed the assembled mul-

titude,—who all regarded him as a father,—and said, in a solemn voice trembling with emotion,—

"Children, the time has now come when an explanation is due to you of all I have hitherto done. When, five years ago, I beheld the distress and the oppression of my unfortunate brethren, I was sorely troubled, and resolved not to rest until I had exerted my humble power to the utmost in their behalf. I was comparatively free then; for the heathens either respected my old age, or else did not think my services worth the having. In one of my solitary walks, I reflected on our former prosperity and the course of life we had pursued; and Jehovah, in his infinite goodness and mercy, enlightened my heart. I saw that we owed our present misfortunes to ourselves,—to the ungodly and sinful life we had led; and a voice within me seemed to say, 'Arise and be strong: despair not, but turn your thoughts heavenward to Him, the giver of all good and bad; put your trust in Jehovah, and he surely will not abandon you. Sorely have you grieved the God of your fathers, in your prosperity, until he has left you and given you into the hands of your enemies as an

atonement for your sins. But behold what he has done even in your captivity,—how he has turned the heart of Shalmanezer, once your most relentless enemy, until now you are even preferred to his own Assyrians. Leave your wicked ways, turn back to the only living God, and he surely will deliver you.'

"From that day there came a change over me. I too had strayed from the right path; in me too the world and its bad examples had subdued all holier and better feelings. Instead of putting my trust in him, I had murmured against the God of Israel for our misfortunes, like the rest of our friends. But now I had once more learned in whom all our hopes must be centred; and that very night I did not seek my lowly couch until I had emptied my heart at Jehovah's feet. I now set to work to find my two noble nephews Harim and Nahum, whom I admonished to put their trust in the Almighty, and, by perseverance and unfaltering attention to whatever duties might be imposed upon them, to gain the good will of their masters. And bravely have they followed my advice. A few nights after, when

I lay on my couch, thinking about our misfortune and praying to God for a speedy deliverance, I fell asleep; and now followed one of those strange circumstances which sometimes direct the whole course of a man's life.

"I had a dream; but so vivid was it that it seemed then, and seems now, strict reality. I was standing on the summit of a mountain whose head towered high above the clouds. Beneath my feet lay stretched out the land of our captivity, and I saw my beloved brethren toiling from morn till night, driven by the cruel lash of their merciless tormentors. But on raising my eyes I beheld in the far distance, and divided from where I stood by an almost endless expanse of water, the green vales, the silvery streams, and the beautiful forests of a new country; and high over it in the sky I saw written, in flaming letters,—

"'A new Canaan for those who seek me.'

"I stood with outstretched arms, my gaze riveted on the lovely scene,—when I felt a light touch on my right shoulder, and, turning my eyes, I looked into the face of an old man of most venerable appearance.

"'My son,' said he, mildly, and in the most melodious voice I have ever heard, 'thy prayers have ascended to God, and I now am here to take thee hence to a land where thou shalt be free, where thou mayest worship Jehovah in his own temple.'

"He took me by the hand and led me to the water's edge, where he pointed out to me a huge structure resting on the water. By a ladder made of ropes and fastened to the top of the structure, he ascended; and, at a sign from him, I followed. Scarcely had our feet touched the planks, when, impelled by an unseen force, the seeming pile of wood moved slowly out into the boundless wilderness of waters. My guide again approached me, and, again taking me by the hand, first led me to a bench, whereon sat four stalwart men, whose brawny arms were holding and swaying back and forward two long poles resting on pivots, and on whose outer ends were fastened long boards hanging over the side of the vessel. I saw the men stooping forward, pressing the poles down till they almost touched the planks, and then they were pushed out as far as the arms

of the men could reach; anon the poles were raised again, and pulled back with all the force the laborers could command. My guide, who perceived my wonder at this unusual occupation, next took me to the vessel's side, where I perceived that, on the poles being pressed down and pushed forward, the boards, which were fastened to the ends of them and ordinarily hung in the water, were lifted clean out of it; and then, on the poles being lifted and hauled in, the boards again sank into the water and were pushed forward by the united strength of the four men,—when they acted as so many levers, which propelled the vessel forward with such a force that she shot through the water like an arrow. The venerable old man then descended with me into the interior of the building, where, after showing me the different apartments for meat, water, bedrooms, &c., he raised a trap-door in the middle of the floor, and showed me a quantity of heavy stones, with which, he said, the entire room from the bottom of the structure to the floor on which we stood was filled, so as to restore the balance of the vessel and to prevent the

wind and waves throwing her over, as, without the ballast, the part above water was much heavier than that below. He next informed me as to the construction of the lower part of his vessel, and made with chalk a drawing of the entire structure on the floor, so complete that I perfectly recollected it on awaking. We now returned on deck, when, to my surprise, I saw several white seeming clouds, which propelled the vessel faster than before, without any work at all on the part of the men. But, before I could interrogate my friendly guide as to the meaning of this new apparition, the vessel struck the land, when the latter, guide, water, and all, disappeared as if by magic, and I found myself lying in my own bed.

"My first action was to jump up; and, without really knowing what I did, I at once took my tablet and made a drawing of what I had seen. I then crept back into my bed, where I soon again fell asleep, and did not wake until late the next morning. I then arose, much refreshed; and, on recollection being restored, the scene of my last night's adventures again stood vividly before my mind's eyes, and, my looks

falling upon the drawing made in the night, I recognized it as the same I had seen made by the mysterious guide of my dream.

"I now became restless; and a secret power seemed to drive me on to the completion of the work now before me. A few days after, I accidentally heard some one express the wish to have a good gardener in the vicinity of the city; and, as I possessed some knowledge of plants and flowers, together with some old works on the art of horticulture, I regarded this as another godsend, and at once made my purpose to become a public gardener known to some chance acquaintances, and soon had the pleasure of seeing my plan approved of; and, to my great joy, my nephew Lamech was offered me as assistant and companion. I then went out to the banks of the river, to select a suitable locality for my future occupation; and I have not the least doubt that it was by the special direction of Providence I hit on this spot. Here, with the assistance of Lamech, I soon constructed the light cot overhead, and in all earnest began to prepare the soil. My efforts were crowned with complete success,

and in the first year I raised enough not only to pay my rent and live comfortably, but I was also enabled to lay by a considerable quantity of provisions for future use. When I was not absolutely compelled to work outside, and while Lamech alone was busy in the garden, I went to work to improve the interior of my house. A cellar being one of the first necessities for a man of my calling, I began to dig the ground in my hut, when one day, as I was busy at work, I all at once struck a well-preserved huge stone slab, which, on closer inspection, proved to be a trap-door revolving on a pivot and leading to a subterranean vault of vast proportions. To describe my surprise and almost maddening joy at this happy discovery would be impossible. I raised the stone, threw open the doors and windows of my house, to admit a current of fresh air, and soon had the foul atmosphere of my splendid cellar sufficiently cleared to admit of my exploring the cavern. I then lowered a ladder of my own construction, the old steps that led down being so much decayed by time as to be unserviceable, provided myself with a blazing fagot of pine-

wood, and boldly descended to the floor of the vault. On closely examining every nook and corner, I first detected the room yonder, which now serves as the prison of our captives; then I went from one end of the room to the other, so as to form some idea of its size,—when I was again surprised on perceiving a rusty iron knob in one of the apparently solid rocky sides. Not doubting that this knob must serve some purpose, I first attempted to turn it and then pressed it, when—judge of my astonishment!—I saw a huge slab slowly move on one side, revealing to my bewildered gaze a second chamber, of still greater extent than the first. A dull sound as of rushing waters soon led me to a closer examination of its boundaries; and I was not long in finding the side whence the sound proceeded, constructed of solid masonry. All this led me to the conclusion that these vaults must originally have been an excavation made by the river,—for it is the Tigris that flows past, and the floor of the cavern I have found to be on a level with its bed,—which in all probability was secured from the waters by

some mighty ruler, in days long gone by, for purposes of his own.

"What those purposes may have been, and whether that wall was built after the river had been led in another channel the while or otherwise, concerned me not; and I have never given it a serious thought. It was enough for my purpose that the vaults existed; and now, with the help of the Almighty, I am sure the day of our freedom is dawning.

"After this happy discovery, I at once set to work to construct means for ventilation, which I contrived to conceal by shrubbery so completely that detection is next to impossible. Then I accumulated as much wood and provisions as, by working day and night, I possibly could. My next thought was on procuring tools and other necessary hardware; and these too I at length succeeded in accumulating in sufficient quantity; when, at last, three years ago, I set out upon a journey through the empire to seek those of my countrymen who would prefer freedom at all hazards to slavery and death under the lash of our cruel oppressors. I found two hundred men who volunteered to

share my fortunes; and, through the most marvellous intervention of Divine Providence, I succeeded in bringing them, together with their families, safely to this place. How this really was brought about I hardly know myself; but here we are, to praise Jehovah's goodness and mercy; and if you, my noble nephews, would know the particulars of our escaping all dangers and detection, let each one tell his own story, at a time more fitting for idle talk than the present.

"On our arrival, we at once commenced the building of this vessel; and now all is ready for an immediate move. All that remains to be done is to bring our brethren who live in the city of Nineveh—each one of whom is duly forewarned—out to this place,—a task by no means easy, and which I deferred to the last, so as not to create a too strong suspicion in this immediate vicinity, sure to follow the sudden disappearance of so many people. Then we have to break down the wall which separates us from the river; and, as its waters at flood-tide—which will set in at midnight precisely—will stand five or six feet above the bottom of this cavern, it will be easy to move the vessel into

the stream; and, once there, we are free; for by daylight we shall be far beyond Nineveh; and, even if by accident we should be discovered by one or the other, they will have no means to impede our progress.

"To-morrow, then, we will try to remove our brethren out of the city; and the night following the day after to-morrow will, with the help of Jehovah, witness our departure for the new Canaan.

"You, my nephews Nahum and Harim, will therefore do best by losing no more time, but return at once to the city, to avoid all suspicion; for I know that you have to make a good many preparations before you can join us to bid a final farewell to the land of our oppressors." The old man ceased; and the assembled multitude, who had listened to him in breathless silence, arose, and one after the other advanced and silently and reverently kissed Mordecai's hands; whereupon Nahum and Harim took their leave and hastened back to Nineveh.

CHAPTER IV.

HERMIONE.

In a lofty and gorgeously-furnished apartment of the royal palace sat the king's daughter. She was now sixteen years old, and just verging into womanhood. She was beautiful, ay, wondrously beautiful. To do justice to the exquisite cut of her features, we should be endowed with the pencil and skill of a Raphael; while her form was such as the mother of Hercules must have possessed, to bring even a god to her feet. Near this royal and commanding beauty—on whose high and noble brow the diadem would have seemed a mockery—was seated the lovely Tamar, one of Israel's fair daughters, who had been brought captive to Nineveh. She was the servant, but rather the companion and confidant, of Hermione,—a position to which she had been raised through her own unassuming modesty, and in spite of the most strenuous opposition on the part of Shalmanezer's relations and friends.

Tamar had succeeded in filling the soul of her royal mistress with the noblest thoughts, and was in turn regarded by her as a sister.

The maidens had evidently been conversing on some very interesting subject; for the heightened color and the sparkling eye of Hermione spoke of mighty feelings stirred within her bosom. But all at once a deep-drawn sigh, coming from the very bottom of her heart, escaped her, and, raising her eyes, which had suddenly lost their lustre and assumed a troubled appearance, she said, in a tremulous though sweet and melodious voice,—

"Tamar, my sister, my soul becomes troubled, and dark forebodings steal within my heart. You know the revengeful nature of my cousin Abimelech; and I tremble for the life of my noble Nahum. Until recently, my cousin has regarded me as his destined bride. His rank and wealth have purchased him a power and influence second only to that of the king, my father; while his known adherence to the false gods and errors of this heathen nation—whereas my father is more than suspected of a strong

leaning toward the true God of Israel—gives him a fearful ascendency.

"His rage, on discovering my attachment to Nahum, knew no bounds; and no means has he left untried to hurl his rival from his path. Ay, the assassin whose steel is to pierce Nahum's heart has been hired.

"Thus far his wicked designs have failed; but how long can it remain thus? O my friend, my sister, the blow will fall, and I shall be sacrificed!

"But no! no! I will not submit. The dagger now concealed within my bosom shall find my heart ere Abimelech's polluted touch shall defile my person!

"But where, my beloved, where may Nahum be? How long is't since you saw him? The hour when he was to meet me draws nigh. Should evil befall him! Oh!——"

"Grieve not, dear mistress," interrupted Tamar, in a low, silvery voice. "Grieve not: he will be true to his appointment. I saw him scarce four hours ago, well and happy; and, believe me, the God of his fathers will protect him.

"Cheer up, then, dear lady, cheer up, and let

me fetch my lute to enliven the lonely hours. It wants yet an hour to midnight; and not before the third hour of the morning, when everybody is buried in sleep, may you expect to behold your lover."

With a melancholy smile, Hermione thanked her companion, and the latter went to fetch the lute. After a short and lively prelude, she sang,—

"Drive trouble and sorrow away from your bosom;
Let darkness and gloom not o'ershadow your life:
Take courage, and fear not; for everywhere blossom
Truth, love, and friendship, spite warfare and strife.

"Though perils, e'en death, may endanger his coming,
Your lover is brave, and his heart knows no fear;
Like the lion, who through Afric's deserts is roaming,
He will come; for he knows that his true love waits here.

"Blessing for woman the greatest all over
Is a constant, a faithful, a trustworthy lover."

The last note of the refrain was yet trembling on the air, when footsteps were heard approaching the room where the maidens sat. Hermione bent her head to listen, and then, pressing her hand upon her heart, as if to repress its tumultuous beating, she arose, and, advancing to

where Tamar sat, said, in a husky voice, "Hark! dost hear those footsteps? That is my father. Something unusual must have happened, or he would not visit me at this hour. Oh! I know the time has come when my fate is to be decided! Be still, my poor heart: whatever it may be, let us meet it bravely!"

A knock at the door, a resolute "Come in," the door opened, and Shalmanezer stood face to face with his daughter. The conqueror of Samaria was at this time about sixty-five years of age, and rather above the medium height. He measured five feet and ten inches. His noble and intelligent face indicated a good heart, but was now clouded by trouble and sorrow.

He grasped the outstretched hand of his child, and, pressing it warmly, kindly inquired after her health. Then he sat down on a low ottoman beside his daughter.

Tamar had risen on the entrance of the king, and now was about to leave the room, when the voice of Hermione arrested her.

"Stay," the royal maiden said: "whatever my father may have to communicate, I am sure

it is nothing that my friend and companion might not hear. Is't not so, my father?"

"Yes, my child,—although I had wished that our conversation should be private: yet, as you desire it, Tamar may remain.

"You may have wondered," the king continued, "at this unseasonable visit; but things have transpired which demand a prompt action on our part.

"Abimelech,"—Hermione shuddered as she heard that name pronounced by her parent,—"whose power and influence, as you know, are almost equal to my own, has sued for thy hand, and demands an unqualified answer. In case of a refusal, he threatens to join my enemies; and then I know all will be lost. Yet for myself I fear not; for although many of my Assyrians are against me, yet I still have many friends, and, being an old man, I am sure that those I have ruled so long dare not harm me, but will let me live in peace for the few years that my life will be spared. But for you, my dear, I tremble; for should Abimelech come to power, thy lot would indeed be a hard one, unless you consent to become his wife.

"I hastened hither to communicate this, and also to tell you that I have gained three days for you to make up your mind. After that time Abimelech awaits an answer, and, alas! your poor old father has lost the power to protect his child. But I wish you to understand that I will not force you to any thing against your own inclination: so you will only have to examine your heart and give your answer according to its promptings.

"Now you know all; and, as I am a bad counsel in affairs of the heart, and the time for retiring being come, I bid thee good-night, my child, and may thy dreams be pleasant and happy!"

The poor man then hastily retired,—for he seemed to fear the outbursts of grief on the part of his truly beloved child,—and the maidens were left alone.

A silence of some duration, which neither of them seemed willing to break, was at length terminated by Hermione, who clasped her hands, and, sinking on her knees, fervently cried,—

"Thou God of Israel, whom I too adore, guide and help me in this fearful emergency. What,

oh, what shall I do? On one side my poor, almost heart-broken father, on the other the friend of my bosom, my noble and brave lover. But, lo! behold at my father's back that dreadful, that abhorred man, Abimelech, the man of iniquity and of blood! Never should I dare to lift my heart to thy throne, O my God; for he whom they would make my husband would crush me, as he would crush every other true believer.

"No! duty toward my Creator demands, and I must, I will obey! Death, or Nahum!"

She had arisen, but now she sank back on her ottoman. Exhausted nature could hold out no longer, and she fell into a deep and swoon-like sleep.

Tamar bent over the sleeping maiden, and long and anxiously did she watch. But at length she was convinced that the sleep was sound, and that there was no danger. She therefore went back, trimmed her lamp for the night, and sat down on her own low couch.

Here she began to muse; and anon, giving words to her thoughts, she said,—

"There she lies, young, rich, and beautiful, the daughter of a mighty king, but, oh, how

unhappy! Not all the wealth of Solomon could compensate her for the trouble she feels. Not even I, the despised captive, would exchange my lot for hers. I too love; between me and my love there also arise dangers. I too can say 'My lover is brave and his heart knows no fear;' but between me and my heart's choice there stands no abhorred suitor, and I need not to fear the breaking of a father's heart. I am free in my choice, and therefore, although a captive, freer than my royal mistress!

"O Harim! my true, my noble lover, I feel it, I shall be yours! But Hermione! she is so good, so noble, so brave, and—— She must, she shall be saved, should I myself perish!"

She sank on her knees, and long and fervently did she pray to the God of her fathers. Then she lay back on her couch; and soon the drowsy god came and folded her to his bosom.

CHAPTER V.

DETERMINATION.

When Harim and Nahum left old Mordecai's dwelling, they hastened, full of wonder at what they had seen and heard, straight to the city. It was late, or rather early in the morning, it being nearly two hours after midnight; and they began to fear that their absence might have been discovered,—a circumstance they wished by all means to avoid. That they were as yet in no wise implicated or suspected by any one but their relentless enemy Bareck, they had, to their intense satisfaction, learned by the confession of the latter; but he for the present was safe, and therefore nothing was to be apprehended from that quarter. And there was yet another cause for rejoicing. That the impending interview of the lovers had been betrayed to Abimelech, and was therefore as well known by Bareck, there could be no doubt. But it was also certain that the king's nephew would hold his peace concerning

his knowledge, so as in no wise to be implicated if his hired assassin's blow should strike home; and so there was nothing to be feared but his vile tool, and that was out of harm's way. But the protracted absence of the captain might have created alarm; and therefore our two friends this time directed their steps toward the southern gate, where the departure of Bareck was not so likely to be known. They found the gate locked; but, making their presence known by three loud raps, they were instantly admitted by the officer on duty, who, after examining Harim's passport, where, as usual, no name was mentioned, courteously saluted and let them pass without hinderance. Nahum and Harim, on leaving their friends, had assumed a disguise, and had therefore not been recognized by the officer, who believed them to be some favored officers of the king's household who had been hunting for adventures in the suburbs of the city,—as was not unfrequently the case.

Once within the city, our wanderers were safe, as they could easily have accounted for their being abroad at this time, had need been. But they were not molested, and did not even meet

with any thing worth their attention, until they came to a place where the street they were following crossed one of the most frequented thoroughfares of Nineveh,—when, on nearing the corner, they saw two men emerging from one of those places where the debauchees of the "better class of society" used to resort for their licentious and bacchanalian orgies, and which at that time abounded in that vicinity. The two men—whom our friends had no difficulty in recognizing as Abimelech and one of his boon-companions—were evidently the worse for the wine they had imbibed, and, in a rather uncertain gait, took the same direction which Nahum and his cousin were following. The latter fell a little behind, and, keeping in the deepest shade, followed on, without their presence being suspected,—when, at length, the heavy tongue of Abimelech broke loose, and, with a terrible oath, he cried out,—

"Perdition seize these d——d Jews! Would that the whole cursed nation had but one head! I would sever it from the body with one stroke of my good sword. Look at this Nahum!—the miserable wretch dares to lift his gaze to my

own royal bride; and, by all that's infernal, she returns his affection!

"Hitherto he has escaped my vengeance; but this very night will see him slain,—ay, hurled out of existence.

"Bareck is true and brave; and he has promised me that before to-morrow's sun arises the Jewish dog shall perish, were he to be slain at Hermione's feet. The captain will be true to his word; and at daybreak I shall hasten to the king's daughter, whose heart I will wrest from her bosom, until she lies prostrate at my feet and acknowledges me her lord and master. Then, the king being subdued already, I shall ascend the throne of Assyria, and woe to the cursed tribe of Israel! I will crush them, I will hunt them down, until their very name shall be forgotten."

Nahum and Harim, who had heard every word uttered by their cruel enemy, here came to a place where their road led them in another direction; and soon after both had the satisfaction of standing in their own rooms, without their absence having been suspected. As it yet lacked an hour of the time appointed for the

interview with his beloved, Nahum threw himself on his bed, where he enjoyed a short rest: then he arose, dressed himself, and at the third hour of the morning he again went forth to the dwelling of Harim, whom he found ready to accompany him.

We left Hermione and her companion asleep in one of the apartments of the royal palace. These apartments were situated in the southern part of the building, and, besides the usual entrance-door, which opened on a corridor that ran the entire length of the palace, they were connected, by a secret stairway that was known only to Hermione, her father, and three other persons, with a room in one of the out-buildings; and, through the intercession of the king's daughter, this room had been assigned to Harim.

It was about half-past two o'clock in the morning when Hermione awoke; and, turning around, she beheld Tamar, also just opening her eyes.

The maidens simultaneously arose, and, meeting in the middle of the room, they embraced each other, their faces lit up with a radiance

that bespoke an inward happiness not felt for a long time before.

"Oh," Hermione cried, "such a bright, glorious vision as I had now!—a dream from which I regret the awaking!

"I saw Nahum in all the splendor of glorious manhood. We were walking arm in arm in the most beautiful garden I ever beheld. One side of this fair spot was bounded by a majestic forest, the other by towering rocks that kissed the clouds; while the middle was traversed by a silvery stream, whose waters, clear as purest crystal, mirrored the heavens above. We were lost in happiness and contentment,—when, as I accidentally lowered my eyes to the ground, I beheld a vermin, with the head and features of Abimelech, ready to dart upon and devour us. I was on the point of crying out, to arouse my unconscious lover, when, lo! there stood beside us an old man of venerable appearance. His flowing beard of snowy whiteness reached down to his girdle; his eyes were mild and full of kindness; while in his hand he held a chain of iron, to which was bound the hired murderer Bareck.

"No sooner did the old man behold the creeping reptile in our path, than he darted forward, and a moment later it lay—vermin no longer, but the corpse of our deadliest foe—lifeless at our feet. Nahum now became aware of the peril we had escaped, and, warmly embracing our noble liberator, he introduced him to me as his uncle."

Tamar had listened in breathless silence to the recital of her mistress and friend, and, when the latter had concluded, she again strained the royal girl to her bosom in a paroxysm of joy.

"Oh, happy are we!" she cried; "for thy dream was not a mere fiction of thy fancy. I too had a dream. I too was in that garden, with Harim by my side. I saw the occurrence you have described. This coincidence cannot have been mere accident: it was, it must have been, sent by Providence, to raise our drooping spirits; and thus it is a foreshadowing of what really will happen.

"But, hark! I hear footsteps approaching! And—oh, joy!—they come from the direction of the hidden passage."

And so it proved to be. A moment later,

the click of a hidden spring resounded through the room, the wall in one corner opened as if by magic, and Nahum and Harim stood before the maidens. They met as only true lovers can meet. A long and fervent embrace opened the conversation, and then Nahum recounted their adventures. He spoke of Mordecai and his wonderful dream,—of the subterranean chambers,—of the ship,—of his assembled friends, and of their purpose. To all this the girls listened with astonishment and wonder. But when he at last came to speak of Bareck and of his capture, the maidens again threw themselves rapturously into the arms of their lovers, and in turn now related their simultaneous dream.

But at last Nahum spoke of their return to the city, of their meeting with Abimelech and his companion, of the hopes and expectations of the former, and of his terrible threat against the king's daughter and the Israelites. This somewhat checked the ardor of the maidens, but at the same time strengthened Hermione in her determination to brave any thing rather than consent to a union with her cousin.

Harim now led Tamar into an adjoining apartment, while Nahum and Hermione seated themselves on a low ottoman.

"Yes, my beloved," the maiden said, "it is hard to leave a fond and cherished father; but, where staying is fraught with such dangers to one's self and one's immortal soul as mine would be, all other considerations must be set aside. My determination is taken. I am with thee and thine unto the end of the world."

"O my most beloved, my cherished angel!" cried Nahum, in tones that were low and trembling with emotion, "my heroic, my brave girl! Wouldst thou indeed leave behind all the luxury and splendor of royalty, to share the fortunes of the despised captive?

"Thy presence will redouble my courage; it will give renewed strength to my arms. Thou shalt be the queen, as I will be the leader, of my brethren, who henceforth and forever shall be spoken of only as the lost tribes of Israel; for to the land of our fathers we will never return; but in a far-distant country, beyond seas whose extent is unknown, I will be the founder of a new nation, whose descendants, down to

future ages, shall be proud of Hermione their mother."

They then spent another hour in sweet communion, until Harim came and admonished his friend that it was time to leave.

It was then settled among the lovers that the next night should be set apart for the flight, the girls disguised in male attire, so as to divert attention from them; and, after another fond embrace, Nahum and Harim returned by the same way they had come.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLIGHT.

THE sun had arisen, and Nahum and Harim were at their posts, as usual, not a soul in the city suspecting their having been beyond their masters' dwellings.

Abimelech—who firmly believed that at least one of them, if not both, would be slain before this time—was still in bed, sleeping off the last night's debauch. The few who had seen them leave and enter the city-gates had not recognized them, and not even for once suspected their identity; while the only men whom they might have feared were locked up in a secure prison, guarded by stout and trusty men.

But the city was in great commotion: guardsmen and soldiers were running hither and thither, while a strong detachment of horsemen were preparing to leave the town.

On calling the roll of the guard, at sunrise, the absence of their captain and three of the

best men was discovered. Messengers that were at once despatched to the several dwellings of the missing men had returned with the intelligence that they had not been at home that night; while it was also ascertained that they had had no special duties assigned them which might have called them abroad.

Bareck had been in the habit of strolling out of the city when relieved from his duty; and not unfrequently was he joined on these excursions by one or the other of his intimate followers,—as the immediate neighborhood of the city was thronged with houses of shame and pleasure; but always had they returned long before sunrise, so as to be present at the roll-call every morning. Yet on this morning they had not made their appearance. Three hours had already elapsed, and no tidings of the missing, when at last some of the men who had been on duty the previous night bethought themselves of the three men they had seen to leave the city, and whom, after courteously accompanying them to the gate, Bareck undoubtedly had followed.

But who the three men might have been the soldiers did not know, as they had been too far

off when their captain conversed with them: they could not even give a correct description of their outward appearance. Inquiries were now set on foot in every direction: the suburbs were strictly searched, but all in vain. All the guardsmen of the city had been interrogated, but nothing had been elicited.

The lieutenant of the southern gate, which was the most frequented by the gentry and the king's officers, had let in and out so many during the previous night, and seen so many royal passports, that he was not able to recall to mind any special circumstance; but he was sure that nothing suspicious had come under his observation.

When Abimelech had slept off the effects of his bout and appeared in the streets, the commotion had reached the highest pitch. The horsemen had returned. They had scoured the country for miles around the city. They had entered every house and building they saw,—the dwelling of old Mordecai—whom they found with his assistant busy planting some rare flowers—not excepted; but to no purpose: Bareck and his followers had not been found. Mordecai had trem-

bled when he saw the horsemen approaching; but he soon mastered his emotion. And well might he tremble; for the soft soil of the garden, which stretched out in front of his house, had retained the footprints not only of Nahum, Harim, and Lamech, but also those of Bareck and his followers,—a circumstance he had not thought of before; but now he remembered it; and his anxiety, therefore, may well be imagined. Then, too, a strict observer could possibly have detected the subterranean chamber, although it was hidden as well as human ingenuity could do it. Had one or the other been discovered, ruin, complete ruin, would have been certain, and all his plans would have been frustrated on the eve of their maturity.

But, fortunately, the horsemen were no strict observers. They chatted gayly as they rode along, while the hoofs of their steeds obliterated the afore-mentioned tracks so completely as to make them altogether undiscernible. Arrived in front of the house, two only dismounted and proceeded to examine the interior; but, as they were in a hurry, they contented themselves with carelessly looking into both rooms; and, not see-

ing any thing suspicious there, they returned and reported to their comrades the result of their search.

Hereupon the whole troop returned by the same way they had come; and the obliteration of all tracks now became perfect.

A more heart-felt thanksgiving, I trow, has never ascended to Jehovah's throne than that which went up out of the breast of the old gardener when the last horseman had passed out of sight.

On learning the state of affairs, Abimelech was nearly driven frantic. His firm friend and confidant, the man of all others whom he could intrust with any, even the bloodiest, most wicked and monstrous orders, sure to be obeyed to the very letter, was gone,—gone, too, before his hated rival had been hurled out of existence. Another man must be found to do the murderous deed. But where to find him? Where was the man so well acquainted with all the secrets of the court and its surroundings, or so well known among the officers of the king's and minister's households, who would sell himself for gold? The execution of his

fell plans must be postponed, perhaps abandoned, or he himself must do the work. But that he dared not attempt.

While in this terrible mood, he bethought himself of Hermione, and straight to the royal palace he went.

On being announced, he was at once shown to the apartments of the king's daughter, who, to his surprise and intensest joy, welcomed him with a warmth and cordiality that were altogether too sudden, too intense, to be real. But he saw it not. Blind fool as he was, he did not perceive, what even the most careless observer must have seen, that this was only a mask assumed to hide the disgust and abhorrence the maiden felt in his presence. But his vanity was flattered; and already he beheld himself Hermione's husband, wielding Assyria's sceptre, clothed in the purple of royalty. Short-sighted mortal! The very maiden who now smiled upon him so sweetly, pure and feeble though she was, would have felt no remorse in sheathing her dagger in his black heart. But she now spoke kindly to him: she regretted the long estrangement between them, and altogether succeeded

so well in flattering his vanity that he really believed himself the object of her sincere affection. But when she told him that on the morrow she would give him a final answer,—when she held out to him the strongest hopes that this answer would be a favorable one,—he was quite beside himself: he threw himself at her feet, he protested his love, and his readiness even to die for her, in such strong terms that she almost believed him in earnest; and he mentally swore that she did love none but him, and that all Bareck had told him of her attachment to Nahum was base calumny and falsehood.

Could that conceited young man only have foreseen what the morrow had in store for him—— But I must not anticipate, and will let him enjoy his brief triumph. After another half-hour's conversation, he retired, believing himself the happiest man alive.

Nahum and Harim, in the mean time, had not been idle: their own effects, as well as those of the maidens, were packed and conveyed to the house of Abraham, an old Jew who lived in one of the numerous alleys of the city, and where

old Mordecai was wont to put up on his coming into town, as he frequently did, with horse and cart, loaded with the products of his garden, which he then disposed of to the inhabitants.

Ample disguises had been provided for the maidens, and the different Israelites in Nineveh, who had previously been sounded, and who had declared their willingness to share the fortunes of Nahum and his friends, were notified that the ensuing night was fixed for their departure. Most of these people had already, and under various pretexts, sent their wives and children, with such of their effects as they could conceal around their persons, out of the city, and were preparing to follow them as opportunity might offer.

Old Mordecai seemed very busy that day. Three times already had he been in town with his cart, which each time he took back well filled. But, as he was in the habit of taking different things, such as seeds, plants, and particularly the city-offals for manuring-purposes,—all of which generally were collected by Abraham and stored in his yard till removed by the old gardener out of the town, whenever he

came in, this circumstance occasioned no surprise. The commotion in the city meantime had not subsided, and, under cover of the din and confusion that generally ensue on occasions of that sort, Mordecai and his confederates quietly and securely worked on, till at length, about two hours before nightfall, every thing was ready, to the removal of the men themselves. This too was soon effected,—most of the fugitives pretending to go in search of their wives and families, while others had been accustomed to going in and out of the city at any hour during the day; and, as each Israelite had been marked with some token of servitude, so as to be easily recognizable, these marks served as so many passports, which were duly respected by all public officials.

At last there remained but Nahum, Harim, Hermione, and Tamar, who could not have left the city before night without creating suspicion.

It was therefore arranged that they should leave as soon as possible after the tenth hour, by the western gate, where some of Hermione's staunchest friends had been put on duty, and where Mordecai promised to be in attendance

with a score or two of his best and bravest men.

Abimelech, in the mean time, had left the royal palace and adjourned to one of his favorite public resorts, where he was sure to find some of his companions with whom to talk over the events of the day.

In this he was not disappointed,—as he found quite a number of the dissipated gentry of Nineveh awaiting his coming. They, on his appearance, boisterously hailed him as the great man of the day, who, as the next after the king, was to be expected to take the most active and prominent part in the affair, and rained such a shower of eager questions upon him, that for a moment he was quite nonplussed.

After order in a measure being restored, he explained to them, as far as he had understood it himself, the cause of the public commotion; "and," said he, "take my word for it, none but our cursed and miserable captives are at the bottom of all this.

"Already some of my secret spies have seen that villanous head steward of the king, and that arrogant fellow who acts as head groom

in Almanzor's stables, take a quantity of boxes and packages to the stopping-place of that old Jewish gardener in Dog Alley; and the latter has removed them out of the city. I could at once have pounced in upon that affair and spoiled their game; but I prefer to bide my time; and when it does come, I do assure you, I shall sing them such a song as they will not forget in all their lives.

"But at present I have other matters to occupy my thoughts, and—hark ye—matters of some import, as well as cause for gladsome rejoicings.

"Ho, my jolly Pancratius of the never-failing bowl! fill our gaping tankards to the brim; and you, my trusty companions in many a glorious bout, sit around me while I relate the day's wonderful revelations."

Mine host soon brought the fresh supply, and the friends formed a ring around the conceited braggart, while he, in a drawling and cracked voice, continued,—

"I tell ye, the game is all in my own hands now. Shalmanezer is subdued, and my most

royal and beautiful lioness is tamed,—ay, tamed in such a way as quite surprised even me.

"Only think of it! When I called on her to-day to hear my final doom, she like a cooing dove received me with outstretched arms, regretted the long estrangement between us, and called me her dear friend and cousin!

"To-morrow I am to receive the reward of my constancy from her own ruby lips, and then,—for Assyria's sceptre!

"A wedding we will have, such as the world never saw before; and, once in my power, my most noble bride shall soon learn to acknowledge me as her lord and master."

The wildest acclamations followed this grand speech; and many of the young men present hastened to swear allegiance to their future ruler; while some, more sober and cool than the rest, ominously shook their heads.

"All very fine," one of these latter remarked; "but, I fear me, all's not gold that glitters. Most strange it is that Hermione, who never even tried to conceal the disgust and abhorrence she felt at the approach of her cousin, should all at once have changed so wonderfully. If there's

not something behind all this, then set me down for a croaking raven."

And in this opinion some of the others joined, until at length even Abimelech was forced to acknowledge that things did wear a somewhat suspicious look.

But he was not cast down. He was sure of his game. If his spies had not been greatly mistaken, the two Jews Nahum and Harim intended to make a decisive move that very night; and would it be not only easy, but glorious fun, to pounce down upon them in the act and at once have them destroyed? And there was yet another thing, which thus far he had kept to himself.

He had long suspected, and his spies had confirmed it, that a great many of the captive Israelites were leagued, and that they must have some final object in view. Many were the stealthy interviews and conversations between Mordecai, his nephews, and many of their countrymen, that had been duly betrayed to Abimelech; while the events of that very day plainly indicated that something important must be going on, as the unusual stir among

the Israelites, and the uncommon number of Israelitish women and children who had on that day left the city under various pretences, had been faithfully reported to him. And when he at last ascertained that Nahum and Harim were preparing for a move, he no longer doubted that that night had been fixed upon for some great undertaking. But what that undertaking really was he did not know, as all his knowledge regarding the affair was only based on suspicion. It would now have been very easy for him to prevent the captives from going any further than they had already done; but, to do this, his suspicions must be made public; and that he did not wish to do.

He had his own reason for letting matters progress to their completion: then he would interfere, with as little help as possible, and, falling upon those whom he considered the mortal enemies of his nation, on the eve of their success, he meant at once to crush them and to be regarded by his countrymen as their savior and liberator.

That done, his way would be clear, and the possession of Hermione certain, as she would

no longer dare to oppose his wishes. How he meant to gain her affection has been indicated by his different conversations when with his companions.

"And now, my friends," he concluded, "as I know that you are all true to me, that I can trust you,—and, moreover, as you will not be losers if I gain my object,—I have decided on making you my companions in this enterprise. Therefore let our jolly host once more fill our tankards, that we may drink a fortunate result to our undertaking; and then——"

He was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a man in the costume of an artisan, who, after making a peculiar sign, retired to the farther end of the room.

Abimelech hastily arose and joined the new-comer, who briefly informed him that Nahum and Harim would leave the town soon after the tenth hour, by the western gate, where the watch had been assigned to Ackbar, a man well known as one of the most faithful adherents to the royal house.

Abimelech thanked the messenger, rewarded him handsomely, and told him that his services

for that day would be required no more; whereupon the man withdrew.

"And now," continued the speaker, on returning to his companions, "let's home, to arm for our enterprise."

The tankards were refilled; and, while his companions quaffed the delicious wine, Abimelech informed them of the messenger's report, and bade them hasten home, arm themselves, and reassemble in a certain locality outside the western gate. Then they all took their leave.

It was near the eleventh hour. The night was beautiful and clear. The moon, now in its full, was just rising above the hills that bounded the view to the eastward of the city, when Nahum and Harim—accompanied by Hermione, who, on leaving the supper-table, about an hour before, had taken a most affectionate leave of her father, who somewhat wondered thereat, as he of course expected to see her again the next morning, and Tamar, both dressed as pages of the royal household—stood before Ackbar in front of the western gate. That official, who was well acquainted

with our friends, at once opened the massive portal and let the four wanderers out.

Once out of the city, the fugitives directed their steps toward a small copse of oaks and cedars, where they were quickly joined by Lamech, who informed them that Mordecai, with twenty-five of their best men, was stationed not a stone's throw off, completely concealed by the shrubbery, where they would halt until assured that the fugitives were not pursued, and then they would follow and soon join them.

Our party now hastened on, and, when they came in sight of Mordecai's dwelling, they resolved to stop and await their friends.

Abimelech and his companions had gone home and armed themselves, whereupon they left the city and assembled in the place chosen for the rendezvous. Here they refreshed themselves with copious draughts of sweet wine, and then went forth to reconnoitre. Ere long they beheld our fugitives, and by the light of the clear-shining moon they had no difficulty in recognizing in the two leaders of the party the detested Jews Nahum and Harim. All at once Abimelech gave a violent start and convulsively grasped

the arm of his nearest follower; for in one of the seeming pages he had recognized the now unveiled features of Hermione.

"Hell and furies!" he gasped; "look here! Dost behold that face? By all the fiends, it is she, my affianced, led away by that accursed villain!"

He was quite overcome by rage and mortification; but soon he rallied, and, turning to his companions, he continued,—

"Now, my friends, now is the time for action! now we will annihilate those dastardly enemies of our nation! Stand by me, and my royal favors shall be granted to all who help me. Half of you turn to the left and by a quick march head them off, while I with the rest will cut off their retreat. Be quick and silent, now, and the day will soon be ours; and hearken: as soon as my hands hold the sceptre of this kingdom, no favor shall be too great, but cheerfully will I grant it to each of you.

"Yes," he continued, in a lower tone from between his clenched teeth, "yes, my royal bride, you will yet be mine, and your promise that to-morrow I am to receive the reward of my

constancy will yet be fulfilled. But beware, my coy dove! All the pangs I have suffered at thy hands will be revisited on thy head; and the memory of that Jewish dog I will make one of anguish and torture to thee,—ay, if I must tear your very heart out of your bosom!"

But the departure of the one-half of his friends soon turned his thoughts in another direction; and, not entertaining the least doubt that the capture of the fugitives would be an easy affair for them, he could hardly await the signal for moving on.

Meantime our wanderers had come to a halt, as we have seen before, to await old Mordecai; and, on suddenly perceiving a party of men emerging into the path before them, they went on, believing these men to be their friends. Scarcely had they begun to move forward, when a shrill whistle, sounded by the party in front, fell on their ears, and a moment later the signal was answered by an exultant cry in their rear. Still they doubted not that the men they saw were really their friends; and Nahum and Harim, preceded by Lamech in charge of the two maidens, pushed on, until the youth—who, sharing the be-

lief of his brother and cousin, had turned his whole attention to the disguised females—all at once raised his eyes and recognized in the party before him their mortal foes.

With the quickness of thought he turned and informed Nahum of what he had seen; but scarcely had he done so, when the party in the rear came up, and Abimelech, his features contorted with rage and malignity, stood face to face with his rival.

So unexpectedly had their enemies come upon them, and so certain had they felt of their security, now that they had come in full view of their destination, that at first our two heroes were quite at a loss; but Lamech soon recalled them to a sense of their situation, and in a whisper informed them that a firm resistance on their part would soon turn the scale in their favor, as the old gardener and his friends could not be far away.

The moon was now completely risen, and in all her splendor illuminated the scene below. The place where the parties had met was a gentle eminence, surrounded on three sides by low shrubbery, here and there interspersed with

a stout oak or a towering cedar, while in front and a little farther on could be seen the garden and dwelling of old Mordecai.

Our fugitives were now surrounded on all sides; and while Hermione, who had been the first to recognise her hated cousin, lay half fainting in the arms of her faithful Tamar, Nahum and Harim prepared for a determined resistance.

"Dog of a Jew!" Abimelech hissed, "now thy impudence has reached its climax; but, by all hades, thy race is run! I could smite thee with one stroke of my good blade; but I will preserve thee, ay, preserve thee—dost hear?—for a fate worse than ten thousand deaths. And yonder maiden, whom thou hast dared to pollute with thy touch, I will wring her heart until the memory of thee and thy accursed race shall be one of anguish and torture.

"Ho, there, my friends! to your work! But hear! slay not these miserable wretches; for I would preserve them, to wrest from them their secrets,—preserve them for my own especial pleasure. But disarm and bind them; and, above

all, secure the two pages. One of them I claim as my own; the other I give up to you."

With this he rushed forward, vainly imagining that the superior number of his followers would awe the fugitives into quick submission. But in this he soon found himself sadly mistaken; as Nahum, Harim, and Lamech were well armed, and stood like so many rocks, frustrating all attempts to overthrow them.

Three times already were the assailing party driven back with many a smart blow, and some of Abimelech's followers began loudly to refuse their help in a further attempt to take the Israelites alive; when their leader, driven to desperation, snatched the senseless form of Hermione and bade his friends slay those whom they could not secure otherwise.

Vain order! ay, and the last ever uttered by the haughty Abimelech; for no sooner did Nahum behold his beloved in the grasp of his detested rival than he felt the strength of a lion in his arms, and with one stroke of his stout sword he cleft his enemy in twain. The rest, when they saw the terrible fate of their leader, took to their heels.

But at that moment Mordecai and his men emerged from the shrubbery; and of the fourteen who had followed Abimelech in pursuit of the fugitive Israelites not one returned to the city.

When the work was done, Mordecai joined his nephews, and, after warmly shaking their hands, he told them that he with his followers had been concealed in the shrubbery near at hand, and that they had seen all that passed.

"But," he continued, "I saw there were only fifteen in pursuit, and I knew that they were pursuing two scions of the royal house of Jehu. We could easily have come forward and annihilated those weak and cowardly Assyrians, but I disdained such a course; and, moreover, I wanted to give you an opportunity to try the strength of your arms,—to regain the confidence in yourself which you might have lost in your captivity; for of all manly virtues self-reliance is the greatest.

"But for the worst we had prepared. Lamech had been instructed, in case of real danger, to give a signal; on hearing which we should have been with you before any harm could have been

done. But, noble youth as he is, he did not want our help while there was a prospect of doing without it; and the result of the engagement has shown that he was right in his calculation.

"But now," the old man added, "let us forward without further delay, while I shall order some of our trusty companions to carry the corpses of our slain enemies to the opposite side of the city, so as to lead their friends to the belief that this work has been done by the robbers who infest the northern outskirts of Nineveh."

In the mean time, Hermione had regained her senses, and, before any of her friends were aware of it, or had had time to remove the ghastly corpses out of sight, she stood among them, tall and erect, her loose hair flying in the night-breeze, the very impersonation of a revenging Nemesis.

Anon her gaze fell upon the prostrate form of her slain cousin, while, on raising her eyes, she beheld the venerable form of Mordecai; and, with the startling cry, "Oh! my dream! my dream!" she sank into the outstretched arms of her faithful lover. But joy never kills: it very seldom even makes one faint; and so Hermione was not

killed, she had not even fainted, but only in the exuberance of her feelings had she sunk on Nahum's stout bosom. She was soon brought to a full sense of her situation; and thereupon the party resumed their march, after fifteen of Mordecai's followers had been ordered to remove all traces of the recent conflict.

In a short time, and without any further disturbance, they reached the old gardener's cot, and in about an hour afterward they were rejoined by their friends, who informed them that the corpses of the slain had been removed as ordered, and that all traces of the conflict had been obliterated so completely as to be unobservable by the closest scrutiny.

Old Mordecai then opened the secret trap-door, and the entire party descended to the subterranean chambers, leaving the cot and its surroundings shrouded in quiet and darkness. It was now about three hours after midnight, and, as all the men as well as the maidens were well tired out, they resolved not to disturb the inhabitants of the vault, but to lie down and prepare themselves by a short rest for the work yet before them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DAY AFTER THE FLIGHT.

We left our friends the fugitive Israelites in their subterranean chambers, preparing to rest, where we will leave them for the present, and now, with returning dawn, hasten back to Nineveh, to notice the effect of the events narrated in our last chapter, upon the inhabitants of the royal city.

The sun had risen in his usual splendor, and the streets of Nineveh began to show signs of returning animation. But in the bustling throng there seemed something wanting. Here and there one encountered closed-up stalls and other places of business; while many a wandering glance seemed to inquire why certain labors, which evidently were assigned to a poorer and more despised class of menials, were not being performed.

In the king's household all was utter perplexity. The various cooks and servants stood

idling around their several offices, not knowing what to do.

The hour at which the monarch would arise and take his morning meal drew nigh; while several of the higher officers passed and repassed the kitchen-door, sending longing glances at the glowing hearths, and loudly grumbling about their breakfast not being served.

But no appetizing flavor of roast or stew emerged from the kitchen; and it appeared as if the day was devoted to a total abstinence from animal food. More than a dozen messengers had been sent to the head steward's room for orders; but they had found the door locked, and had been unable to make themselves heard by the supposed sleeper; and, as Harim was known to be an especial favorite of the king and his daughter, all were afraid to provoke his anger by louder demonstrations. But deep and bitter were the curses muttered against the steward and the favor in which he stood with his royal master and mistress.

At length the king sent for his chamberlain; and now they could wait no longer. Once more they knocked loudly at the closed door, and

then, not receiving any answer, they burst it open, when, lo! the room was found to be empty and showing unmistakable signs of not having been occupied all night.

Great now became the consternation and excitement; but the wish for something to fortify the inner man prevailed, and, in the bustle of hasty preparation, the mysterious disappearance of the head steward was for the while forgotten.

The same consternation prevailed in Almanzor's stables. The horses loudly clamored for their oats, while the under grooms stood idling and wondering at Nahum's absence. But here, too, the disappearance of the head groom was at length discovered: yet the steeds could wait no longer for their morning meal; and therefore here also the affair was for the while forgotten.

It was yet early in the morning; and therefore the absence of Abimelech and his friends had not yet been discovered, as these gentlemen did not belong to the class of early risers.

But with advancing day the perplexity increased. Public officials began to inquire about the not-performed public labors. Masters made

search for their missing slaves; while those who were accustomed to deal with the few free Israelites, most of whom were engaged in traffic with small wares, &c., loudly expressed their wonder at their non-appearance.

In the now well-filled rooms of the "jolly Pancratius" all was consternation and excitement.

For the twenty-fifth time, mine host was relating to a crowd of eager listeners how on the previous night Abimelech and fourteen of his friends had been assembled in that very room, and, after a good deal of discussion, of which he, Pancratius, had not understood any thing beyond that all the talk had been about the Jew Nahum and the king's daughter, they had left to arm themselves and to reassemble at a certain public house outside the western gate; how he had seen none of them since, although he had kept his house open all night, according to their own wish; and how he therefore feared that they had not returned.

Every new arrival augmented the consternation, for as yet none had appeared who knew more than the others. Whenever the door

opened to admit a new-comer, they all would rush forward, and all at the same time exclaim, in eager tones,—

"What news? Have you seen Abimelech?"

"No."

"Did you hear any thing of young Haman?"

"No."

"Has Mardeck made his appearance?"

"No."

"Any news at all of any of the missing fifteen?"

"No."

And "no" it was throughout the whole catalogue. No one had seen or heard of Abimelech or any of his companions. It passed all comprehension.

At length a young man whose dress and bearing bespoke him one of the higher class, and who was known by his friends as "the prince," made his appearance, and, with looks and tones full of mystery, informed the assembled throng that just now the flight of Harim, Nahum, the king's daughter Hermione, her maid the lovely Tamar, and a host of other captive Israelites, had been discovered. "They have been followed,"

he added, "by a party of armed troopers; but no clew to their whereabouts has as yet been discovered, save that the cottage of the old Jewish gardener has been found abandoned and burnt to the ground. But one thing besides our troopers have seen; namely, the footprints of a large body of men in a northerly direction; and, as it is known that Abimelech and fourteen of his friends left the western gate between the ninth and tenth hour last night, it is supposed that they followed the fugitives, as some of the footprints in the same direction, judging by the delicate and fashionable finish of the sandals, seem to be made by the former; and, if such is the case, we may perhaps soon hear of them. One thing only puzzles everybody. You all know that for some time the northern outskirts of the city have been infested by a large band of robbers, and therefore it is not at all impossible that the fugitives as well as Abimelech's party have fallen in with them, in which case it is probable that all have been slain or captured. But another party of mounted soldiers has been sent in the direction indicated; and, whatever may have been the fate of Abimelech and his

friends, we shall most likely soon know all about it. The king is nearly frantic at the disappearance of his daughter, and has offered a large reward for her recapture; wherefore I do not doubt that we shall soon have the fugitives back again, if they have not been already slain; for nothing stimulates officials and hirelings to such exertions as the hope of being well rewarded.

"Should Abimelech liberate Hermione and bring her safely back, then will he indeed be fortunate; for Shalmenezer solemnly declares that in that event the two shall be united without further delay, and Abimelech will surely succeed to the throne.

"And, furthermore, this flight of the Israelites and their ingratitude to the king, who has done so much for them, have turned our ruler's former good will toward them into such deadly hatred, that he will readily listen to and accept the advice of his son-in-law to sweep the cursed race out of existence.

"But who comes here? News, news, my friends! It is Tareck, who was with the second party, sent, under command of Sennacherib, to

pursue the fugitives, and who therefore can give us the desired information.

"Hail, Tareck! well met! Ho, Pancrace! A brimming tankard of thy best!"

The friends had shaken hands; but, on his inquiring gaze now encountering that of Tareck, the prince suddenly relaxed his hold, and, in startling tones, exclaimed,—

"What, in the name of all the gods, is the matter? Thou lookest as if thou hadst seen a ghost! Speak! What ails thee?"

But Tareck did not speak. He seized the tankard brought by mine host, and at one draught swallowed its contents: then, in a solemn and trembling tone, he said,—

"Our friends are dead, slain like dogs! while Abimelech is cut in twain!

"The place where the dead bodies were found," he continued, "shows all the signs of a conflict, while the footprints in the soft ground indicate that a strong party must have been engaged.

"But I cannot believe that the fugitive Israelites have done this work. It is a well-known fact that the northern outskirts of the city are

infested by a strong band of robbers; and I believe that in pursuing the fugitives Abimelech has fallen in with the desperadoes; for I cannot for one moment entertain the thought that the unarmed and weak sons of Israel should have been able to overcome and slay a force so well armed and disciplined as our fifteen friends undoubtedly were.

"But the strangest part of the affair is, that, although the ground consists for miles around of the same soft substance, no traces could be discovered either back from or beyond the scene of action."

And so it was.

When the fifteen men ordered by Mordecai to remove the dead bodies left their friends, to perform their work, they went as far as they could through the shrubbery, where they were sure that their feet would not leave any traces in the soil, while they moved on with such caution as not even to displace a single twig or bough; and when they had gone far enough in that manner to be certain that the direction whence they had come could not be perceived, they moved out upon softer soil,

where they purposely let their feet sink deep into the ground; and, not satisfied with this, each man left as many prints as he possibly could, and they even put the dead on their feet and caused them to leave their traces, which might easily be discovered by any pursuers, until they came to a spot that seemed fit for depositing their burdens. Here they jumped and stamped about for some time, they tussled with each other, to make it appear as if a sharp conflict had taken place, and then they left the bodies in such positions as to appear as if they had been slain there.

After every thing had been arranged to their satisfaction, the Israelites threw themselves on their bellies, and, snakelike, moved back to the shrubbery without leaving a single backward footprint. On arriving opposite the western gate, they soon found themselves on the tracks made by Nahum, his companions, and their pursuers, which they succeeded in obliterating so completely that nothing was discovered by the parties sent after them the next day, as has been seen by the various reports.

"When I had seen all this," Tareck concluded, "I stood rooted to the spot; and, bewildered by the spectacle before me, and not knowing what I was doing, I turned my horse's head and galloped back to the city.

"But now let us out into the street, for Sennacherib and his soldiers will soon return with the remains of our friends."

The narrator had been listened to with breathless anxiety, while every one in the room seemed spell-bound and thunder-struck.

But when the report was finished, they all arose, and, vowing deepest vengeance on the murderers, whoever they might be, they simultaneously rushed into the street, to add to the din and confusion existing there. All Nineveh was indeed now the scene of the wildest excitement; but in the crowd there were only a few who knew what it was about, while no one was able to say what was to be done. By this time Almanzor, with a host of other high officers of the realm, who had already been informed by Tareck of all that had occurred, had appeared upon the scene. All the soldiers in the city were under arms,

bugles sounded and drums beat to quarter in every direction, orderlies were seen to fly hither and thither, the gates were closed, to guard against any surprise, and, in fact, the city wore the aspect of a besieged garrison.

After a little while, an officer, mounted on a fiery coal-black charger, was seen to come from a street leading to the northern gate and approach the king's captain. A short consultation ensued. Then Almanzor nodded his head, and, surrounded by his staff and followed by his soldiers in battle-array, he moved off in the direction whence the messenger had come.

When the second party under command of Sennacherib left the city, they went out of the northern gate, and were not long in finding the tracks made by the cunning Israelites for the purpose of leading their pursuers astray. On discovering the footprints the Assyrians uttered an exultant shout and impetuously dashed forward, not doubting that they soon would overtake the fugitives.

But when they at length reached the spot where the corpses of Abimelech and his followers were deposited, their exultation was soon

checked, and, horror-stricken, they gazed on the scene before them.

The sight which presented itself was indeed one to strike awe into the stoutest heart.

Fourteen corpses, the faces turned up to the sun, were ranged side by side, a deep gash about three inches long, and alike in every forehead, showing the way by which the soul had left its late abode; while the two halves of Abimelech were placed at the head of the ghastly column.

But the shock the soldiers had felt on first beholding the revolting spectacle soon passed away, and terrible were the curses and deep the vows of revenge hurled after the murderers. Then they all set to work to discover the route these had taken after finishing their bloody work; but, behold! no traces were to be found beyond or back from that terrible spot. How had they got away? Had the earth swallowed them, or had they been raised up into the air? It was altogether unaccountable.

There must have been some supernatural power at work. Yes, there was no doubt that the murderers must be leagued with either God or the devil! And thus the terror the Assy-

rians had felt on beholding the fate of their countrymen returned, and was fearfully augmented, until all the soldiers fairly trembled with superstitious fear, and, gathering up the remains of their slain friends, they madly hastened back toward the city.

Almanzor and his followers had meantime arrived at the gate, which now was thrown open, and in strode Sennacherib, followed by his troopers bearing the sad remains of the king's cousin and his companions, which, after having been carried through the principal streets of Nineveh, were deposited in their family sepulchres. Then the soldiers dispersed, to tell their tales of terror, and succeeded so well in imparting their own superstitious fears to the rest of their comrades, as well as to their fellow-citizens, that all began to tremble with apprehensions of some impending calamity.

The watches at the several gates were doubled; some of the inhabitants rushed into their temples to invoke the help of their gods; while not one was to be found that would have been brave enough to leave the city, at least on that day, for fear of some impending doom;

and so the efforts of the Israelites to give their flight and the subsequent occurrences the most mysterious appearance had produced the desired effect.

We now leave Nineveh and its inhabitants to recover at leisure from their terror, while we return to our friends in the subterranean vaults.

After the last of the fugitives had retired to rest, and when all was quiet, Mordecai arose again; and, not feeling quite secure as long as there remained a possibility of their retreat being discovered, he paced the room in silent sorrow.

At last an idea seemed to strike him; for his pace became more animated, and, lighting a small torch, he proceeded to the often-mentioned trap-door. This he lifted by means of a secreted lever, and went up into the cot. Here all was now bleak and bare, every useful article having been removed on board the vessel. The old man went out to the rear of the building, where he gathered a heap of leaves and dry wood: this he placed around the trap-door in such a manner that, on being set on fire and burned, the ashes and cinders must fall on the

stone slab, thus covering all crevices and completely hiding the entrance. Then he set fire to the leaves and returned to the vault, drawing the heavy stone after him.

In the dry leaves the flame soon spread. Higher and higher it rose, steadily, majestically; now it reached the wooden walls, then the ceiling, up, up; at last the devouring element seized on the roof, and anon the entire structure was enveloped in one bright sea of flame, illuminating the country for miles around. Had there been any one awake in Nineveh, the conflagration must have been seen; but the unusual stir and excitement of the day had produced uncommon fatigue, and irresistible drowsiness had closed every eye; and so the flames raged on, unnoticed, uncared for.

But the object of Mordecai was gained: the cot fell with a crash, its ruins completely obliterating all traces of any underground habitation.

The old man had heard the fall of his late dwelling, and it filled his soul with joy and confidence. He sank down on his knees, to commune with his Maker, the God of his people: then he lay down, and soon was buried in sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when the sleepers awoke, and, much refreshed, they arose to begin the work before them.

But first the maidens were introduced to the assembled Israelites; and great were the rejoicings of all at their safe deliverance thus far.

Then Mordecai sank on his knees, followed by every one present, and, raising his aged hands on high, he prayed. He thanked Jehovah for his great goodness and mercy, he invoked the divine blessing on their perilous undertaking, and then he arose and blessed his hearers.

Next he took Nahum and Harim by the hand, and, presenting them to the multitude, said, in a deep and solemn voice,—

"Children, I thank you for the love shown to me thus far. I thank you for the confidence, the willingness, and the obedience with which you have followed me under all circumstances, with which you have executed all my commands.

"I need not repeat to you that all I have said and done has been for your own good: you have shown that you always have felt this to be so. Fain would I continue to be your guide and

commander; but I am getting old and feeble. The weight of threescore and ten years is quite enough to unfit a man for a situation of such responsibility as the leadership in an undertaking like ours. I have therefore resolved to throw the burden of this responsibility on younger shoulders.

"In these my two noble and beloved nephews you behold two scions of the royal house of Jehu.

"He on my right, our esteemed friend Nahum, would in all probability have been now our king had we not lost our independence; and only last night, when he slew the cruel enemy of our race at the head of fourteen armed men, he showed himself worthy to be our leader. Him do I therefore appoint my successor; and with this kiss do I anoint him your chief.

"He on my left, our noble son and brother Harim, has in every respect and under all circumstances shown himself the true and devoted friend of his countrymen; and he too proved last night, when in company with Nahum and Lamech he stood like a rock against fearful odds, that he is to be trusted. Him do I name Na-

hum's chief assistant, and him also do I thus anoint with the kiss of love.

"Men of Israel, behold your leaders. Love, honor, and obey them.

"But I too shall remain among you. In all cases, under all circumstances, shall my counsel and advice cheerfully be yours; and, though old and feeble, supported by the strong arms of your leaders, I shall accompany you to the promised land; and in the hour of need will my voice be heard for the salvation of Israel."

He ceased. The Israelites arose, and one simultaneous shout of exultation burst from every mouth.

"Nahum and Hermione!" "Harim and Tamar!" Cheer upon cheer reverberated through the subterranean vaults, and echo threw them back as with ten thousand tongues.

Old Mordecai was not cheered; but, with beaming eyes, every one went up to where he stood. They took his wrinkled hands and carried them to their lips, while tears of love and gratitude rolled down their swarthy cheeks and spoke louder than words the feelings of their bosoms.

But at length the tumult was over, and the

men went to work. The vessel had received the finishing-touches on the day before, and now the last provisions were carried on board, while the women set to work to prepare the sleeping-apartments and the beds of dry leaves and moss. Then the men began to break down the wall that separated them from the river; and at the sixth hour after noon all was accomplished, except the liberation of the prisoners and the removal of the vessel.

As all now were for a time at leisure, Nahum, Hermione, Harim, and Tamar went to old Mordecai and craved his blessing to their union,—which of course was cheerfully granted, and preparations were at once made for the celebration of the nuptials. It was a cheering sight to see the two late captives and menials, but now the chosen leaders of a brave and determined people, in the full bloom of manhood, with their beautiful brides, one of whom was the only daughter of a noble king, standing before the old man, who officiated as high-priest on the occasion. When the important question was asked, "Will you take these men for your lawfully wedded husbands? will you love,

honor, and obey them to the end of your days?" a loud, fervent, and cheerful "Yes" was answered by the maidens; and, according to the beautiful custom of the Israelites, a stout glass was raised on high and then dashed to the floor, where it was shattered in ten thousand splinters, thereby indicating that, as the several parts of the glass could not be severed but by the breaking of the vessel, so the tie that bound the two hearts could not be dissolved until death should destroy it.

The ceremony over, the young husbands drew their wives to their bosoms and sealed the contract with a fervent kiss. Then the entire party sat down to a frugal banquet; and, although the meal consisted of but rough fare, a more joyous and happy wedding has seldom been witnessed.

At length the hour of midnight drew nigh and admonished the revellers that the time for their last work in the vault was approaching. They therefore arose, saw that every thing was in its place, and Mordecai, with six men, went to liberate the prisoners. They provided themselves with flaming torches, went to the first vault, and with their united strength raised the

trap-door which led to the outer world, and which they left wide open.

Then they proceeded to the room of Bareck and his three men, and, after ascertaining that all four were sound asleep, they unlocked the door and then hastened back, after first breaking off the iron knob which connected with the spring that held the stone slab in one of the walls separating the two underground apartments. They then carefully and securely put the stone back in the aperture, until the click of the spring told them that communication with the chamber in which they and their friends were was beyond the power of any human being in the first vault, unless by breaking the wall.

They now went on board their vessel, where all the others were already assembled,—thus leaving their late prisoners, the four Assyrians, free to find their way back to Nineveh as best they might.

By this time the tide was beginning to come in, and ere another half-hour had passed it was at its height. The rocking of the vessel now indicated that it was afloat; and, under the direction of Mordecai, four of the stoutest men

were put on the benches constructed for that purpose, and set to working the oars.

The vessel began to move forward. A few strong pulls, and the fugitive Israelites were in the middle of the river Tigris.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEPARTURE AND JOURNEY.

With the foresight that had thus far characterized all his undertakings, old Mordecai had for some time applied himself to the study of the system of the heavenly bodies; and by attentive observations he had succeeded in acquiring a fair knowledge of astronomy. But this was not all. He had at the same time become acquainted with the regularly-recurring tides of ebb and flood. With what certainty he was able to foretell the flood tide at midnight has already been seen; but he was just as certain of the fact that this tide would only last a stated time, after which it would return whence it had come, and thus aid the rowers materially in propelling the vessel. And that the river Tigris emptied into a larger expanse of waters had long been known to him, as he also had no doubt that this larger expanse of water must be bounded somewhere by land.

The oppression of the Israelites while in Assyrian captivity had been such that even death was preferable; and therefore it was only a question of time whether they should succeed in reaching a land where they might once more be free and happy, or whether they should perish on the frail structure they had now so happily succeeded in safely launching into the river. Worse than their condition had been in the country they were now about to leave it could not well become; and, if we take into account the unbounded confidence in divine providence that had now so firmly taken possession of Mordecai's heart, it is not at all surprising that he should have put implicit belief in his dream as sent by Jehovah to indicate the means by which he might break the chains of his unfortunate countrymen,—what it undoubtedly was.

But to return to the vessel. It had safely been brought out of the cavern into the middle of the river Tigris, and now the rowers applied all their strength in propelling the vessel down the stream, —a task in which they succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectation; and, when at last

the tide began to set backward, the vessel fairly shot through the water like an arrow.

When the day returned, they were far beyond Nineveh, and thus far had not been seen by any mortal eye. We now must go back for a short time to the cavern left by the fugitives, to see what had become of Bareck and his companions. When they awoke the next morning, they were somewhat surprised by the deep stillness, that was not broken by the slightest sound; and when some two or three hours had passed without their morning meal having been brought, they became somewhat alarmed, fearing that by some means or other their captors might have been induced to leave the cavern and had left them behind to perish by starvation.

But, before resigning themselves to their fate, they would at least make one attempt to liberate themselves, and therefore went to the door of their room to try its strength. But judge of their surprise when it yielded to the first gentle pressure and they found themselves in the outer cavern! Here all was silent as the grave, and nobody impeded their progress. After advancing a little farther, they saw a light

streaming into the vault, which they soon perceived to come through the opened trap-door; and in a short time they stood once more in the free air. Here they marvelled for some time at the charred ruins and the devastation that met their eyes, and then they hastened, as quick as their feet would carry them, back to Nineveh. As it was yet very early, they did not meet anybody on their road, and found the gate of the city still locked. Three loud raps on the ponderous portal quickly brought the sentinel on duty on the inner side to the small wicket constructed in a side door. But, when the man saw the faces of his captain and of his three comrades, he started back as if he had seen a ghost, and it was some time before he recovered from his sudden fright so far as to summon the lieutenant of the guard, whom he informed of what he had seen, and who then, at the head of his entire force, had the gate opened, when Bareck, with his three followers, strode in and was welcomed back by his men. Mutual explanations between captain and lieutenant, as well as between the reunited guardsmen, soon followed; and great was Bareck's surprise on hearing of

the mysterious and terrible fate of Abimelech and his friends.

But he had no doubt as to the perpetrators of the bloody deed; for, on the night of the occurrence related to him, he had been awake when the last fugitives, with the king's daughter and her maid in their midst, had entered the cavern, and, gluing his ear to the key-hole of his prison-door, he had overheard enough of their conversation to understand that something of moment must have happened.

He now at once left his lieutenant and hastened straight to the dwelling of the king's captain and minister Almanzor,—where his appearance created as much surprise as it had occasioned at the gate; and, upon intimating to the officers in waiting that the communication he had to make to their master was of the utmost importance, he was at once shown into a private room and his presence announced.

Almanzor was yet in bed when his chamberlain entered the sleeping-apartment; but, on hearing that Bareck had returned with communications of importance, he at once arose, slipped

into a loose dressing-gown, and went down to meet the captain of the guard.

The latter gave a detailed account of all that had occurred to him since the night he had let Harim and his friends out of the city-gate. "I did not like the appearance of these men at such an hour," he said,—"particularly as I recognized in one of their companions, who was disguised as a lame beggar, the assistant of that old gardener on the bank of the river. Had their purpose been honest, why that disguise? and I at once suspected treason against the peace of our city, if not against the precious lives of our gracious king and his minister,—as it was no secret that the Israelites did not regard us with very friendly looks. But, as the head steward of the king's household exhibited a royal passport, I had to let them pass, not daring to risk the wrath of our ruler. Yet my mistrust was so strong that I determined at once to have the wanderers watched; and, when I had been relieved by my lieutenant, I selected three of my men and went straight to the cot of old Mordecai, to see if my suspicions were founded. On nearing the place, we fell into an ambush,

and, after being overpowered by superior and well-armed forces, we were brought to a subterranean vault beneath the hut."

Then he told of the number of men, women, and children he had seen in the cavern, their stores of arms and provisions, then of the conversation he had overheard regarding Abimelech and his friends, and finally of the disappearance of the Israelites and his own escape.

Almanzor listened to the tale in silence and growing surprise; but he could not doubt the speaker, as much of what he related was already known in the city.

That Abimelech had been killed by none but the fugitives, he no longer doubted; and as, according to the statement of Bareck, the Israelites could not have left their retreat earlier than the previous night, he felt quite certain that there would be no difficulty in overtaking them. He therefore bade the captain wait, and hurried back to his bedroom to dress himself.

In less than half an hour he returned, told Bareck to follow him, and went straight to the barracks of the troopers. Here he ordered the bugle to be sounded for the instant appearance

of the soldiers; then he sent one of them to his stables for his fleetest charger, while another one was brought out for the captain of the guard, and, in a very short time after, Almanzor, at the head of two hundred horsemen, and accompanied by Bareck, dashed out of the eastern gate. They first went to the site of the burnt cot. Here they dismounted, and the king's captain, the captain of the guard, and six men bearing torches, with which they had provided themselves on leaving the barracks and which they lighted at some smouldering embers of the ruin, descended into the subterranean chamber. On looking around, they found this blank and empty: not a single article of furniture, or any thing else, was to be seen, while the room so lately occupied by the four Assyrians remained in the same condition as they had left it that morning.

Almanzor next went through the cavern, and most minutely examined the floor and the walls; but nothing could be discovered. He passed the revolving rock that closed up the entrance to the second cavern; he even perceived the hole where the rusty iron knob had been; but the wall was rough and uneven, and there were

a great many more holes similar to that other one, and so the spring escaped detection.

They then went back again to the open air and carefully examined the ground around the trap-door; but they could detect not a single trace, besides those made by Bareck and his followers on their escape, and their own. Yet the cot might have been burnt down after the escape had been effected, and so covered all footprints in the immediate vicinity. And therefore they made a wide circuit, examining the ground with closest attention; but all in vain: no trace could be discovered for a mile around. Next they went to the edge of the bank; but this was very high, and hung far out over the river, so that even the opening in the second cavern could not be discovered from that side. And as the flow of the river was very rapid in that spot, and as the opposite bank was also very high and too steep to admit of ascending it, it was quite out of the question that the fugitives, with their women and children, should have crossed over; and it never for once came into Almanzor's mind to go to the other side.

Disappointed and dissatisfied, the king's min-

ister divided his forces into two equal parts, and, putting the one under the command of Bareck, while he himself led the other, he bade the soldiers scour the country for miles around, and, after four hours' diligent search, reassemble at the cot to report the result. Stimulated by the hope of reward that each man knew was awaiting him if any thing should be discovered, they all exerted themselves to the utmost to find any trace; but all to no purpose; and at the appointed time they all returned to the ruin, each party having the same tale of "no success" to tell.

Now they all returned to the city, to relate what they had heard and seen, and to inform the inhabitants of the mysterious and utter disappearance of the Israelites.

And here we will leave them, bidding them a final adieu, while we mount that winged horse, "thought," to gallop back to our friends the fugitives, whom we left sailing undisturbed and swiftly down the clear waters of the Tigris, borne on by the receding tide.

After a little while the eastern horizon changed from a deep dark to a light gray; then it grew

purple, and soon the first beams of the rising sun gilded the earth.

The scene that presented itself to the gaze of the travellers was as interesting as it was novel; for, after they had sailed down for some distance, the banks on both sides of the river receded, making room for an almost endless plain, interspersed with towering hills and deep, shady forests. Hermione, Tamar, and their husbands stood on the fore part of the vessel, drinking in the fresh morning air and enjoying the lovely landscape, while the rest of their friends that were not busy in other parts crowded the deck, to let their eyes rest on the surrounding country. Then came the sense of being free once more, to fill their souls with gratitude; and many a silent but fervent prayer of thanksgiving ascended on high.

Mordecai was still asleep; for the excitement and bustle of the last four-and-twenty hours had exerted their due effect on the aged limbs of the old man, and his followers were careful not to disturb his slumbers. And so he slept on, the sweet sleep of the just, while now and then some pleasant dream seemed to visit his couch; for at

short intervals a heavenly smile overspread his face, and his lips parted as if in silent communion with some heavenly vision.

Meantime the rowers worked on, and the vessel almost flew through the water.

From time to time the men on the benches were relieved by their companions, every one eager to contribute his share in the glorious work. At length, when the sun indicated the ninth hour of the morning, old Mordecai appeared among his friends, his countenance lit up by happy smiles; and they all eagerly crowded around to greet their liberator and father.

The old man raised his right hand in response, and then, without saying a word, he uncovered his aged head, turned his face heavenward, and prayed to Jehovah.

Then he blessed the multitude, and, covering his head, he advanced, embraced Nahum and Harim, and said, "Now, my children, I feel almost young again. The last night's rest has refreshed me wondrously, while most pleasant dreams visited my pillow, and on angels' wings bore my spirit to the land of promise. Yes, my friends, more fortunate than our forefathers were

under Moses and Aaron, we shall safely reach our destination, and not one of our number will die before setting his foot on the soil of that new and glorious country.

"But what am I talking about? I came here to tell you that I felt the cravings of appetite, and to invite you to our morning meal, which I perceive you have not yet taken.

"Our daughters, wives, and sisters have prepared us a princely feast, to celebrate this the first day of our freedom after our long captivity; so let's down, to satisfy our stomachs."

They all went down; for it was as Mordecai had said. Out of respect to the good old man, not one had dared to even speak of hunger before their aged friend should arise to share their meal.

The repast was frugal, as usual, but bountiful and well prepared, while the healthy appetite and the unclouded happiness every one felt served as the best and most stimulating spices.

Joy and contentment reigned supreme in that room, and even Hermione, seated by the side of her husband, experienced a thrill of pleasure such as she had never felt in the costly-furnished apartments of her royal father's palace.

After the first cravings of hunger were appeased, a general conversation ensued, and then Nahum expressed the wish to hear of the exploits and adventures of Mordecai and his friends on their journey from the interior to the cot of the former.

But his uncle interrupted him. "Nay," said he, "the time for long and idle talk has not come. As yet we are not beyond all danger. As yet we can see the banks of the river on each side, and therefore are liable at any moment to be seen.

"Before the Tigris empties its waters into the sea it passes many a village and many a town. And although, fortunately, none of the inhabitants possess the means to intercept our vessel, yet to be seen might be dangerous nevertheless. The different tribes that inhabit the banks of the Tigris are firmly allied to Assyria, and therefore they are no strangers to the fact of the destruction of Samaria and our captivity. They might recognize us, and suspect our intention, and their arrows might endanger our lives, while heavier missiles which they could send after us might prove fatal to our frail bark.

"I told you that we should safely reach our destination, and that not one of our number would perish before setting foot on the land of promise. And that this will be so I do not for one moment doubt; for Jehovah has given me the promise in my last night's dream, when my guide of the voyage that I made in spirit, reappeared to me. But it behooves us to do our best to avoid all dangers that might beset us on our road. I therefore would counsel you to exert the utmost caution. Let our females and children keep to the interior of the vessel, and only come on deck when there is no danger of being seen; while the men would also do well by keeping out of sight as much as possible. I should have had our morning meal set out in the open air, instead of crowding you all in this room, had I not feared the danger of exposure. And it would be well for us to form certain rules for the guidance of every one, at least until we leave this river; for, once in the open sea, no human being can harm us."

Nahum now took up the word. He thanked his uncle for his counsel. He commended the

old man's wisdom; and he too saw the necessity of adopting rules and regulations.

It was then resolved that not more than ten men, besides the four rowers, should be allowed on deck at any one time during the day, while at night, when there was no danger of being seen, every one might come up.

The different meals were divided into three instalments, so as to avoid crowding the room too much; and a number of other rules of minor import, and which do not concern the reader, were adopted. The assembly then broke up. Some remained where they were, while the others went to their several rooms; and Mordecai,—who, of course, was permitted to go where and do what he saw fit,—accompanied by Nahum, Lamech, and some of their friends, went on deck. Their first care was to have the rowers relieved, and then they looked around them. The tide had set in long ago; yet the vessel, having been fairly set in motion, and being well assisted by vigorous pulls of the four oars, had lost little in speed. The atmosphere was clear, and in the far distance our friends

beheld the dim outlines of a great city situated on the right bank of the river.

Now the moment so much feared by Mordecai was arriving, and, spite his assurance and bravery, the old man trembled for a moment. The vessel had from the first been in the middle of the river, and, the rowers working uniformly, she had thus far kept the same route. But suddenly a bird was seen flying straight toward the ship, followed by a huge hawk; and in its fright the former flew full into the face of one of the rowers. The suddenness of the blow took the man by surprise, and for some minutes his oar hung in the water, until the rower had recovered from his fright. But the other men worked on; and thus, the one side of the vessel being worked only by one oar, (whose effect was moreover greatly lessened by the other one that hung in the water,) whereas the other side was worked upon with the undiminished force of two stout men, the ship changed her course, and shot to one side of the river. Mordecai had seen it all; and his soul was filled with joy. It had shown him the means to guide the vessel at will, and it was not long before he had a

rudder constructed on the same principle as his oars, which, rude though it was, served his purpose to his entire satisfaction.

And so his principal fear was allayed.

By this time they had come near the city; but the river here was very wide, and, as the old man guided his vessel as far as possible to the opposite side, there was very little danger, even if they should be seen and their purpose known. And well was it for them that the means for guiding the ship had so opportunely come to their hands; for, on coming opposite the city, their vessel was seen by some soldiers who happened to be near the river, and, spite the great distance, they had been recognized and their purpose at once divined. A number of arrows were sent after them, while some of the soldiers took up heavy stones; but, as the former missiles fell harmless into the water long before reaching the vessel, all thoughts of attacking the fugitives were abandoned by the inhabitants of the city. But the Israelites saw that some of the soldiers hurried off into the town; and shortly afterward the signs of great commotion became visible. Horsemen were seen

dashing back and forward, while one, bolder than the rest, forced his animal into the water and swam toward the vessel. But he never returned. When he came within the proper distance, an arrow, sent by the unerring hand of Nahum, pierced his brain, and he sunk into his watery grave. On beholding the fate of their companion, the other soldiers withdrew, leaving the fugitives to pursue their way; and soon after the latter were out of sight. But had they been obliged to follow the course they had taken at first, viz. in the middle of the river, there is no knowing what might have become of them, and perhaps Columbus, when he came to America, would have found that country uninhabited.

On the Israelites this occurrence had made no impression; for they had implicit confidence in their guide, and he had told them that there was no occasion for fear, while those that were in the interior of the vessel knew nothing about it until they were far beyond the place.

And now they sailed on, passing several other towns at night-time, until, four weeks after

quitting Nineveh, they reached the end of the Tigris and came into the river Euphrates, whence six days later they emerged into the Persian Gulf. Here there was less danger of being seen; and, without meeting with any accident, the fugitives sailed on, and on the seventh day of their entrance into the gulf they ran into the Strait of Ormus. This they quitted after a half-day's hard rowing; and now the blue waters of the Bay of Arabia opened before them, whence they soon emerged, by keeping on their straight southerly course, into the Indian Ocean. They now had lost sight of the land, and saw nothing but sky and water. The grandeur and sublimity of the spectacle before them filled their souls with awe; while now they felt that they were free indeed. And in the exuberance of this feeling they sank on their knees with one accord, and raised their cheerful voices to heaven.

It was now ten weeks since they had left the land of their oppressors, and their clothes had become dirty and travel-stained. The women therefore set to work to wash the garments, and then they fastened stout cords across the deck

of the vessel, to hang the pieces out to dry. A lively breeze had, in the mean time, sprung up in the east, and, the wind catching in the clothes, the rowers instantly felt that a new and strong impulse had been given to the movement of the ship. They soon communicated their observation to each other; and, to test it still further, they lifted their oars out of the water and held them suspended,—when, to their surprise, the vessel went on even faster than before. One of the men, Reuben by name, then suggested the expansion of a large sheet as high up as possible; and, this meeting with the approval of the rest, he and one of his companions left their places, and, fastening their oars, they nailed two long poles opposite each other to the railing of the deck. To these they tied a stout rope, on which they fastened a large sheet; but, perceiving that most of the force of the wind was lost by the sheet being raised, to let the air escape, they fastened the other end of the novel sail to the deck, and then went back to observe the result.

The effect was wonderful; for not only was the labor of the rowers made unnecessary, but

the speed of the vessel was increased to such an extent that the fleetest charger would have been unable to cope with her. All this had been going on in the small hours of the morning, and while, with the exception of the four rowers and the women, everybody on board was sound asleep.

Before Mordecai retired the previous night, he had fastened the rudder with cords, so as to keep the craft in her straight course. But the wind and the waves had loosened it; and gradually the east wind changed the direction of the vessel, until she headed straight to the west.

But the men on deck did not observe this: they were too full of joy at their discovery to have eyes or ears for any thing else; and so the bark sped on her new course without interruption.

While this had been going on on deck, a scene of a different character, but closely allied to that on deck, had been enacted in the interior of the vessel. Old Mordecai was sleeping soundly, when suddenly his spirit awoke and saw by the side of the old man's couch the venerable guide of his former journey. A

smile played upon the face of the heavenly messenger, while his right arm was stretched out and the forefinger of his hand pointed to a certain direction.

"My son," said he, "thy trust in divine providence has not been vain. So far thou hast been in the right direction for the salvation of Israel; but now thou must change the course of thy bark, and toward the setting sun shalt thou seek the land of promise. Arise! go on deck, and see what is done. Keep thy ship in the direction she has taken, and soon shalt thou reach that country where thou mayest prosper, where thou mayest lift thy heart to Jehovah's throne in his own temple."

The old man disappeared, and Mordecai awoke. He jumped out of his bed, dressed himself, and went on deck. Here he was surprised to find the rowers' benches empty, and the oars fastened down.

But soon he felt the onward motion of the vessel, and, on raising his eyes, he beheld the large sheet suspended between the two poles.

The white seeming clouds on the vessel of his

dream stood before his mind's eye, and he fell on his knees, raising his hands toward heaven.

"I thank thee, Jehovah!" he cried; "for thou in truth art the Father, the salvation, of Israel!"

He then interrogated the men on deck as to the meaning of what he saw, and soon was informed of the circumstances attending the happy discovery, while at the same time he perceived that the fastening of the rudder had been cast off, and, on looking up toward the sun, now about two hours risen, he became aware that the direction of his ship was changed toward the west. Now the rest of the Israelites awoke and began to crowd the deck, when they were informed of the fortunate discovery just made, and all united in a heart-felt prayer of thanksgiving. They then sat down to their morning meal, which now, as ever since the open sea had been reached, was served on deck; and, this being finished, Nahum reiterated his wish to be informed of the circumstances attending the removal of his friends from the interior of Assyria to the subterranean chamber.

This time Mordecai made no objection, and Reuben, the same man who had expanded the

first sail that was ever set to the breeze, related as follows :—

"I, with about two hundred of my unfortunate countrymen, had been carried away to Halah, which is by the river Gozan; and hard indeed was our lot. From morning till night we toiled and bled under the lash of our cruel oppressors, while our wives, daughters, and sisters fell victims to the lusts of their licentious masters. Many of our number were overcome by their sufferings. They fell, to rise no more,—when their corpses were left on the field, a prey to the wild beasts, while their bones to this day lie bleaching over the plains. For three long years we endured our hardships; when, one day, while out in the fields toiling beneath the burning rays of a July sun, I and twelve others beheld an old man, clad in rags, rapidly approaching us. When he came nearer, we saw that it was some poor unhappy wretch bereft of reason. He gnashed his teeth, raised his hands in a menacing attitude, and ran straight toward our overseers, as if he would annihilate them with a stroke of his long, bony arm. The hirelings, cowards as they were, fled before this

single old man, until they were lost in the distance, and when we stood, irresolute and curious, to see the end of this strange adventure, the maniac turned upon us.

"He made a sign with his right hand, and uttered a single word,—when we became aware that his insanity was assumed, and that he was our friend. He then approached us, and said,—

"'Brethren, I too am one of the unfortunate sons of Israel! But, happier than you, although a captive, I am free to do what I like. But this is no time for idle talk; and therefore I must be brief. Let those of you who prefer freedom at all hazards to slavery and death at the hands of your cruel masters, join me, at the hour of midnight, at the cedar copse that you see at some distance to the right. There you will find others of your countrymen, whom I have seen already. And be careful not to forget your wives and children, with such of your property as you can safely conceal about your persons.'

"And, making another sign with his hand, and uttering the single word 'Caution,' the man moved off as quickly as he had come.

"We now awaited the return of the overseers; but, as they did not come back, we continued our work until the hour arrived when we were permitted to go home. On our way homeward we were rejoined by our tormentors; and many were the indignities they heaped upon us for not coming to their rescue.

"But they did not strike us, for fear that we would expose their cowardice and make them the laughing-stock of their comrades; and so we were permitted to go to our huts. As we now had been in bondage so long and had never made an attempt to run away, (knowing as we did that it would avail us nothing,) we were comparatively free after our day's work was done, and frequently had we visited each other, and even taken long walks with our wives and children.

"On this evening, and when our last meal was finished, we all assembled in the hut inhabited by me; and as, by the talk of the old man, it was more than probable that an immediate move was intended, we at once resolved to flee with him, let the consequences be what they might; and, accompanied by our wives and children, and after we had packed up as much of our small

stores as we could conveniently carry, we set out toward the appointed spot, where we arrived a little before midnight. After waiting there for about half an hour, we were joined by thirty-seven of our countrymen, with their wives and children, who were also resolved to seek freedom at all hazards.

"We had not yet seen the old man; and some of us even began to fear that he would not come, —when suddenly he stood before us,—not as the beggar bereft of reason, but a venerable old man, with bald head, and long, flowing beard of snowy whiteness,—in short, our good old father Mordecai. He told us of Nineveh, of his nephews, of his cot and the subterranean vault, then of his dream and his purpose. He asked us if we would share his fortunes; and when we told him that we were resolved to dare any thing rather than remain in bondage, a happy smile lit up his face, and he at once instructed us how to proceed in order to reach his cot in safety. 'For,' said he, 'I cannot accompany you, as my mission is not yet ended.' He then arose, and, admonishing us to lose no time, went off, and soon was out of sight.

"We stood for a moment in hesitation, but soon overcame that feeling. We knew that the old man was to be trusted, and therefore at once commenced our journey.

"Expecting that an immediate move was contemplated, we had, on leaving our huts, provided ourselves with as much provisions as we could bring away besides our baggage; and when the sun arose the next morning we were far from our late abode.

"Following the instructions of our liberator, we now sought the shade of a deep forest, where we rested until the sun had gone down and then resumed our march. And thus, marching and resting alternately, we at length, nine days after our departure, arrived at the old man's cot.

"Friend Lamech, when he heard who and what we were, at once admitted us to the vault; and there we remained until we left it on board this vessel. There may have been dangers in our road; but, by the help of Jehovah, we avoided them all. And now, thanks to our noble old friend and father, thanks to the God of Israel, we are free once more!"

Nahum and Hermione, Harim and Tamar, had listened to this narrative in surprise and wonder, and when it was finished they arose, went up to Mordecai and kissed his hand, while the tears that glistened in their eyes spoke the thanks they would once more express for what he had done for his unfortunate brethren.

But the old man arose, and said,—

"No thanks are due to me for what has been done; for what I did was for my interest as well as for that of my unfortunate brethren. I too desired to leave the land of our enemies; and well I knew that only by uniting our forces could this be brought about; and that we have succeeded, that we have accomplished our flight and now are free, is the work of Jehovah.

"To Him all our thanks belong.

"The narrative of our brother Reuben," he continued, "answers for all, as, with the exercise of proper caution, the rest of our friends, and at last I myself, succeeded in reaching the subterranean vaults in safety, without encountering any of the dangers that may have lurked in our path."

It should be stated here that the Israelites

who left the city of Nineveh to join the fugitives numbered about fifty men, with their families: so that the entire number of persons on board the vessel was somewhere in the neighborhood of six hundred.

By diligence and economy, Mordecai had been enabled to accumulate provisions enough to support all these people for about one year; and, as he firmly believed that long before the end of that time they would reach their destination, he had no fears of destitution.

They now sailed on; but soon the wind began to lull, and they had to return to their oars. After a few days, however, the breeze sprang up with renewed force,—and the oars again could be dispensed with. And so, alternately rowing and sailing before a wind that fortunately, and, no doubt, by the especial direction of Providence, did not once change its course, they at last, just nine months after leaving Nineveh, sighted the Cape of Good Hope.

It was the sixth hour after noon when the men on deck saw the land; and, believing this to be the place of their destination, they set up a great shout of joy. But old Mordecai, whom

the shout had called on deck, sadly shook his head, for he saw no traces of the lovely landscape of his dream.

"We must not stop here," he said: "farther on toward the setting sun lies the land of promise."

But he was troubled. The provisions that he had expected to last for the entire journey were nearly consumed, and he had as yet seen no signs of the country that had been shown to him in his dream.

The more he looked at the land now before them, the more he became convinced that that was not the place of their destination, and that it was very likely their journey was to last another nine months. How he should be able to bring his brethren safely to their new home after the means of satisfying the demands of nature had been exhausted, he did not know, and in silence and sorrow he paced the deck, not daring to make his thoughts known.

But soon his tired limbs refused to perform their wonted duties; fatigue overcame the old man, and, descending to his bedroom, he threw himself on his couch. No sooner had slumber closed his eyes than his spirit again awoke, and

the mysterious guide of his first voyage reappeared, and, while an encouraging smile lit up his venerable face, the heavenly visitor said,—

"Fear not, my son. Be not faint of heart. Thinkest thou that He who has protected thee thus far, who has led thee safely through all dangers, will abandon thee now? Or dost thou fear that he has not the power to protect thee further? Look around thee. Right in front, in the very path of thy vessel, thou seest a land which is to be to thee, and to many who will come after thee in future ages, a cape of good hope.

"There thou must land. The interior is full of fruit, vegetables, and game. Fill thy vessel, then resume thy journey. And be of good cheer; for in nine months from now thou shalt reach the land of promise.

"But henceforth the guidance of thy bark must be left to me. Be careful not to touch the rudder, while thy men must not be allowed to handle their oars; for I am appointed by Jehovah to take thee to the country that he has given thee without further aid from man."

The messenger then disappeared, and Mordecai slept quietly on.

The sun was high in the heavens when the old Israelite awoke. He was much refreshed; and, when he had made his simple toilet, he went on deck. Here the invigorating morning air fanned his cheeks, and anon his dream came back to his mind. He remembered the command given him by the venerable guide to land and to replenish his store of provisions; and when he looked around, dreading lest the land they had seen on the day before had been passed in the night and was now far in their rear, he was astonished to perceive that the vessel had already touched the coast, and that the combined strength of thirty muscular men was not able to remove the craft back into the open sea.

Then he sprang forward and bade the men desist; and in a few words he informed them of his sadness the preceding day on thinking of their situation and the exhausted state of their larder. But he also told them of his dream, and of the advice and assurance of his heavenly visitor.

And now the ship was fastened to the land, and most of the fugitives with Mordecai, Nahum,

and Harim at their head, jumped on shore and set out to explore the interior.

Ere long they found entire forests of trees laden with nutritious and delicious fruit, and extensive plains overgrown with good and wholesome vegetables, while the game, from the timid hare to the stately stag, appeared in such abundance that the men only needed to stretch out their arms to catch them.

And so in a short time the vessel was refilled with even better provender than she had carried when she was launched on the broad waters of the Tigris. The wanderers also found an abundance of springs of the purest and best water wherewith to fill their empty goat-skin bags; and before the noon of the second day after their landing they were provided with every thing needful for a continuance of their journey, when the vessel was cast loose and pushed back into the open sea,—a task accomplished this time by three men with the greatest ease.

After sailing a few days in a westerly direction, the wind suddenly changed to the south-east, driving the ship in a northwesterly course,

and soon after she emerged into the Atlantic Ocean.

Meantime Mordecai had not forgotten the request of his heavenly visitor, and had caused the oars to be taken off altogether, while the rudder was left, but never touched by human hand.

And so the Israelites sailed on to their destination, their vessel guided by the unerring hand of a supernatural power, while by the especial direction of Providence the wind—although at times blowing hard enough to cause the waters to rise up in foam-crested waves—never once changed to a storm; and, without encountering any thing worth relating, they at length—just nine months after leaving the Cape of Good Hope, and eighteen months since their departure from Nineveh—came in sight of what are now called the Bahama Islands.

Old Mordecai stood on deck when the land first appeared in the distance, and, on coming nearer, he recognized the green vales, the silvery streams, and the beautiful forests of his wonderful dream.

And with his arms stretched out, as if to

grasp the lovely scene, he cried, in a joyous voice that trembled with emotion, "Behold, brethren, the land of promise!" and, once more sinking on his knees, his prayers and thanksgivings ascended to the throne of the Almighty.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF AMERICA.

At the time of which I write, that cluster of islands now known as the Bahamas was one solid piece of land, separated only by a small stream about fifty feet wide from the continent of America, of which it then formed the eastern-most point.

This point was one of the most lovely spots on the face of the earth. The climate, although far from tropical, was still clear and warm enough to favor a truly tropical vegetation.

Beautiful forests of almond, citron, and orange trees abounded, while the green vales were traversed by silvery streams, pure and clear as crystal, whose banks were covered with a profusion of rich and rare flowers.

The delicious grape, and other fruit of the richest flavor, were found in abundance, while almost in the midst of this natural garden a

huge volcano reared its lava-crested summit high into the clouds.

When old Mordecai arose, he saw Nahum and Harim, with their wives, standing beside him, their eyes riveted, in wonder and rapture, on the lovely landscape before them.

"O father," Hermione cried, "what a lovely, what an enchanting scene! Is this beautiful country indeed the land given to Israel by the merciful, the good Jehovah?" And, filled with joy, she threw herself into the arms of her husband.

In the mean time the wind, which had been blowing very strong during the last twelve hours, grew in violence, until at last it changed to a heavy storm. The sea, before so quiet and smooth, was lashed into foam. Its waters ascended on high in monstrous waves, and chaos seemed to reign supreme over that boundless expanse.

The vessel of our fugitives soon began to feel the influence of this change: it was thrown about like a play-ball in the hands of a giant; anon it was lifted high into the air on the crest of a towering wave, and then it sank out of sight as if swallowed up by the roaring waters.

Finally a wave mightier and higher than the rest seized the frail bark, held her one moment suspended over a terrible abyss, and then threw her high on the shore. On striking the land, the huge structure burst asunder; but the receding water left her high and dry; and our Israelites, although dreadfully frightened, found themselves safe and sound on the promised soil.

Our friends had been spell-bound and awe-stricken when the storm arose and they began to feel the violent motions of the ship; but Mordecai, whose coolness, fortunately, never left him for a moment, quickly drove them into the interior of the vessel, covered the holes with the doors made for that purpose, and then, tying himself to one of the rowers' benches, he alone remained on deck. When the vessel went to pieces, the bench broke loose, and the old man fell into the hold; but he fell on one of the beds of moss and dry leaves, and therefore suffered no injury other than a somewhat violent shock.

The first care of the wanderers was to remove the parts of their ship and her contents farther out on the land; and, when they had

ascertained that none of their number was missing or injured, they set to work with a will.

They first moved their provisions,—of which, to their great joy, they found a considerable quantity left; then they took their furniture, tools, &c.; and finally they broke up the remaining parts of the vessel and brought away the pieces.

By this time the storm had blown over, and the sun emerged from behind the last dark cloud. The Israelites built a great fire, to prepare their evening meal; and, when that had been partaken of, they stretched themselves on the ground, where they soon sank into a deep sleep.

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Glorious Sol was leaving his watery bed, and his genial rays began to gild the tree-tops, when our sleepers awoke the next morning.

They arose much refreshed; and then old Mordecai kneeled down to morning prayers. After that he arose and formally resigned into Nahum's hands his office as chief of the Israelites.

"My mission," the old man said, "is now

ended. Thanks to Jehovah, you are free: you now stand on the soil that he, in his infinite goodness and mercy, has given you.

"You now can pray to the God of your fathers in his own glorious temple, without fear of molestation. But I fain would rest from my labor; I would live in peace and quiet the few days that I may be spared. In our friend Nahum I leave you a successor whom you may trust under all circumstances: he will be the father, as Hermione will be the mother, of Israel.

"Yet, before I retire from my office, I would once more admonish you to keep the commandments of Jehovah. Forget not what he has done to you.

"While Israel walked in the right path, she was mighty and happy; but when she left the right course, when she turned her heart from the true God of her fathers, she fell: then Jehovah withdrew his protecting hand, and her enemies triumphed over her. When in our captivity we again turned our hearts to the only true and living God, behold how he raised us up, how wonderfully he helped and protected

us in all dangers, until now we are once more free!

"As long as you shall do right, you will prosper, you will become a great, a mighty people; but as soon as you cease to do that which is right, you will perish."

The aged Mordecai ceased, and Nahum now arose and went up to his uncle. He embraced the old man and kissed him; then, in the name of his friends, he once more thanked him for all he had done for them. "Be assured," the new leader continued, "that, as long as our life shall last, we will never forget your wise, your good counsels; as long as our life shall last, we shall love and honor you as our liberator, as our greatest benefactor." Then he took Hermione's hand, and turned toward the assembled multitude.

"Brethren," he said, in a clear and manly voice, "I have been appointed your leader: our father has deemed me worthy to be his successor, and, while I accept the trust thus reposed in me, I here most solemnly pledge myself to the interests of Israel. I shall always be your friend, while Hermione will be your mother;

and with the assistance of our brother Harim, and under the guidance of our venerated friend and father Mordecai, I shall be able to lead you to happiness and glory."

There were some skilful mechanics among the Israelites; and they at once set to work to build tents with the boards of their vessel, while another part of the men, under the guidance of Mordecai, went to prepare the soil for agricultural purposes; and, as the old man had not neglected to bring with him a large quantity of grain and different seeds with which to sow their well-cultivated acres, all soon were comfortably settled.

Now Nahum was formally installed as king, and under his rule the young colony soon began to prosper. Fruit, vegetables, and game, were found in abundance in the new country; and, while a party of skilled hunters supplied the tables of the inhabitants with savory meat, the inland streams contributed various kinds of the finny tribe.

It was now the month of November, and the rains, that annually set in in this new country instead of the severe winter of other lands, soon began to fall.

The tents the new settlers had built, although a very fair protection for the present, were too frail in construction to afford an entirely secure shelter for a longer time; and it was therefore resolved that, as soon as the rains should cease, they would commence the building of a regular city.

The interval was occupied in making plans, and in such other work necessary for building-purposes as could be performed within the tents; and when the spring of the next year came around, the foundation of the town was laid. After six years' assiduous labor, the new city was finished, and although, of course, not so good and substantial as our modern buildings, yet the houses were secure and comfortable and presented a very handsome appearance.

The streets of "New Samaria"—as the city was called—were straight and wide, while the houses, with the exception of the king's palace, the residence of Harim, and the temple, were of one size, and each surrounded by a well-cultivated garden, thus giving the town a most beautiful appearance. The king's palace was a noble structure, with numerous out-houses, the

whole surrounded by a magnificent and well-laid-out park. This park was traversed by a broad, silvery stream, which, flowing over numerous picturesque cascades, formed several splendid waterfalls in miniature, and on arriving in the middle of the grounds expanded into a beautiful lake.

Stately trees, over whose crowns the summers of centuries had passed, and which had been left standing when the park was laid out, harbored in their branches armies of rare birds of richest plumage. Delicious grapes of golden and purple hues clustered on leafy vines, and were interspersed with the yellow orange, the purple plum, and the sweet almond. Flowers rich and rare emitted their delicious fragrance; and altogether this garden was in all respects a perfect counterpart of Eden.

The house of Harim, too, was a noble structure, and it also was surrounded by a beautiful park; while the temple, that stood in the centre of the city, rivalled the famous temple of Solomon in magnitude and elegance.

In the king's palace there was a suite of three rooms, fitted out with all that ingenuity could

invent and persevering industry could accomplish for elegance and comfort.

These were the apartments of Mordecai,—a fitting tribute of love and veneration on the part of the good old man's grateful countrymen.

Lamech, too, was an inhabitant of the royal palace.

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It was little more than six years after the landing of the Israelites. In a large hall of the king's palace, furnished in the most gorgeous manner, seated on a throne ingeniously constructed of the costliest wood, was Mordecai. On each side of him sat Nahum and Hermione, in their royal robes, while Harim and Tamar occupied two chairs at the foot of the throne. The higher officers of the realm and of the royal household formed a semicircle, in the centre of which stood Ezra, the high-priest, and on his right hand a comely dark-eyed boy, about five years old, and on his left a beautiful little girl of about three summers. These children were the son of Nahum, named Mishael, and the daughter of Harim, named Deborah; and that day had been chosen for the celebration of their circumcision,—a cere-

mony that had been postponed until it could be performed in the king's palace.

When all had taken their places, and while a deep silence reigned throughout the assembled multitude, Ezra fell on his knees, and, raising his hands on high, offered up to Jehovah a fervent prayer, in which he was joined by all present.

After that, Mordecai descended from the throne, and, taking both children by the hand, blessed them, and then the solemn ceremony was performed by the old man and the high-priest.

This done, a sumptuous repast was served up in the garden of the palace, of which all the people partook; and great were the rejoicings of the assembled multitude.

Hermione, whose stately form and queenly bearing commanded the respect and admiration of all who beheld her, moved among her guests like a mother and a sister. She had a kind word, a sweet smile, for every one present; and wherever she appeared she was greeted with loud manifestations of love and veneration.

Tamar, the lovely Tamar, was also there; and she likewise received the hearty congratulations of her friends and countrymen.

At length the feast was over, and the Israelites dispersed over the extensive park, some listening to the sweet strains of harp and lute, others strolling along the banks of the beautiful lake, while the younger portion of the assembly sought the remotest parts of the enclosure, to listen to the sweet voices of the feathered songsters, or in some cool and shady arbor to forget all around them in love's sweet communion.

In a little while the sound of trumpets became audible, and, headed by a band of music, a procession of beautiful children dressed in white was seen to emerge from the palace. After them came a little carriage, wherein sat Mishael and Deborah, and which was drawn by six boys arrayed in gaudy colors, while a file of other boys, dressed in the fashion of David and Solomon's time, closed the procession.

They went over the greatest part of the park, and on their march they were joined by all present in the enclosure, who had been attracted by the sounds of the music and the novelty of the scene. At the entrance of a huge canvas tent, that had been constructed on the bank of the afore-mentioned stream, and at the foot of

one of the waterfalls, stood Nahum, Hermione, Harim, and Tamar, reviewing the advancing procession; and when it had passed, the children were left to their plays, under the supervision of some older attendants, while the guests were invited into the tent, where another band was playing up to the lively dance.

Here, led by Nahum and Hermione, all soon were in motion, and the dancing was kept up until near the tenth hour. Then followed the sumptuous evening meal, and after that the dance was resumed.

It was near the fifth hour after midnight when the company separated, all highly pleased with their generous chief and his beautiful queen.

And so the first inhabitants of America lived on, alternately working and feasting, little dreaming that their happiness would ever come to an end.

As yet old Mordecai was with them, and his counsels prevailed. Well did he know that the happiness and prosperity of his friends was the work of the God of their fathers, and most conscientiously did he admonish them to walk in

the right path. But old age now began to show itself in all earnest, while the anxiety, trouble, and exposure he had endured during the last ten years of his existence had done their share in undermining the once vigorous constitution of the liberator of the Israelites. And already the lessons in religion the latter had received from their heathenish conquerors began to show their dangerous consequences,—in a slight and almost imperceptible degree, it is true; but yet Mordecai had trembled when first he became aware of it, and he dreaded to think of the time when he should be taken away. He had remonstrated with Nahum and Harim on the subject; but, although they had admitted the truth of his observation, and had done every thing to quiet him, they had not satisfied him, and the old man began to fear that even his nephews were in danger of falling into the errors of the rest.

But he had done all he could, and nothing was left him but to pray to Jehovah to guide and keep his friends in the right path.

This the old man did often and earnestly; but how his prayers were answered, we will see in the following chapter.

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF MORDECAI, AND SEPARATION.

TEN years have elapsed since the incidents related in the last chapter. The population of New Samaria had increased to the number of several thousands, and the city had been greatly enlarged.

But the moment long dreaded by Mordecai had at length arrived. The old man lay at the point of death. All that love and gratitude could accomplish to soothe the last moments of their liberator and friend was done by Nahum, Harim, and the Israelites in general; but a heavy burden of sorrow and anxiety was on the old man's heart. Only too clearly had he seen, in the latter years of his life, that his countrymen were beginning to follow the ways of their late heathenish masters, and to turn away from the God of their fathers, and dark forebodings had overshadowed his soul.

But the Israelites had never given him the

opportunity to reproach them directly; for they had always tried to hide their leaning toward heathenism, and had never publicly shown it, for fear of offending their honored father. And so old Mordecai could but admonish them to remain true and faithful. But all his admonitions, he felt, had been of no avail; and now, while at the point of death, he shuddered when he thought of the terrible fate that surely would overtake his erring brethren.

His nephews and their wives were beside his couch, and with his last breath he tried to warn them of the fearful consequences of a sinful life. But soon his tongue refused to do its duty, and, with the word "Jehovah" half uttered on his lips, he fell back and expired.

Great and sincere was the grief of the settlers when they heard of the loss.

The city was shrouded in deep mourning, and for an entire week every thing wore the aspect of a great calamity having befallen the inhabitants. Then preparations were made for the solemn burial. A magnificent coffin, made of the costliest wood, inlaid with precious stones and mounted with gold, had been provided, and

on the eighth day after his demise the remains of Mordecai were carried out of the palace, and—followed by every man and woman of New Samaria, the king, the queen, Harim, Tamar, and Lamech, at the head as chief mourners, in solemn procession—deposited in the vault of the temple. The Israelites then returned to their homes; and for a long time afterward nothing was thought or spoken of save the many excellent qualities of their late friend and liberator, and many were the secret resolves to live according to his precepts and example.

But alas for human weakness!

The impression made by the godly life and the solemn death of old Mordecai was at last forgotten, and the new settlers returned to their evil ways. Even Nahum and Harim forsook the God of their fathers. Hitherto, and while their uncle had lived among them, they had been true and faithful; but now the old man was gone, and his counsels were no longer heard, while the ease and luxury of their high positions, combined with

"Idleness, the mother of all vices,"

had, little by little, corrupted their hearts. And

so it came to pass that the court of the king, which should have been an example of righteousness, became the centre of licentiousness and iniquity, whence corruption spread through all classes of the community.

Hermione and Tamar, weak creatures, though faithful and righteous thus far, were but too easily guided by their husbands, whom they loved with all the sincerity of a pure and noble heart, and whose examples they therefore did not for a moment hesitate to follow.

The royal palace now became the daily scene of debaucheries and wanton feasts, while the altars of the temple, once consecrated to Jehovah, became the pedestals of heathenish idols.

And so the children of Israel sinned against the Lord their God, who had safely brought them out of their captivity from under the hands of their cruel oppressors.

They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire; they used divination and enchantments, after the manner of the heathens; and their feasts rivalled the infamous orgies of Nebuchadnezzar in all that was licentious and wicked.

But one man was there in New Samaria who saw all this with grief and sorrow. The soul of Ezra, the high-priest, was troubled when he saw the desecration of the temple, when he beheld the sinful course his friends were pursuing.

He admonished and remonstrated; but to no purpose. The majority of the people turned a deaf ear to all his words; while the king and Harim had already found too much of unholy pleasure in the evil path they were following to heed the exhortation of the good priest.

But Ezra did not give up his good work. He begged, and he threatened with the eternal punishment that certainly would overtake them if they did not return to the only true God of Israel; but he was derided, and at last he became the object of the most intense hatred.

And yet the exertions of the old man did not remain wholly unrewarded. A young man, Eliakim by name, who possessed some influence among his countrymen, became at length convinced of the truth of the words of the high-priest; and through him about two hundred more of the Israelites became converted to the teachings of Ezra.

But what were these against the far greater number of their opponents? True, the former did all in their power to turn their brethren from their wicked ways; but it was of no use. The latter were not to be moved. Of the elder people, who had been delivered out of their Assyrian captivity, a great many had departed life; and the younger ones—particularly those that had been born on the voyage or in the new country—had long felt and become dissatisfied with the restraints to licentiousness which the strict religion of Israel imposed on its votaries.

While Mordecai lived, they dared not even express their dissatisfaction, and were obliged to submit to the Mosaic laws without a murmur.

But now all restraint was gone; and gladly and eagerly had the occasion for throwing off all reserve been embraced.

It is, therefore, not be wondered at that Ezra and his followers were totally unable to make the slightest impression on their erring friends; and, as the existing difference of opinion between the two parties was not unlikely to lead eventually to internal strife and civil war,

the high-priest and his adherents at last resolved to separate and seek a new country, where they might be freed from the fate which they were sure would soon overtake the inhabitants of New Samaria.

The latter did not object to an arrangement that would at once, and without the slightest trouble on their part, rid them of a party of men who were opposed to their mode of living, and whose presence they felt would be a perpetual reproach to themselves; and, accordingly, our two hundred friends, with their wives and children, at once began to prepare for their departure.

Eliakim—a man in the prime of life, with regular features, five feet nine inches high, and withal one of those personages whose appearance indicates that they can be trusted—was chosen as leader, and under his directions the preparations were soon completed.

Six rude canoes had been built, in which to cross the stream that divided the new Canaan from the continent of what now is called America; all the goods, tools, &c. belonging to the emigrants had been packed and conveyed to

the boats; and on a fine sunny morning of the month of August, twenty years after the landing of the Israelites in the promised land, our wanderers, numbering with their wives and children about five hundred souls, left New Samaria and crossed over to the continent. Arrived here, they erected tents, and resolved to rest for some time, in order that they might deliberate on the course they meant to pursue. Night was coming on when the camp was ready. Our travellers, therefore, set to work to prepare their evening meal; and, when that was partaken of, they laid themselves down to rest. The labors of the day had been very fatiguing: the emigrants, therefore, were soon fast asleep, and it was late the following morning when they awoke.

After a frugal morning meal had been prepared and partaken of, Eliakim appointed some of the younger and more robust of his followers to accompany him, while he set out to hunt and to explore the interior of the country. The weather was splendid: not a cloud was visible in the skies, and a lively breeze tempered the heat of the sun.

Our hunters had proceeded but a short distance when they came to a lovely dale, that was traversed by a small stream, whose waters were clear as purest crystal, and whose green banks seemed to be the rendezvous of innumerable flocks of game, from the stately deer to the tiny rabbit, which were quietly feeding and gambolling on the greensward.

The appearance of our party seemed to excite the curiosity of the animals to the utmost; but beyond that the latter evinced no emotion. It was evident that they had never before seen a human being, and that they regarded them only as a new species of their kind. The men had, therefore, no difficulty in securing alive as many of the quadrupeds as they wanted, and even their doing this did not disturb the rest, who quietly continued to feed and to gambol.

After spending some time in their new occupation, Eliakim despatched some of his followers with the captured animals back to the camp, where they were to direct their friends to cage and feed the game, and kill them only as they might be wanted. In a short time the messengers returned; and then the entire party re-

sumed the journey, taking along with them a fat buck, to serve them as food. When evening came, they had travelled over a considerable extent of country, through deep forests and lovely vales; and then they halted, and, after lighting their camp-fires, cooked some small game they had killed on their march, after which they lay down to sleep.

The next morning the journey was resumed; and so they travelled on, hunting and exploring the country. Game and all kinds of nutritious fruit they found in abundance; and eight days after their setting out our wanderers returned to the camp of their friends, whom they found in good condition and high spirits.

Eliakim now informed the Israelites of the result of the exploration,—whereupon it was decided to move on; and the morning after the return of the hunters saw the entire party once more on the journey. Of the animals that had been caught by Eliakim and his companions, a great number were still alive; and the Israelites had succeeded in taming them to such an extent that they could be used for carrying part of their luggage.

By following a southwesterly course, our wanderers at length came to the banks of a mighty river; and here they resolved to build a city. Stone and wood they found in abundance; and, as there were some skilful mechanics among them, who possessed a good store of excellent tools, the foundation of the town was soon laid, and then the work proceeded in good earnest.

One day, while the workmen had built a fire and were preparing their dinner, some stones had been left in the fire; and when, after the meat was cooked, the men threw water on the flames to extinguish them, they, to their surprise, saw the stones fall to pieces and crumble into dust, which, by uniting with water, was soon dissolved into a paste. This paste again mixed with the ashes and sand lying around; and, after stirring this mixture, the laborers produced a cement which they at once saw would be of great use to them in building their houses.

The men now set to work to collect as many of these stones as they could find, and, after

burning them thoroughly, found themselves in possession of an excellent mortar.

And now the building was continued, and, after ten years of hard labor, the city was finished.

Great were the rejoicings of the Israelites when they beheld the mighty work of their hands, whose ruins, when they were discovered centuries afterward, excited the wonder and admiration of the world.

But not long did our wanderers enjoy the possession of their new home.

The spot where the town had been built was very swampy, and soon proved to be so unhealthy that the inhabitants found that they either must remove, or else expect a speedy extermination.

Accordingly, one fine morning, about one year after the city had been finished, the Israelites packed up their movables and set out to find another and healthier spot, where they again at once set to work to lay out and build another town. But this, too, was abandoned soon after it had been finished, as our wanderers had by this time become so accustomed to a roving life that

they could not be persuaded to stay in any one place, and, as the raising of cattle, of which they had succeeded in catching and taming a good stock, had become their principal occupation, it was desirable to find the best pasture, and to leave the ground when that began to give out.

And thus it happened that several towns and hamlets, the colossal ruins of which have been discovered in later centuries, when they excited the wonder and admiration of the world, were alternately built and abandoned.

But we now must leave the wanderers in their rambles through the country, and return to the city of New Samaria, with the inhabitants of which place rests the sequel of our history.

We left Nahum, Harim, and their followers in their new city, where they continued to live in licentiousness and iniquity, after the manner of the heathens.

Mishael, the son of Nahum, was twenty years old, while Deborah, Harim's daughter, had reached her eighteenth summer. Both had grown exquisitely beautiful; but the examples

of their parents and neighbors had corrupted their hearts.

Nahum and Hermione, as well as Harim and Tamar, had by this time become the parents of many children, all of whom, after reaching a certain age, were allowed to live together without the least restriction; and so it had happened that Mishael and Deborah had already become parents, without being united in the holy bands of matrimony.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GHOSTS, AND THE SOLEMN WARNING.

AGAIN five years had elapsed. Nahum and Hermione had witnessed the birth of many grandchildren, and the teachings and warnings of old Ezra had long been forgotten.

The Israelites had now become so hardened in iniquity that not a vestige of their former religion was to be found among them.

Every house in New Samaria had its images and idols, before whom the inhabitants burned incense and sacrificed the blood of their own children. The temple had been changed from the house of Jehovah to the temple of Moloch, and the latter was served by twenty priests, whose licentiousness beggared all description. In short, New Samaria had become an abode of vice.

It was a lovely morning in the month of June, and the city was decked out with all the pomp of a heathenish festival.

That day the image of Moloch was to be borne through the principal streets of New Samaria in solemn procession. That day was set apart for the great sacrifice. A virgin, whose person had not been polluted by the touch of man, was to be dedicated to the idol. Abominable mockery!

Very few there were among the maidens of the city who had remained pure amid all the bad examples, all the licentiousness, that surrounded them.

But those few were among the bravest and the best; and they were therefore chosen by the accursed priests of Moloch to minister to their own infernal lust, to their own beastly desires.

It was to be decided by lot, drawn by the priests themselves, which of the poor girls that had been branded as pure was to be the victim.

I say that had been branded as pure; for in those days it was regarded a crime for a maiden to be chaste after reaching the fifteenth year; and so severe were the heathenish statutes made and most rigorously enforced by the priests, that the king himself would not have dared even to

murmur if one of his own children had been selected for the sacrifice.

And now the doors of the temple were thrown open, and, preceded by a band of music, the twenty priests of Moloch emerged into the street, clad in their gaudy robes of office. After them came twenty-five young girls dressed in red skirts, while their bosoms down to the waist were left naked. Long hair, black and glossy as the raven's wing, fell in numerous ringlets down on their snowy shoulders, while in their hands they bore wreaths and bunches of rare flowers.

Then followed a closed carriage drawn by twelve youths, whose dress consisted of a pair of short scarlet pantaloons, the other part of the body being left naked, like the bosoms of the girls preceding them.

Within the carriage, dressed in white, and their faces covered with thick veils, were seated six young girls, whose ages varied from sixteen to eighteen years, and who were the only ones to be found in New Samaria deserving the appellation of virgin. And as a reward for this, as a reward for the constancy and fortitude

with which they had withstood all temptations, they were now being borne to the sacrifice.

One of their number was destined to become the property of the most licentious rascals in all the city, to become the slave, the victim who, though ostensibly a sacrifice to the heathen deity, in reality was to minister to the beastly lust of the accursed priests, and who, after their devilish desires were satiated, was doomed to perish by the most miserable of all deaths, that of starvation.

Following the carriage came the king and the queen, accompanied by Harim and Tamar, and followed by the officers of the royal household, all of whom wore their uniforms of state.

Next were the young men and women, attired in the most shameless manner; and at last came the aged and feeble, closing the procession. It was a disgusting sight to behold how the latter tried, in manner and dress, to imitate the levity and wantonness of their sons and daughters.

Nahum the king, and Hermione his queen, were clad in their royal robes; but their faces wore sad and desponding looks.

In the wagon before them, and among the six maidens one of whom was to be the victim, sat Talmai, their best-beloved child, their hearts' idol; and a dark presentiment had already told them that she of all was destined for the sacrifice.

In vain had the king exerted all the influence of his high station to ward off the blow from the head of his devoted darling. But, alas! he himself had led his people in the way of the heathens, and now, according to the custom of all heathenish nations, the priests of their first deity had become all powerful with the inhabitants of New Samaria.

Hermione had humbled herself into the dust, she had fallen on her knees before the high-priest of Moloch, to implore his mercy. Vain! vain! That hoary-headed libertine knew that he should be the first to possess the poor victim; and Talmai was so beautiful!

At last both parents saw that all earthly hope was gone, and in despair they even turned their eyes heavenward: they implored the help of the God of their fathers, they vowed to return from their evil ways.

But how could they expect that offended Jehovah would listen to their prayers?

And now they beheld the beginning of the end. They had seen their beloved daughter forced out of their midst by rude hands, they had seen her led, or rather dragged, to the temple, they had seen her thrust into the carriage with her unfortunate companions, and now they saw her borne on to her final doom.

But to return to the procession. With measured steps the priests of Moloch, bearing the image of the idol in their midst, and their followers, strode up the principal street of New Samaria, on to the first altar, that had been erected in front of the royal palace.

Here the image was set down, and the priests formed a semicircle. Then the twenty-five half-naked girls mentioned above, and who bore the then proud title of "Daughters of Moloch," stepped forward, and, while the music struck up a half-wild, half-solemn strain, they began to dance around the idol. At first their steps were slow and measured; but the music grew wilder, and the movements of the girls became quicker, while their bodies were contorted in the most

vulgar and indelicate manner. But wilder and wilder the music sounded, quicker and quicker grew the vulgar dance, until at last this and the contortions of the bodies were frightful to behold. After a while the maidens could hold out no longer, and one after another they fell down in utter exhaustion.

Then the carriage was drawn forward, the doors were thrown open, and the six virgins were forced to alight. They were led to the image and there compelled to throw themselves flat on their faces. While they were in that posture, a young man, who had acted as coachman, and who, with the exception of a flame-colored sash tied around his loins, was entirely naked, sprang from his seat and came forward.

"Mighty god of this great and glorious nation," he said, "in these maidens, who now lie prostrate at thy feet, thou beholdest those who have been deemed worthy to be sacrificed on thy altar.

"Before long the lot will have decided which of them will be chosen by the great Moloch for his own.

"Guide the hands of thy holy priests when

the lots are drawn, that she who is the purest and best may indeed be selected."

All the girls now arose. The six virgins were made to kneel around the image, and then the twelve youths, led on by him who had acted as spokesman, came forward. The band again began to play; but the strain had lost its half-solemnity, and now it burst forth in unbounded wildness. The "Daughters of Moloch," who by this time had entirely recovered from their exhaustion, joined the young men; and now began one of those wanton and bacchanalian dances which fortunately Christianity and civilization have banished forever, unless, indeed, they should yet exist in some of the lowest dens of iniquity of our own days.

Soon the excitement of the dancers infected the rest of the multitude: first the young men and women, and finally even the old and feeble, rushed forth to join in the shameless orgies.

The king and his queen had hitherto preserved their dignity: the anxiety for their beloved child which gnawed on their hearts had made them insensible to all that surrounded them; and, following their example, their com-

panions had also remained quiet. But now the general excitement exerted its influence even here, and, forgetting all else, Nahum, Hermione, Harim, Tamar, and their followers, joined in the wild dance.

A piercing shriek went up from under the veil that hid the pale but lovely features of Talmai—who, like her unfortunate companions, was forced to look upon that disgusting spectacle—when she saw her father and mother, old and feeble though they had grown, rush forth in mad excitement.

The king's daughter and her five virgin friends had been among the pupils of good old Ezra, and his teachings had produced the desired result in the pure hearts of the six children. Gladly would that faithful priest have taken his darlings out of a city whose inhabitants, he saw, would sink deeper and deeper until some fearful and final doom should terminate their existence. But they were too young then to be taken away without the consent of their parents; and that, of course, was not to be obtained.

Yet the hearts of the girls were stronger, and his teachings had taken deeper root, than Ezra

had hoped; and, despite all the licentiousness of their friends and neighbors, they had preserved their purity.

And this had not been all the consequences of the good old man's admonitions. There were in New Samaria two young men who also had been among the disciples of Ezra, and who also had been steadfast enough to preserve their hearts pure.

Omar, son of Nahum, a young man of twenty-one years, was an exact counterpart of what his father had been when I first introduced him to my readers. The strength of his frame was, of course, not so well developed as that of his sire at the time I speak of; yet the cut of the features was the same, while his appearance in general justified the belief that with the coming years the son would grow even stronger than the father.

Omar's friend and companion, Gad, was the son of Korah, one of the higher officers of the king's household. He was now twenty-five years old; and he too, like the majority of his countrymen at that time, was a young man of

a stately form and with regular and well-cut features.

These two young men did not share in the idolatry and licentiousness of their neighbors. They had not joined the vulgar procession of the day, but had met at the house of old Isaac, a firm friend and adherent of Ezra, but whose age and infirmities had not allowed him to accompany that good man on his emigration; and, as for the present the priests of Moloch did not covet the possession of the two friends, they had been allowed to do as they liked.

Meanwhile the vulgar dance around the image in front of the king's palace had reached its climax, and the dancers began to sink down, one after another, in sheer exhaustion.

The six virgins, although compelled to look upon that most disgusting spectacle, had thus far been permitted to retain their thick veils; and this they regarded as a great blessing, for thus the blushes that suffused their faces at sight of the indecent contortions and exposures were hidden from the libertine gaze of the gaping crowd.

But now the priests rushed forward, half mad

with passion. Like so many demons, they stood around the trembling maidens, and with rude hands tore off the protecting veils, to glut their blood-shot eyes in the charms of their victims.

The extreme and commanding beauty of Talmai, who had just finished her sixteenth year, and whose graceful, well-rounded, and faultless form towered high over her companions, kindled a fire in the breast of that hoary-headed high-priest, whose hair and beard had been whitened by more than fifty winters, of such intensity that he mentally swore to possess the king's daughter, cost what it might; and from that moment the doom of the poor girl was sealed.

But this was not all. The sight of so many handsome faces, their beauty heightened by the blushes that overspread them on so suddenly and unexpectedly becoming exposed to the gaze of men, had completely maddened the licentious priests; and it was forthwith resolved that one victim would not be sufficient to satisfy the cravings of their passion, and that at least two of them should be demanded.

Adah, the daughter of Aaron, another high

officer in the king's household, was in her eighteenth year. She had been brought up with Talmai, and the similarity of their characters and inclinations had made the two girls fast friends.

Adah was not so tall as her friend, nor was her beauty so intense and commanding: still, she was very handsome, and the faultless cut of her features was of that style that appeals directly to the senses.

After Talmai, she was the handsomest of the six virgins; and therefore, when the priests resolved to demand two victims instead of one, her doom also was sealed.

And now the veils of the virgins were readjusted, for the multitude, who in their excitement had danced and jumped until their senses reeled, and who therefore had seen nothing of the doings of the priests, began to recover from their exhaustion.

When all had been restored to consciousness, the priests came forward, and, in solemn mockery, threw themselves down before the altar in pretended prayer. After a little while they arose, and, ascending a platform that had been

erected on one side of the altar, the high-priest said,—

"Sons and daughters of Moloch, we have once more met to perform that great, that solemn duty which we owe to our mighty god!

"My heart bleeds, and these tears, that I am not ashamed to shed, are witnesses to the sincerity of my grief; but duty compels me to stifle the emotions of my heart. These virgins, who have been found worthy to become a sacrifice to the great Moloch, are themselves the cause of their present affliction: they have lived so that they have become unworthy to live among us, and therefore our merciful god has chosen them for his own, as he in his greatness would disdain to possess what man had enjoyed before him.

"But, whatever else may have been the conduct of these maidens, they are daughters, and have never been remiss in their filial duties; and it is in behalf of their afflicted parents that my heart bleeds, that these tears are shed.

"O my brethren and sisters, my sons and daughters, it is hard to be the performer of so

great a sacrifice; but my office demands it, and the good Moloch will strengthen my feeble arm, blind my tearful eyes, and steel my bleeding heart in the execution of my work.

"As I did five years ago, so shall I to-day, spare you the sight of the bloody spectacle; and when you hear the solemn tolling of the bell on yonder temple, know that the sacrifice will have been performed."

Here the speaker ceased, to observe the effect his words had produced on his hearers.

He knew that he must proceed with the utmost caution; for, although the inhabitants of New Samaria had completely turned from the God of their forefathers and adopted the statutes of the heathens, they had stood aghast when, five years before, just after the departure of Ezra and his followers, the priests of Moloch had proposed the cold-blooded murder of a grown maiden as a sacrifice to the idol, and all their arts and persuasions had hardly enabled them to obtain the consent of the people.

Fortunately for them, their first victim had been a poor, unprotected creature without parents or friends; but the plan they had formed, in their

unholy passion, to have the thing repeated every year, they dared not bring into execution; and therefore, after the minds of the populace were thoroughly sounded, it had been determined that the great sacrifice should be performed every five years.

The wily priests were well aware that they must not proceed too hastily to gain their end, but bide their time; and, while they congratulated themselves on having obtained the consent of the people to the first step in the desired direction, they had no doubt that in time they should be able to lead them at will. To have an object wherewith to satisfy their beastly desires during the intervening space of five years, they had put their first victim into a lofty, well-aired, under-ground apartment, constructed by themselves for that purpose, and, while they had partaken but sparingly of the fruit in their possession, they had done all in their power to preserve the charms of the poor girl. But now she was to be cast aside; and already on the day preceding the procession had she been thrust into a dark and gloomy hole, also constructed by the priests for that

purpose, in the bowels of the earth; and there they had left her without food or drink.

But, at the same time, the villains had not been idle in other directions. They had worked hard to fortify and strengthen their power, and now the minds of their followers were pretty well prepared to listen to any atrocity that might be proposed and advocated by them.

Yet the proposition they were to make on that day was a startling one even to themselves. To obtain possession of Talmai, the king's daughter, they thought they could manage well enough. On that score they had no fears. But how to gain the consent of the people to that proposition—to have two victims instead of one—was another question; and even the hardened and rascally priests trembled when they thought of the possible consequences.

Yet their hearts were set on gaining their object, and they had resolved to try it, at all events, come what might. And, therefore, when he had been silent long enough to observe the effects of his words, and when he had seen that the eyes of his hearers were directed to him, and that the latter regarded him with respect

and veneration for the tender feelings of his heart, so cleverly depicted in his hypocritical words, the high-priest continued:—

"But, my dearly-beloved friends, Moloch is dissatisfied! The smell of our last sacrifice has long since evaporated; the nostrils of our god have become parched, and they have expanded like unto the boundaries of our city! When, last night, I lay on my hard pillow, thinking of my duties and of the prosperity of our people, the mighty prince of unbounded regions appeared unto me in his wrath! Fire and brimstone came out of his mouth that was terrible to behold, and, in tones of thunder, he threatened to sweep us and our city from the face of the earth if his wrath were not appeased.

"Then I took courage,—even I, humble and unworthy though I felt in that presence,—and I expostulated. But he soon silenced me.

"'Sacrifice!' he thundered forth. 'Call ye a feeble maiden burnt on my altar at intervals of five years a sacrifice to such as I? The smell of a hundred burning cities like yours would hardly fill the tenth part of one of my nostrils; and yet I forbear! But if to-morrow's sun does

not see my wrath appeased, tremble; for no longer will I spare you!'

"He then was silent, and I was enabled to speak to him. I spoke of our late errors, and how we had only recently become converted,—of our growing attachment to the true faith, and our willingness to serve him; and at last I succeeded in calming him to such an extent that he promised not to withdraw from us his protection, if on this occasion we would sacrifice two virgins instead of one, and repeat the sacrifice every twelvemonth. Then he disappeared.

"And now, my beloved brethren and sisters, my sons and daughters," concluded the speaker, "I have told you what is expected of us, and what we may expect in return; and if you ask my advice, it is, We must, we will, comply with the request of the great Moloch."

The sermon was ended, and the high-priest looked around upon his hearers. But they were silent; horror had bound their tongues. The words of the preacher had been so powerful, the horror depicted in his face had been so well feigned, that not one in that vast assembly, with

the exception of the six virgins, who had not once looked up to the speaker, doubted the sincerity of his assertions.

The poor victims had heard and understood every word uttered by that hoary hypocrite, and their souls had been filled with grief and despair; for not only had their chances of escaping the fearful doom become much smaller, but they were certain now to be sacrificed at last.

Only the priests rejoiced. They had gained the victory; for they saw by the looks of the people that no objection would be made on that side, and it required all the efforts of their hardened nature to preserve their wonted dignity and decorum.

It took some time before the multitude recovered from the effect produced by the speech of the high-priest; and when, at length, all had become tranquil, that old villain again alluded to the subject, and said, "If no objection is raised among you, I shall consider it my duty to make the sacrifice a double one; but if, on the other hand, any one in your midst be dissatisfied with that, let him come forward; and then let me tell you that I have done all in my power to make

you follow the right course; and if, after all, my advice should not be heeded, then beware how you provoke the anger of our god, and on your own heads be the consequences."

But no objection was raised; and so the affair was settled to the intensest satisfaction of the priests.

The procession now again formed, the six virgins were put back into the carriage, and, in the order in which they had come, the multitude resumed their march to the next altar. Here they went through the same ceremonies that had been performed at the first stopping-place, the sermon only being dispensed with; and so the procession moved through the entire city, stopping at twelve different places, where similar altars had been erected, and before each of which the same vulgar and bacchanalian orgies were repeated.

At last, two hours after noon, the procession returned to the temple, where the people were dismissed to rest and refresh themselves, and to reassemble at the fourth hour, when the lots were to be drawn, and when the victims were to

take their last farewell of parents, friends, and the world in general.

The wagon was drawn into the temple, where it was to be left and watched over by the priests, while the virgins were to remain as guests of Moloch, until that great and divine personage should have indicated, through the lot in the hands of his priests, which of the maidens were worthy to be sacrificed.

Nahum and Hermione had to be carried home; for the exertions of the day and their anguish in behalf of their best-beloved child, whom, they now felt, no earthly power could save, had been too much for them, and in a state of utter prostration they arrived at the royal palace.

Our two friends Omar and Gad had meantime not left the dwelling of old Isaac, and all three were engaged in an earnest conversation, when the door was unceremoniously opened, and in strode a young man of about twenty-six years, whom they instantly recognized as Abner, old Isaac's son, and in whom we too find a recent acquaintance,—to wit, the young man in the flame-colored sash, who had acted as coachman in the great procession.

But now he was not naked: he wore the costume of the young men of his class, then in fashion, which he had also worn when he went to the temple that morning.

Abner had not a bad heart; but he was naturally wild and reckless. A proper and judicious education would, in all probability, have made a good and true man of him; but, unfortunately, he had been the only son of his father, and his mother had died when he had scarcely been born.

Old Isaac had loved his wife with a sincerity rarely equalled even in our days of Christianity, and, when the cherished partner of his life had died, he had transferred all his love to her first-born.

And so Abner had been spoiled by indulgence. At first he had joined his fellow-citizens in their heathenish ceremonies out of idle curiosity; but, little by little, he had become pleased with the wild and licentious life, and now he was a firm adherent of Moloch and the teachings of that idol's priests. Yet he loved his father with a sincerity that amounted to veneration, and on no account would he have

done an act that he knew would seriously displease the old man.

Had Isaac been firm and seriously remonstrated with his son, he could easily have led him back to the true faith; but the father was too weak, and therefore the son sank deeper and deeper.

When the young man had affectionately embraced his father, and cordially greeted Omar and Gad, both of whom he well knew and much respected, he sat down and related what he had seen at the procession.

The cheeks of the two friends flushed when they heard that even their old parents had taken part in the shameless dance, but they were silent; and Abner, who had not perceived the change in their countenance, went on.

"Although," he said, "the lots are not drawn yet, I can pretty well guess which of the six virgins are to be sacrificed; for, as I must inform you, we are this time to have two victims instead of one, as the great Moloch appeared to his high-priest last night and threatened to sweep us and our lovely city from the face of the earth if at least two maidens were not burned on his altar.

The priests suppose that nobody knows who really will be sacrificed, and they even pretend to know nothing themselves; but I have had my ears and eyes open, when they believed me absent or asleep, and I can tell you that they will manage the drawing of the lots as it pleases themselves. I pity the poor girls, but then the priests say it must be done; and so I think it can't be helped."

Our friends shuddered when they heard what the young man said, yet they did not feel surprised; for too well they knew that the priests of Moloch had it all their own way in New Samaria,—which name, by the way, had now been changed to New Babylon,—and that no power in the city was strong enough to oppose their wishes.

Omar and Gad had also all along thought that the villanous priests must have had some hidden object of their own in proposing the sacrifice, and they had long wondered why the latter had not demanded more victims from the first. But that the drawing of the lots was managed as the priests pleased, the two young men had never doubted.

And now they wished to know which of the virgins would be the victims, and so they asked their informant if he would tell them; when that young man, with his usual frankness, said,—

"Mark me: if Talmai, the king's daughter, and Adah, the daughter of old Aaron, are not chosen for the sacrifice, then set me down as a fool."

At the mention of these two names a deathly pallor overspread the faces of the two friends, and they would have fallen to the floor had not the stout arms of Abner caught them and led them to a seat.

Omar had long been the secretly affianced lover of Talmai, while Gad had plighted his troth to Adah.

When the young men recovered from the blow, they wildly jumped up and cried, "No, no! that must not be! They are ours, and they must be rescued at all hazards. You, friend Isaac, and you, good Abner, must help us! By our friendship, by all that you hold sacred, we adjure you! Stand by us!"

But Abner sadly shook his head.

"It would avail you nothing," he said. "The

fate of the two poor girls is sealed, and you cannot alter it.

"In stratagem and cunning we are no match for the priests, and to attempt force would only subject you to ridicule,—if, indeed, the enraged people, who regard their priests as demigods, should not tear you to pieces.

"No! I love and respect you, although you are not believers; but this thing cannot be altered."

And thereupon he strode out of the house back to the temple, even leaving the refreshments his father had prepared for him untouched; for he could not bear the despairing looks of the friends.

When he had gone, the two young men turned to old Isaac; and so desponding were their looks, so prayerful the tones in which they besought the old man to lend them his co-operation, that he could not resist; and, after considering for some time, the father of Abner told them that he had formed a plan by which they might possibly gain their object. "But," he added, "it is a bold game you will have to play, and the consequences may be terrible for yourselves if the

plan fail: yet it is the only thing that can be done,—the only thing that promises the shadow of success."

Of course the friends were willing to do any thing. What was life to them, if the two maidens were taken away from them forever?

And so they told old Isaac, and then the latter disclosed his plan. But what that was, how it was executed, and whether it had the desired result, the sequel must show.

In the mean time the fourth hour had come, and the inhabitants, the king and the queen and their friends and followers included, had reassembled in the temple, all curious to know how the drawing of the lots would terminate, all eager to witness the end of the ceremonies.

And now, one after the other, the twenty priests strode in and went to the altar, while at the same time the six virgins were led forward and made to kneel around it. Six strips of parchment, each with the name of one of the virgins written upon it, were put into a vase, while six beans, of which four were white and two black, were put into another.

Simultaneously with one of the pieces of parch-

ment a bean was to be drawn, and the virgin whose name appeared upon the strip was to be free if the bean were white, but to be declared worthy for the sacrifice if the color of the bean were black.

The two youngest of the priests were blindfolded, and then, after the two vessels had been well shaken by the high-priest, the dreadful lottery commenced under the supervision of the last-named functionary.

Every breath was hushed in that vast assembly, while all eyes were turned upon the face of the high-priest in silent expectation.

And now the arms of the blindfolded drawers were raised: in one hand appeared a strip of parchment, while the other exhibited a bean of dazzling whiteness.

With a slow movement the high-priest stretched out his arm to take the parchment, and, after deliberately unrolling it, he read, in a monotonous tone of voice, the name of Rebekah.

A shout went up from the assembled multitude; for Rebekah was free, and the people rejoiced, forgetting for the moment that among the

remaining five there were two whose doom was irrevocably sealed.

She who bore that name which had just been uttered by more than a thousand tongues, had fallen down and fainted; the emotions of her heart had been too much for her, and, while the people rejoiced at her good fortune, she lay in utter oblivion.

But at a nod of the high-priest, four stout young men came forward: the form of the insensible maiden was raised and borne out of the temple, while the arms of the two blinded priests again descended.

Again a piece of parchment and a white bean were drawn, and this time the high-priest, in his monotonous voice, pronounced the name of Dinah, another of the six virgins.

Again the people rejoiced, again the liberated maiden fell down and fainted, and she too was taken up and carried out of the temple.

Then the drawing of the lots was resumed for the third time, and resulted as the two preceding ones, the name that was now pronounced by the high-priest being that of Keturah, who, when she heard that she was free, also fainted from

the excess of her emotions, and was also carried away.

Now there remained only one white bean, only one single chance for the three remaining victims! Nahum, Hermione, and Aaron had become fearfully excited: their children stood on the brink of a terrible abyss, and no earthly power seemed able to prevent their falling down. The three maidens sat motionless, erect as so many statues cut out of stone, not a sign, not a breath, indicating that there was yet life in their motionless forms.

And now the blindfolded priests once more put their hands into the vases: slowly and deliberately the two arms went up, and the last white bean glittered in the air. Solemnly the high-priest lifted his arm to take the parchment, slowly was it unrolled, and in deep tones the name of Zilpah sounded from the lips of the old villain.

The liberated virgin lay fainting at the foot of the altar; but no rejoicing shout went up from the multitude, and all eyes were directed to the spot where the king, the queen, and Aaron, the king's officer, lay on the floor broken down

and senseless. The blow had fallen on them like a thunderbolt, and like the lightning's flash had prostrated them where they stood.

Talmai and Adah had not fallen down: the blow had been too hard, and it had taken away their reason. Jehovah had taken compassion on the suffering innocents, and in his mercy had spared them the consciousness of their terrible and hopeless situation. For the moment all was confusion in the temple, and the people began to think that the end of the ceremonies would be postponed. But in this they were mistaken. The priests were too eager to clutch their prey, which they felt sure they could easily restore to reason and consciousness.

In a little while Nahum, Hermione, and Aaron were lifted up and restored to life, whereupon they were put on chairs that had been brought forward for the purpose. Then the two stoutest priests came forward to the still kneeling victims and raised them on their feet. The poor girls had been bereft of reason, as we have seen above, and therefore they offered no objection to the doings of the villains. They did not even shudder at the indelicate touches; but, like

machines, they allowed their movements to be directed at the will of their taskmasters.

And now they were to be unveiled, they were to be divested of their clothing; for in a state of entire nudity they were to take their final farewell of their parents, friends, and the assembled multitude.

Already the hands of the priests were stretched out to tear down the veils which hid the features of the two virgins; but the next moment the two villains recoiled and fell down on the floor.

A flash of lightning, so intensely vivid that for the moment the temple was illuminated to its farthest corners, as if the noonday sun had descended from his sphere and come into the building, had suddenly shot right into the faces of the two rascals, and, besides prostrating them at the feet of their companions, it at the same time revived the reason of the two maidens, who now stood quite conscious again, but silent and awe-stricken, like the rest of the assembled multitude. Immediately after the flash of lightning there came a crash of thunder, as if ten thousand cannon had been fired in one simulta-

neous discharge, and now the heavens grew black as Erebus. Flash followed on flash, while the thunder crashed in one continuous roar. Then came a flash more vivid than all the rest, followed by a peal of thunder that made the very earth tremble, and shook the temple to its foundation; and a moment later a bright flame shot up in front of the edifice and illumined the interior. The lightning had struck one of the ancient trees that stood near the door, and set it on fire. At the same time the portals of the temple were thrown open, and in came two persons, dressed in snow-white garments. The first of these persons—an old man with bald head and long, flowing beard, whose features closely resembled the features of old Mordecai—strode boldly forward, followed by his companion, whose fair face and light, airy form gave him the appearance of an angel of the Lord.

The two seemingly supernatural beings went straight to the altar of Moloch, while the terrified priests timidly drew on one side, and then the visitors raised the white sticks they bore in their hands, and broke the image of the idol in ten thousand pieces; then they turned to the

maidens, whose hands they took, as if to assure them of their protection; and now they confronted the villanous and cowardly priests of Moloch.

"Villains," said the elder of the two, "dastardly, cowardly villains, your licentiousness, your iniquity, has at last reached up to the throne of Jehovah, the true God of Israel.

"We have been sent to put a stop to your wicked and sinful career. Look upon these innocent maidens, whom in your villany you had selected for a fate worse than ten thousand deaths, whom you had selected to minister to your beastly lusts, to satisfy your hellish desires, while you made your poor deluded followers believe that they were to be sacrificed to that miserable idol the broken pieces of which are crumbling under my feet.

"Begone, ye rascals! pollute no longer the temple of Jehovah with your presence."

And with this he and his companion again raised their sticks. But the priests did not await the onset: as if driven by ten thousand demons, they jumped up and fled out of the temple; and they did not rest until they reached a small

house near the outskirts of the city, where the underground apartments for the reception of their victims were dug.

The pretended heavenly messengers had, meanwhile, turned to the assembled people, and, in a solemn voice, he who bore the resemblance of Mordecai said, "Men of Israel! deeply have ye offended the great Jehovah, Him who in his infinite goodness and mercy led us safely out of the land of our oppressors, over the boundless waters, to this glorious country, where you might have prospered, where you might have prayed to him in his own temple.

"But you have turned away from the God of your fathers: the temple you erected to him you have desecrated; you have turned it into a temple of Moloch,—the imaginary heathenish deity whose image lies broken beneath my feet, and who has not even the power to punish its destroyer. Your priests are hypocrites and impostors, and you stand on the brink of a fearful abyss. Woe unto you if ye do not return to the only true God of Israel!

"Your city shall be destroyed, and you shall be swept from the face of the earth, if you do

not leave your evil ways. Go to your homes now, and reflect on what you have seen and heard. But these maidens will remain with us: you have forfeited all claims to them: yet no harm will befall them, and if you indeed return to the true God of Israel, they will be restored to you in their purity and innocence, whereas otherwise you will never see them again."

Now the mysterious visitor ceased, and one after the other the people left the temple, marvelling at what they had seen and heard. Nahum, Hermione, and Aaron indeed made an attempt to join their children, but an imperious gesture of the two "messengers" drove them back, and at last they too left the temple to seek their homes.

When the last of the lingerers had disappeared, the pretended ghosts tore off their disguise and revealed to the gaze of the astonished maidens the well-known and beloved forms and features of Omar and Gad.

* * * * *

When Abner had left his father's house some three or four hours before, the two friends had implored old Isaac to help them in rescuing

the doomed virgins, in terms so supplicating and earnest that the old man could not withstand, and he had formed a plan whereby the young men might possibly gain their object, as we have seen above. The father of Abner knew, as well as his son, that any ordinary stratagem, any ordinary cunning, would be of no avail against the superior craft of the priests of Moloch; and so he came to the conclusion that only by working upon the superstition of the people was any thing to be gained against the wishes and the will of the priests. The old man had of course retained a perfect recollection of the outward appearance of old Mordecai, and so, when Omar and Gad had declared their willingness to do and dare any thing to liberate the two imperilled maidens, he with the aid of a wig and a false beard disguised Omar, the stoutest of the two, so well that any one who saw him might easily have taken him for the deceased liberator of the Israelites. Gad, whose light and airy form fitted him exactly for that purpose, was made to resemble an angel of the Lord. Then the two friends provided themselves with white garments and sticks of the same

color, and, after they had been instructed by old Isaac how to proceed and what to say, they wrapped themselves in large cloaks and sallied forth to the temple. What, however, the result of their undertaking would have been under any ordinary circumstances is doubtful; but, long before they reached the temple, the storm that had been gathering since noon, and the first fury of which had prostrated the two priests in the temple, burst upon them. Yet so eager were they to arrive in time for the rescue of Talmai and Adah that they did not heed the pouring rain; and scarcely had they reached the entrance to the temple and thrown their cloaks at the foot of one of the old trees that stood near, when a flash of lightning struck that very tree, and set it, as well as the cloaks, on fire. When the thunder-clap came, they pushed open the door and strode boldly in. What followed we have already seen.

And now we return to the rescuers and the rescued. The lovers had already informed their sweethearts of what we know concerning themselves and their plan, and now they were deliberating on the course they were to pursue.

"Here," Omar said, "we cannot stay; while for you, Talmai and Adah, it would be equally dangerous to return to your homes. For, although the people have been terribly frightened to-day, to-morrow these villanous priests of Moloch will be reinstated in full power; and, believe me, they will soon return to the attempt to get you into their possession. No! in flight only lies your safety. Perhaps in time our friends may return to the God of their fathers, and then we may return to them. But, if that should not be the case, Jehovah, who has helped and protected us thus far, will help and protect us still farther.

"At the distance of about a league from this city there is a cave which I accidentally discovered while out hunting one day; and, as night is fast approaching, we can easily leave the temple and proceed to that shelter under cover of the darkness; and, while you remain there under the protection of Gad, I shall return to secure and bring away such of your and my own clothing and other property as we may want,—a task by no means difficult for me, as I have free and easy access to the households as well of Nahum

as of Aaron and Korah. I then shall return to you, and we will stay in that cave as long as we can do so with security; while the game and the fruit that abound in that vicinity will not let us want for the necessaries of life."

To follow this advice, Gad and the maidens saw, was the best thing they could do under existing circumstances; and, as night had by this time fairly set in, they all resolved to depart instantly. The two young men had retained their own clothing when they were disguised by old Isaac; and all they had to do, therefore, was to throw off their white garments and tie them, together with their false wigs and the beard of Omar, into a bundle. The two priests who had been prostrated by the lightning lay stiff and stark where they had fallen, and Omar had contrived to take off their upper garments unperceived by the maidens. He now wrapped the latter, to protect them against the chill night-air and to hide the snowy color of their dresses, in these ample and dark-hued cloaks, and then the four sallied forth into the street. They met no obstacle in leaving the city, and, under the guidance of Omar who knew his road, they

soon reached the cavern. This proved to be a large and airy natural vault; and, after gathering the dry leaves and moss that lay around in abundance so as to form a soft and comfortable resting-place, the maidens lay down, and soon their eyes were closed in sweet repose. Gad then sat down near the entrance, while Omar returned to the city.

Here that young man found not the least difficulty. In the king's palace, which he visited first, all was consternation and utter perplexity, and nobody questioned or, indeed, even perceived him, when he went straight to Talmai's room. Unperceived he packed up whatever he thought worth taking, and just as unperceived he left the dwelling of Nahum, to repair to his father's house, where he deposited his burden. The same confusion and perplexity existed in the dwelling of Aaron, where he succeeded in securing of Adah's wardrobe and other property as much as he could carry.

Gad's parents had gone out to visit and condole with the afflicted Aaron; while the domestics of the household had also left the dwelling, to gossip with their cronies over the events of

the day. Here Omar might have carried away all the house contained; but he contented himself with carrying off nearly all that his friend called his own. He then returned to his own dwelling, but his parents had gone to the king's palace, and therefore Omar had it here all his own way. First, he packed up as much of his wardrobe and other things as he wanted to take along with him; then he tied all the bundles together and went to the stable, where he found his own horse, that had been caught and tamed for him. He put the bundles on the animal's back, and then went into the kitchen, whence he soon emerged with a considerable bundle of provisions. This he also put on his horse's back, and at last he carefully and deliberately led his beast out into the street, and, without hinderance or accident, soon was out of the city. About three hours after his departure, the young man had again reached the cavern,—where he found Gad, still awake, sitting near the entrance; and now the two friends carried into the vault the goods Omar had brought out of the city, leaving the horse to feed

in the luxuriant grass that grew around that spot.

After this the two young men partook of a hearty supper, and at last they also lay down, and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EARTHQUAKE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THE sun had scarcely risen when Omar and Gad arose. Both had been awake in the night, but, without disturbing one another, they had silently reflected on their situation; and now they sat down to deliberate on what they might do.

"I think," Omar said, "it would be best for us not to remain here, as there is every possibility of our retreat being discovered; and then, I fear, we would be lost. The people would at once become aware of the imposition played upon them, while the priests would certainly instigate them to resent the insult to their god; and therefore our only safety lies in departing for a region where the inhabitants of New Babylon are not likely to follow.

"But, still, I believe that for a day or two we are safe: our present retreat is so well hidden that only by accident can it be discovered. And then I am sure that Jehovah, who evidently has been

and still is with us, will prevent our enemies from finding us. I, therefore, would advise you to stay here for the present with the maidens, while I once more return to the city, to see how matters stand there. Possibly our yesterday's exploit may have affected the populace in the right direction; and, if so, they may see that they have done wrong, and return to the God of their fathers,—in which case we can go back to our parents and friends. But, whatever may be the case, they will, at least, not suspect me, as no one witnessed my last night's departure, and, if the people see me return with my horse, they will most naturally think that I have left the city early this morning. I shall therefore leave you immediately, and stay in New Babylon until I have found out how matters will turn out after yesterday's proceedings.

"This may possibly take me two days; but, as you are well provisioned, and, as I said before, have nothing to fear for two or three days, you need be under no apprehension; while it is hardly necessary for me to assure you that I shall return as soon as I have found which course will be the best for us to follow."

Gad could find no objection to this advice, and it was therefore resolved that Omar should do as he had said.

The friends now returned into the vault, where they found the two maidens just opening their eyes; and, sitting down, the young men told them what they had resolved upon. Talmai and Adah at once gave their assent to the proposition, and, entreating Omar to return as soon as he could, bade him go immediately, while they had no fear to stay where they were under the protection of Gad. And, leaving them for a while, we will accompany the son of Harim and Tamar, who at once left the cavern in search of his horse. He found the animal quietly feeding in the luxuriant grass about a stone's throw from the entrance to the cavern, and, jumping on its back, he rode off. He did not take his direction straight to the city, however, but went off farther into the woods, where he soon succeeded in securing some small game, which he slung across his horse's back, and then, as if returning from a hunting-expedition, he galloped back to New Babylon. When he rode into the city, he found but few people

abroad, the majority of the inhabitants being still sleeping off the fatigue of the previous day, and those whom he met in the streets greeted him cordially, never for once doubting that he had left the town that very morning.

On coming to his father's house, Omar found every thing quiet and still, and everybody sound asleep. He put his horse back into the stable, and, taking the game he had secured, he went and awoke some of the servants, berating them soundly for their laziness. The aroused menials rubbed their eyes, jumped up, and, seeing their young master, pleaded their yesterday's fatigue and the miraculous circumstance, which had kept them awake far beyond their usual hour for retiring, as excuses for having slept so long. Omar declared himself satisfied with this, and, leaving his game in the care of the servants, he went to his room, where, throwing himself on his bed, he mused over his own and his friend's situation.

It was the ninth hour of the morning when the young man returned to his father's house; and about an hour afterward the household began to stir. A little later, Omar was called to join

his family at their morning meal; and when he came down he found his parents in a seemingly very much disturbed state of mind. Harim cordially shook his son's hand,—a thing he had not done for the last five years; while Tamar silently embraced and kissed her child, who before, on account of his aversion to the heathenish ways of his parents, had been looked upon with rather unfavorable eyes. Omar of course regarded this friendly reception as a good omen, and, as the proceedings of the previous day soon became the subject of conversation, he had the courage to remonstrate with his parents against the sinfulness of their previous life. And as all the details of yesterday's interruption of the heathenish festival were known to all the inhabitants of the city, whether they had participated in the procession or not, it was not surprising that he too should have been informed of all that had occurred; and therefore he spoke without fear on that score. "Jehovah," he said, "has most significantly shown you that he is God indeed; or what else could have prevented the consummation of the ungodly sacrifice? What a glorious sign of his infinite goodness and mercy, to send your de-

parted friend and teacher to admonish you to leave your heathenish ways! Believe me, the two virtuous maidens, whom the wicked priests of Moloch were about to sacrifice, not to their false god, but to their own beastly desires, are safe and well cared for; and, if our friends do indeed return to the true God of their fathers, Talmai and Adah will be restored to the embrace of their parents. Yes, my dearest father, my most beloved mother, in Jehovah alone there is salvation, in him only must our hopes be centred. And what is he whom you have thus far served, whom you call your god? An image of clay and wood, made by the hands of its villanous priests, which could not even withstand the strokes of a feeble old man, but fell to the ground, broken into ten thousand pieces. And where then was the mighty being whom, as you say, it represented? Believe me, this being exists only in your imagination; else why did it not strike the profane destroyer? Not ten thousand Molochs would have been able to harm a single hair on the heads of the two virgins! But Jehovah spoke, and your idol and its accursed priests were dumb. The great I AM sent

one of his messengers on the wings of lightning, and your souls trembled in awe, while the two maidens went free.

"O my beloved parents, I adjure you by Him who made heaven and earth, return from your evil ways, return to the God of Israel while yet it is time, or else it may be too late, and you will be lost forever!"

Omar had grown warm while he proceeded, and his parents listened in speechless surprise and wonder. Never before had they heard their son speak so eloquently and fearlessly; and if at that moment it had depended upon them, there is little doubt that the Israelites would have been made to leave their heathenish ways and return to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But that was not to be: the tribes of Israel were to be lost forever.

The morning meal had not been ended, when there came a knock at the door. Harim invited the comer to enter: the door opened, and in came old Korah, his face wearing a troubled expression. His son had not been at home all night, and was not to be found in the city. All

the clothes and other property of the young man had also disappeared, and the father began to fear that his child was lost to him. He had hoped to find him at the house of his friend, or at least to hear there some tidings of the lost one. The former he saw was not the case; but in the latter he was not disappointed. Omar had indeed seen Gad leave the city on the previous day, and so he told the old man,—adding at the same time that his friend had left because he feared the priests of Moloch would try to injure or destroy him, as he was known to be opposed to their teachings and doings; and therefore he had thought it best to depart, for a time at least, promising, however, to return as soon as he should hear that the power of the priests was broken. "And here," the speaker continued, turning to his parents, "you see another of the consequences of heathenish idolatry. Nahum, our king, and Aaron, already mourn the loss of their children, who have been driven from their homes through the instrumentality of Moloch's rascally priests; and, believe me, they will never return until you all again acknowledge the true God of Israel. Behold here our good old friend

Korah: his father-heart yearns for his absent boy, than whom a better and more virtuous son the world never saw. Gad, too, I am afraid, will not return until the accursed priests of heathenism have lost their powerful influence. But, alas! when will that be? Even I, much as I love my parents and my native city, may yet be obliged to flee before the wrath of these men, who are well aware that I too am opposed to their false doctrines."

The last part of this speech produced its due effect on the young man's hearers; and, if Harim had before been determined to leave the ways of the heathens, he and Korah now solemnly vowed to do all in their power to restore the true religion.

While they were yet speaking, a messenger of the king was shown into the room, who summoned Harim and Korah to the royal palace, and the two officers lost no time in obeying their master's will, while Omar—who, as an especial favorite of Nahum, had often been allowed to attend the councils of state—followed his father. When the trio arrived at the king's palace, they found a great concourse of people assembled near

the entrance, all eagerly talking and gesticulating. Omar, without losing sight of his father, went as near the crowd as he could, when he distinguished the words, "A great wonder, indeed! Truly, truly, Moloch is a great god!" But the disappearance of Harim and Korah within the door of the palace prevented him from hearing more.

When the new-comers entered the council-chamber, they found the king, surrounded by his officers, seated in the middle of the room, while on a platform, and occupying the chairs of state, sat Shadrach, the high-priest of Moloch, and his nineteen assistants. Omar's heart sank at sight of the latter; for at once he suspected that, so far from having lost their power and influence, they had already contrived, with their usual cunning, to turn the proceedings of the previous day in their favor. And in this the young man was not mistaken. All the king's councillors and officers were now assembled; and, when every one had been seated, Shadrach arose, and, in a solemn voice, said,—

"Men of New Babylon, rejoice! for yesterday the great and mighty Moloch showed us that he

is god indeed! That flash of lightning which prostrated our two younger brethren was nothing less than the august presence of our lord, before the glory of which his unworthy priests fell to the ground. The two seeming ghosts you saw enter the temple were but insignificant messengers of Beelzebub, who, being a relentless enemy of our mighty god, tried to sink the latter in our estimation. Yet the great Moloch, in his mercy, forbore: he disdained to crush them: he even permitted them to address you, ay, and to destroy his own holy image. But this last insult was too great; and, when the last of you had left the temple, the messengers—one of whom had borrowed a disguise resembling the long-departed Mordecai—were felled to the ground, never more to rise, while our two brethren were raised up and restored to consciousness by our god's own hands; and here they are to bear witness to the greatness and mercy of Moloch. The two virgins Talmai and Adah were gathered to the bosom of our divine master, and by him borne to his celestial habitation,—he having appeared among us for that very purpose.

"This morning, soon after the sun had arisen,

I, accompanied by seventeen of my brethren, repaired to the temple, our hearts sad and desponding,—for even we had begun to fear that the power of Moloch was not so great as we had supposed,—when, on coming to the altar, judge of our surprise, we saw the image, bright and glorious, standing in its place, and our two brethren kneeling before it, singing songs of praise, while our two visitors of yesterday lay stiff and cold on the floor.

"Full of wonder and awe, we rushed back and threw open the doors of the temple, when some of our people, who were in the neighborhood, came in, and also witnessed what we had seen. Our two restored brethren then informed us of all that had transpired, and, with the help of the people, we buried the corpses, after which we hastened to our gracious king's palace, to inform our ruler and his councillors of what had transpired, and to all of which the multitude who are assembled in the court below can bear witness."

When the high-priest ceased, all present were awe-struck, while some of the firmer adherents

to Moloch and his priests cried out, "Great is Moloch, and he is god indeed!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Omar's feet, that young man could not have been more astonished. That the villanous priests would do all in their power to defend their idol, as well as themselves, after the occurrences of the previous day, he had not for one moment doubted; but to hear them utter such a barefaced falsehood he had never expected. But what should he do? To unmask the hypocrisy of Shadrach, to convince his hearers that all the high-priest had said was an atrocious lie, he must disclose the deception himself and Gad had played on the people of New Babylon; he must betray the retreat of Talmai and Adah; and that he dared not do. Had his own safety, had his own life, only, depended on the disclosure, he would not for an instant have hesitated; but he could not endanger the lives of those who were even dearer to him than his parents. Still, his love of truth did not permit him to be silent; and, after a short hesitation, he arose, and said, in warning tones,—

"Friends and countrymen, believe not what

you have heard. A voice within my bosom tells me that all that that priest of Moloch has told you is falsehood! And, more, were I assured of one thing, I could convince you that you are being grossly imposed upon. I——"

But here the speaker was interrupted by the assembled priests and their friends, who loudly demanded the instant destruction of the unbeliever, while, at a sign from Shadrach, the doors of the council-chamber were thrown open, and in rushed the fanatic people, shouting and crying, "Great is Moloch, and he is our god indeed!"

When order had in some measure been restored, the new-comers were asked what they had seen in the temple that morning; and, in the most positive language, they corroborated the statement of the high-priest; while the latter regarded Omar with looks of deadly hatred.

Our hero now saw that all was indeed lost, and that his last hope had been destroyed. If the bold statement of Shadrach had astonished him, the corroboration of this statement by so many people, whom he could not believe capable of so barefaced a falsehood, absolutely startled him.

And, in fact, they had but spoken the truth in corroborating the lie of the high-priest.

When, on the previous day, the terrified priests of Moloch had fled from the temple before the seemingly supernatural visitors, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, they did not stop until they arrived at a small house near the outskirts of the city, which served as the ordinary dwelling-place of Shadrach. Here they locked themselves in, and sat down to talk over the occurrence they had just witnessed and to devise means how this thing might be turned in their favor; for they naturally feared that, if something to that effect was not done instantaneously, their influence and power would be lost. They deliberated long and earnestly, without coming to an understanding, until at last the youngest member of the fraternity, more cunning than the rest, advised them to go to the temple in the still hour of midnight, when nobody would perceive them, there to gather up and bring away the fragments of the image, and to replace the latter by a similar one that he had seen lying in the vault of the temple. Then they were to disguise the

two slain priests so as to make them resemble the two ghosts, while they could easily find among their faithful friends and adherents two men who should replace the lost members of their brotherhood,—a thing which might be the more easily accomplished as they, the priests, never went abroad without putting on a disguise.

"And after all this is accomplished," the speaker continued, "we will retire to this house, while the two new-made members shall remain kneeling before the image of Moloch, and sing songs of praise, as if in gratitude for their deliverance.

"Shortly after to-morrow's sun rises, we will return to the temple, and, upon finding all as we shall have left it, we will throw open the doors, and invite all whom we may see in the neighborhood to come in and witness the mighty and wonderful deeds of our great god. By this means we shall make the inhabitants of this city believe that Moloch is indeed a mighty god, and our influence will remain the same, while our power will be strengthened and enlarged."

This advice met the full approbation of all present, and, when the twelfth hour had come,

they went to the temple. Here they set to work to clear away the fragments of the broken image; and then they descended into the basement, where they soon found the other statue, exactly like the destroyed one, and which had been made by the priests themselves for any emergency that might render an instantaneous replacement necessary. When the new image had been put on the altar, the priests turned to the corpses of their late associates, whom they found in the place where they had fallen; and here they were surprised to see that the upper garments of both had been removed.

But there was no time for deliberation as to the cause of this; and therefore the two bodies were forthwith wrapped in white sheets brought for the purpose, the closely-fitting masks were taken off the faces, and these latter so carefully and well disguised that a superficial observer might easily have taken them for those of the two visitors of the previous day.

And now the two men who were to be put in stead of the two lost members of the fraternity must be found. Under ordinary circumstances, this would have been a very difficult

task; but the wily priests were well prepared for all emergencies.

The vault, or basement, of the temple was connected by a subterranean passage with a house whose inmates were in the interest of Shadrach and his companions, and where the latter were always sure to find some of their firmest and most faithful friends.

Thither the high-priest now went, followed by two of his assistants. The passage was a narrow and winding one; but the three men were provided with blazing torches, and so, one after the other, they strode boldly forward, until, after a long walk of nearly half a mile, they came to a stout iron door set deep into a wall. Here they halted, while Shadrach took out of a pocket in his cloak a small key, and, inserting this into the lock of the afore-mentioned door, the latter flew open, admitting the trio into an ordinary cellar. With this place the high-priest seemed to be well acquainted; for, without hesitation, he went straight to a door opposite to that through which they had entered, and which yielded to a light touch of his hand. The three priests then ascended a short flight of steps thus dis-

closed, and soon found themselves at the door of a room whence proceeded the sound of many voices.

Shadrach gave three loud knocks in quick succession,—when the door was opened, showing to our wanderers a good-sized apartment, filled with people of both sexes. On entering, the visitors were cordially, not to say reverently, received, for they were well known to all present; and here the hypocritical priests of Moloch did not hesitate to lay off their usual solemnity, but showed something of their true colors. After somewhat warmly saluting the young and handsome girls present, in whom we recognize the "daughters of Moloch" who played so conspicuous a part in the grand procession of the preceding day, and when they had exchanged friendly salutations with the rest of the assembly, the three "brothers" sat down and took part in the general discussion, which of course turned on the strange and unexpected interruption of the great sacrifice. But when some one expressed a fear that this might hurt the influence and power of himself and associates, Shadrach gayly shook his head, and

said, "Be under no apprehension for us, my friends; for a great and mighty god like Moloch is not easily to be hurt; and we have already learned that it was himself who, in one of his strange moods, created all that disturbance. The two priests, whom you saw fall down, were not killed: they recognized, in the flash of lightning that illumined the temple when they were about to perform their office, the august presence of our great god, and, well aware of their own unworthiness, they prostrated themselves to the ground; whereas the two seemingly supernatural visitors were actually stricken down and killed after you left the temple; for even now we saw their corpses stiff and stark at the foot of the altar."

There was great rejoicing among the company when they heard this, as, for reasons of their own, they would not have relished the downfall of Moloch and heathenism; and, after a little further conversation, the priests left by the same way they had come, not, however, before they had exchanged glances with two villanous and sensual-looking individuals, whom they secretly beckoned to follow them.

When the high-priest, followed by his two assistants and the two men whom he had selected to replace his lost associates, returned to the temple, he found every thing in order; and then he informed the two latter personages that they might become members of his fraternity, if they were willing to fulfil certain conditions, which would instantly be made known to them. The two villains would, of course, gladly do any thing in their power to merit the honor to be conferred upon them; for well they knew the influence which as priests of Moloch they would share with the rest; and, being led into a circle formed by the priests in front of the altar of the idol, a terrible oath, by which they promised to live only for the interests of the brotherhood, and on no account and under no circumstances to divulge any secret they might become acquainted with, was administered to them.

When this was duly taken, the two men were formally installed in their new office, and then Shadrach addressed them, as follows:—

"Brethren," he said, "you are now duly installed as priests of Moloch, and it is but right that you should know whom we serve, and what

the true object of our life is. Moloch, the great and mighty god, is but a creation of our imagination, whom we profess to serve, to gain the great object of our life,—ease, comfort, and pleasure. When, six years ago, after the departure of old Ezra and his followers, our countrymen turned completely from the religion of their forefathers and began to follow the ways of the heathens, I, in company with some others, many of whom are now gone from among us, resolved to turn this to our advantage. We went to work earnestly, and at first secretly tried to win as many as we could over to our new doctrines. We professed to be inspired by dreams, and at last succeeded in introducing our ideas to our entire satisfaction. By flattering the senses of our adherents, we soon gained a powerful influence; and then we slowly but determinedly advanced toward the object we had in view.

"Ease and comfort we soon found; for scarcely had our new god been fairly inaugurated, when his devotees exerted themselves to make our lives easy and comfortable. But of pleasure we at first found very little: as priests of an almighty and great god, we were expected to lead a sober

and quiet life, and what little recreation we had we were obliged to seek secretly, and only among those of our friends whom we knew to be faithful to our selves. Yet this was dangerous. We might be betrayed, and lose all we had gained. It was, therefore, necessary that we should have an object of pleasure within our own exclusive possession; and we therefore resolved to introduce the annual sacrifice of one or more virgins, whom we of course meant to keep for the satisfaction of our own desires. But in this we met with an unexpected and serious opposition on the part of the people themselves, whom this new proposal startled; and, although we at last were successful, we deemed it advisable to be satisfied with one victim, and to postpone the repetition of the sacrifice for five years.

"But in the mean time our power and influence have increased to such an extent that they are now superior to even those of the king himself, and, as you must have seen yesterday, we are in a fair way of having things as we desire them. And now, on the very eve of success, we have been thwarted: not only have the

prizes been taken away from us, but our character and influence are endangered. But these latter must be preserved by all means; and, as our interest is now your own, I suppose that you will not hesitate to stand by us to the last. That the storm which yesterday so unexpectedly and fatally interrupted our proceedings was indeed a reality, we cannot doubt; for our two brethren, whom you saw fall down, were killed by the lightning. But the two seeming ghosts, I am sure, were human beings; and, if I am not very much deceived, they were Omar, the son of Harim, and Gad, the son of Korah, who have ever been opposed to our doctrines, and whom I have since ascertained to have been the accepted lovers of the two maidens whom we meant to make our own.

"Still, we are not certain as to that, and therefore we must proceed with the utmost caution. If it really is as I think, the two young men will hold their peace, so as not to betray their complicity in the matter; and all we have to do, therefore, is to make the people believe that Moloch himself sent the storm and took away the virgins bodily. And if afterward any thing

should turn up in regard to this affair, we must trust to chance and our own boldness and ingenuity. We must further make the people believe that the two priests, whom you represent, have not been killed, but only prostrated themselves before the presence of our god, and were raised up afterward by Moloch himself, while, as soon as the people had left the temple, the two seemingly supernatural visitors had been stricken down and destroyed. To that end we have disguised the two corpses of our fallen brethren in such a manner that they may easily be taken for those whom we want them to represent, and you must stay here in the temple while we return. You must kneel down before the new image and sing songs of praise, as if in gratitude for your providential deliverance. Shortly after sunrise we shall come back again, and on seeing you and the restored image we shall profess to be greatly surprised. We shall run and throw open the doors of the temple, to invite all who may be in the vicinity to come in and witness the great wonder. You must then come forward, having previously put on the masks and clothes of our dead brethren, and relate to us

and the accompanying people how our great god himself raised you up, slew the two seeming ghosts, and afterward disappeared with the maidens. By that we shall make the people believe that Moloch is indeed a great and mighty god, and at the same time strengthen our influence and power. Afterward we shall easily be able to get the two young men, whom I suspect, into our hands, where we will deprive them of all chance of harming us again; and in less than eight days we will be in possession of all we want for the satisfaction of our desires."

The new priests were delighted with the prospects so glowingly depicted by the wily Shadrach, and they of course promised to do their utmost to bring the glorious plan to a successful issue.

The result of the scheme my readers know.

We will now return to the council-chamber of the royal palace, where we left Omar nearly paralyzed by what he had seen and heard, with Shadrach's looks of hatred and malignity still bent upon him. When the statement of the high-priest had been so positively corroborated by the fanatic multitude, not one in the room dared to doubt any longer, and Harim himself, in stern tones,

commanded his son to return home,—an order which the young man gladly obeyed; for he saw too well that there was no longer any hope of bringing his fellow-citizens back to the only true God of their fathers.

Tamar was sitting alone in her own private room, whither she had retired when her husband and son had gone to the king's palace. Her heart was heavy. The occurrences of the previous day, and the earnest words of Omar, had made a deep impression on her mind. She began to see that she and her friends were hurrying on to destruction. She trembled when she thought of the daily increasing and fearful power of the priests of Moloch, whom, in spite of all persuasion, she could not believe to be the true god of her people. When, five years ago, the first great sacrifice had been demanded, she had remonstrated with her husband; she had even hastened to the king, and on her bended knees had adjured him not to permit so abominable a thing.

But Harim and Nahum had then already gone too far. They feared the wrath of the people if the priests of their first deity should be thwarted, and Tamar was told that the sacrifice was

necessary. Weak creature as she was, she allowed herself to be persuaded; and, as in the five following years no new demands had been made on the part of the wily priests, she had become tranquil and even reconciled to the heathenish customs of her countrymen.

But now the demands had been renewed. They had even become more extravagant than ever, and all had been granted. Tamar shuddered when she saw and heard it; but she was compelled to look cheerful, and even to participate in all the shameless orgies, in all the mocking ceremonies, of heathenism; for she dared not refuse to follow the example of her husband and the royal pair.

But when afterward in the temple she had witnessed the discomfiture of the priests and the interruption of the sacrifice, she hastened home to her room: there she sank on her knees, and, in the fulness of her emotions, cried, "Verily, verily, this was the work of Jehovah!"

And now her son, whom nearly everybody hated, because he dared to show openly that he was opposed to the teachings and doings of Shadrach and his confederates, had spoken to her. He, too, had told her that the true God of Israel

had sent his messengers to prevent the consummation of the heathenish sacrifice. He had admonished his parents to leave the ways of the heathens and to return to the true Creator of heaven and earth. "Yes," she said to herself, "Omar will speak to the king with all the fire of his eloquence: he will admonish Nahum to return to the religion of his fathers; and God grant that he may succeed!"

She was interrupted in her soliloquy by rapid footsteps near the door of her room. The next instant this was opened, and her son, his bosom heaving and his countenance flushed, stood before her.

"All is lost, dearest mother!" the young man exclaimed, "and I am obliged to leave you, perhaps never to return." He then related all he had seen and heard in the king's palace. "But," he added, "every word uttered by that villanous priest is a barefaced falsehood. My true and brave friend Gad and myself were the two seemingly supernatural beings who, inspired by Jehovah, visited the temple to prevent the abominable sacrifice; and we certainly have not been killed, as Shadrach would make the people

believe. But, alone and unarmed as we were, we should not have been able to do any thing against the misguided multitude had not God himself helped us; and that he has done so, that he slew the two priests who had already stretched out their arms to grasp the innocent victims, is the best proof that he indeed made us the instruments for saving the two maidens from a fate worse than death.

"And now Talmai and Adah are in security. They are under the protection of Gad; and it is in their behalf only that I now flee from the wrath that has been kindled against me in the bosoms of Shadrach and his followers. Fain would I stay; fain would I confront the accursed priests of Moloch, to prove the utter falsity of their assertions, and, if still unable to convince my poor misled countrymen, gladly would I perish a martyr for the glorious cause of Jehovah. But two helpless and innocent maidens claim my protecting arm, and I cannot withhold it.

"Fare you well, then, dearest mother; and be assured that I shall not forget to pray to Jehovah for the redemption of Israel."

He then pressed his lips to those of his parent in one long and fervent kiss, and, hurrying from the room, went into the stable, where he soon found his horse, saddled and bridled as he had left him some three hours before.

To lead the faithful animal out and jump on his back was the work of a moment; and, galloping through the park that surrounded his father's house, Omar soon found himself far on his way toward the retreat of his fugitive friends.

And well was it that this was so; for scarce half an hour had elapsed after the young man had left his mother's room, when Harim, accompanied by the priests and followed by several hundred of the firmest adherents of Moloch, made his appearance in quest of his son, whose instant and unconditional deliverance into his hands Shadrach had demanded soon after Omar left the council-chamber, and which demand, backed by the majority of the king's councillors and the fanatic people, Harim had not had the courage to oppose. But the villanous high-priest was again disappointed. The servants had seen their young master leave the house, mount his horse, and ride off; but what

direction he had taken, and whether or when he would return, no one could tell.

Harim had hastened to his wife's room, to see if there he could get better information in regard to the missing young man; but on entering the apartment he found Tamar lying on the floor in a high fever, with which she had been seized as soon as her son had left her, and which threatened to end fatally. All now became confusion and excitement. A physician was sent for, and the female servants of the house were summoned to the assistance of their suffering mistress; while pursuit of the fugitive was out of the question. The man of medicine soon made his appearance; but on seeing the sick woman he ominously shook his head. There was no hope, he said: long-pent-up anxiety must have received a sudden and terrible shock, and all the medicine in the world could not save the sufferer. This was a sad blow to Harim, who loved his wife dearly; and every thing was done to stay the progress of the fever. But all to no avail. Half an hour after the doctor's arrival, Tamar sat up in the bed, whither she had been carried, and, wildly staring around for some

time, she began to rave in the most incoherent and fearful manner. And an hour afterward the mother of Omar breathed her last in the arms of her husband.

When the death of Tamar became known in the city, there was a general mourning; for everybody had loved the modest, gentle, and benevolent woman, while many there were who owed to her their present prosperity. Out of respect to the deceased and her husband, all business was forthwith suspended, and when, three days later, the corpse was borne to its final resting-place, nearly all the inhabitants of New Babylon joined in the sad procession.

Omar, unconscious of the sudden and fatal illness that had befallen his mother, had meantime safely reached the cave where Gad and the two maidens were hidden, and, after securing his horse in a place where the animal was not likely to be discovered, he went to inform his friends of the result of his observations in the city. When he entered the cavern, Gad and the two girls were surprised to see him come back so soon; but when they beheld the sad expression of the young man's countenance, their

surprise gave way to anxiety, and, surrounding their returned friend, they eagerly waited for his communication.

"My dear friends," Omar said, after he had seated himself on a projecting rock, "be strong, and put your trust in the Almighty. All hope of return to our parents and friends is lost, and we must try to forget their existence." The speaker then related what he had witnessed in the king's palace,—the barefaced lies which Shadrach had told the people, and how readily the latter had listened to and believed all the high-priest said. "When I had seen and heard all this," our hero continued, "I could hold out no longer, and, jumping up, I denounced every word of the old hypocrite as false. I told our countrymen that, if assured of one thing, (I meant your security,) I would prove all I said. But I was interrupted by the fanatic multitude, while even my father, whom I believed I had persuaded to leave the ways of heathenism, turned against me, and in stern words bade me go home. Shadrach and his associates regarded me with looks of the deadliest hatred, which plainly told me that my doom was sealed if I

should fall in the hands of those accursed priests; and I am sure that even now the latter are trying to encompass my ruin.

"But, thanks to God, I have eluded them; I am once more safe; and, although I sincerely grieve for our poor deluded parents, I shall forget that besides you there exists a human being who has a claim on my love and affection. We are exiled from the land of our birth, and, trusting in Jehovah, we must bear our lot. Here we cannot remain, for our retreat might be discovered, in which case our destruction would be certain; and therefore the sooner we depart hence, the better."

The young man ceased, while his three friends sat sad and silent. The ties that bound them to their home could not be severed without a struggle, and this struggle was a hard one.

But all four were endowed with the principles of a true religion, and this religion sustained them in the hour of trial. Talmai was the first to recover her self-possession. Like a heroine of old, she arose, and, with her right hand pointed heavenward, she said,—

"Omar is right! We must forget all earthly

ties, and, trusting in Jehovah, we must bear our lot. Let us then depart at once, and henceforth only live for each other."

The brave example of the speaker did not fail to exert a favorable influence on the still desponding Adah and Gad, and soon all the friends had become reconciled to their fate. Preparations were now made for an immediate departure, and about four hours after the return of Omar the fugitives found themselves once more on the journey, accompanied by the horse of the former, loaded with the effects of the wanderers. Our little party now hastened on toward the setting sun, in a direction opposite to that of New Babylon; and after a severe and toilsome march of three days they reached the borders of the stream which divided the island from the continent of America. Well aware that the inhabitants of New Babylon would not venture so far from their city, Omar proposed to stop here, at least until some future events should make a removal necessary; and then the speaker immediately went to explore the neighborhood. At the distance of about a quarter of a mile from where he had left his

friends, the young man came to a lovely spot, surrounded on three sides by a thick, almost impenetrable, wood, while in front glittered the clear waters of the afore-mentioned stream. Game and fruit existed here in even greater abundance than in the other parts of the island; while, on closer inspection, the lover of Talmai detected in the background, almost completely hidden by trees and underbrush, a cave, which seemed to be made expressly for a dwelling-place of human beings.

Full of gladness, and silently thanking Jehovah for the happy discovery, Omar hurried back to inform his friends of this fortunate circumstance; and in a little while the now happy quartet were snugly and comfortably established in their new quarters. Here they led a pleasant and peaceful life, the two young men doing all in their power to render the existence of the two maidens happy and joyous, while the affection of the latter for their noble lovers and preservers grew from day to day stronger. And thus we shall leave them for some time, while we pay a last visit to the city of New Babylon.

As soon as the remains of Tamar had been

deposited in their last resting-place, the search for Omar and his friend Gad, whose disappearance had also been discovered in the mean time, was renewed, as now the priests no longer doubted that the two young men were in reality no strangers to the occurrence that for a time had startled the inhabitants of the city and which even had endangered the influence and power of Shadrach and his companions. But nothing could be discovered. The high-priest had sent a party of his firmest friends and adherents out of the city to scour the country for miles around; yet they also failed in finding any traces of the missing.

The cowardly priests became alarmed; yet they had done all they could, and therefore they had to let matters rest as they were. And now other affairs claimed their attention. The principal object of their life—which they had felt sure of when Talmai and Adah were so near the terrible fate which had been assigned them, but which had been frustrated by the interposition of Divine Providence and his instruments Omar and Gad—now again became their ruling passion. But how to gain this object had be-

come an almost unanswerable question, and the priests began to despair of its accomplishment, when, at last, the two villains who had been chosen as successors of the slain members of the fraternity proposed a speedy and satisfactory settlement of the affair. "It would be dangerous," the elder of the two said, "to demand a new sacrifice, as we have scarcely succeeded in making the people believe that Moloch has indeed come into possession of the last victims; and all we can do now is to startle the inhabitants into the most abject submission by some bold and seemingly supernatural contrivance. My companion and myself have taken this thing into due consideration, and, if you will give us time and not refuse us such co-operation as we may require at your hands, we will be able to accomplish our common object." The speaker then went on to unfold the plan of himself and friend,—which was nothing less than to personify Moloch himself and his first attendant. By means of wooden legs fastened to the soles of their feet, they would raise themselves to a supernatural height; while they were to bend the bark of some ancient tree into such a shape

as to serve the place of a head in conformity with the size of the body. These structures were to be drawn over their own heads and shoulders, and fastened around the waist so as to allow room for the arms while manipulating with brimstone and other combustible materials, all of which were to be ignited and at intervals thrown through the holes which had been cut in place of mouth, nostrils, and eyes. The whole was to be covered with the skins of animals, and suitably adorned with horns and such other articles as would give them the most terrible and unearthly appearance. Then they were to await a dark and stormy night,—when the two rascals would put on the disguise just described and sally forth into the streets of the city, indicating their presence by shouts and other vocal noises, which, in consequence of the great hollowness of the bark structure, would assume the most unearthly sound. On hearing these signals, the priests were to come forward in a body, and at sight of the seemingly supernatural visitors the high-priest and his companions were to prostrate themselves on the ground, as befitting them in the august presence of their mighty and won-

derful god. "I then shall command you to arise," the plotter concluded; "after which you must introduce us to the people, leaving the rest to ourselves; and, if we do not manage the affair to the entire satisfaction of every member of our fraternity, then you may set us down as boasting fools, and do with us as you list."

The assembled priests fairly trembled with delight when the plan had been unfolded; for it promised the most complete success; and they already fancied themselves in possession of all they desired, as a public visit of their great god himself would be certain to dispel all doubts that might possibly linger in the minds of the inhabitants.

And now they all went to work to procure the desired disguises. Among the brethren there were some skilled mechanics; and, as they were well provided with all necessary tools, the wooden legs were soon made; and then some of the rest went to gather bark, skins, and such other articles as were required. Twelve days after the plan had been proposed, all was ready. And now the priests impatiently awaited the first dark and stormy night, to try the experiment.

At length, three days later, the sky became overcast, dark and heavy clouds obscured the light of the sun, and at the seventh hour after noon an Egyptian darkness had settled over the city of New Babylon. All the streets were deserted,—the inhabitants having retired into their houses, where, in the midst of their families, they had found a secure shelter from the storm that was raging without.

But scarcely had they begun to enjoy that comfort and luxury which one is always sure to feel under these circumstances, when they were startled by a succession of the most terrific and unearthly sounds, which seemed to proceed from the clouds that overhung the city. The terror-stricken women and children crouched timidly together, like so many frightened sheep; while the "lords of creation" stood riveted to the ground, not daring to cross the threshold of their houses. But the sounds drew nearer, until they grew so terrible that the end of time seemed approaching; while in the midst of this noise some human voices became audible, which seemed to be imploring mercy. And now some of the more courageous men of New Babylon

took heart and went out into the street. But the sight that met their eyes was well calculated to fill them with terror. Two gigantic forms, with heads of monstrous dimensions, and covered with jet-black hair, strode along, their mouths, nostrils, and eyes emitting constant streams of fire and smoke, while the seemingly awe-stricken priests of Moloch went before them, alternately prostrating themselves and imploring their forbearance and mercy in the most abject and piteous tones. The voices of the two monsters now became somewhat less terrible; and thus the grotesque procession moved on, through all the streets of the city, to the king's palace, where Nahum, surrounded by his frightened officers and councillors,—who had hastened thither when they first heard the approaching sounds,—stood trembling with fear and apprehension. By this time the people had somewhat recovered from the first shock, and now they were hurrying to the scene of commotion, wondering what it all meant; and when the supernatural visitors reached the royal residence they had been joined by nearly all the inhabitants.

And now the priests once more prostrated

themselves before the monsters, when the taller of the latter, whose head was adorned with two monstrous horns, said, in a hollow and terrible voice,—

"Arise, and do as thou art bidden!"

Shadrach and his attendants arose, and, turning to the king and the assembled multitude, the high-priest said,—

"Mighty and gracious king and countrymen, in these our esteemed visitors you behold our great and all-powerful god Moloch, who, in his infinite goodness and condescension, has deigned to visit us, his unworthy subjects, in company with Tartak, the chief of his hosts.

"When, about an hour ago, we were in the temple, engaged with our solemn duties, a heavy storm arose, and, borne on the wings of lightning, the two heavenly beings appeared among us. Our divine master came in his wrath: he accused us of infidelity, and threatened to sweep us off the face of the earth, as we had become heedless of his wishes and pleasure.

"'Five years have elapsed,' he cried, 'and my nostrils had almost forgotten the smell of your sacrifice, when, as if in mockery, two feeble

maidens were deemed sufficient to atone for your sinful negligence.

"'Yet I took the virgins to my bosom; but they were a drop of water in the fiery furnace. My parched lips long for the blood of the guiltless: my distended nostrils want the smell of the sacrifice. I have pitied you, I have helped you, I have made you a great and happy people; and what has been your gratitude?

"'Verily, I will forbear no longer; and ere to-morrow's sun has performed the half of his daily journey I will send my angels to sweep you out of existence!'

"We stood spell-bound and terror-stricken. We had all along feared that the terrible Moloch would be dissatisfied; but we had done all in our power to make proper atonement, and so we had begun to hope that our good will would hide the insignificance of our gift. And now we stood trembling before our lord; we prostrated ourselves into the dust, and implored his mercy and forbearance. But he did not listen; and, raising his voice like unto the roaring of his thunder, he rushed out into the streets of our city. We followed him, and, prostrating ourselves again

and again, we renewed our prayers for mercy, until at last we were heard. Our mighty god assured us of his mercy and forbearance if we would make good what we had neglected. 'And,' he concluded, 'to show you that I indeed am lenient and forbearing, I solemnly declare that I will be content with a single sacrifice for every one of the elapsed five years. Two of your virgins you have given me: to-morrow let the remaining three follow. And now, come, introduce us to the people; tell them what I have said; and, if they are ready to obey my commands, I will not withdraw my protecting hand.'"

Shadrach ceased; and then the mouths and nostrils of the two monsters again emitted streams of smoke and fire, while he that personified the great Moloch came forward, and cried, in tones of thunder,—

"Insignificant and miserable wretches! ye who have dared to kindle my divine wrath, now ye have heard what my servant has said; and woe unto you if my anger be not appeased! Choose between obeying my mighty will and instant destruction; for if to-morrow's sun does

not witness the sacrifice of three of your purest virgins, your doom is irrevocably sealed!"

Another stream of smoke and fire indicated that the great Moloch's speech was ended; and the people of New Babylon stood spell-bound and awe-stricken.

The terrible Moloch was no longer an uncertainty: there he stood before them, and out of his own mouth they had heard what they might expect if his divine will was disregarded. All were silent: naught was heard save the hard breathing of the multitude; and already the two monsters began to show signs of impatience at the delay,—when at last, admonished by the high-priest, Nahum came forward, and said, in a terrified and unsteady voice,—

"Men of New Babylon, ye have heard the words of our great and mighty god! It is better that three of our maidens perish than that we all be swept from the face of the earth! Let our priests select those whom they deem worthy to be sacrificed; and you I command to appear, at sunrise to-morrow, at the doors of the temple, to participate in the great procession."

More the king could not say; while the mighty

shouts of the people indicated that they concurred in the views of their ruler.

And now the supernatural visitors gave vent to their joyful feelings in one exultant shout, that rang far and wide through the deserted streets of the city; and then, followed by the priests, they went back to the temple, while the people dispersed to seek their homes and talk over the affairs of the evening. The object of Shadrach and his companions was accomplished; and, when they had reached the interior of the temple, the doors were securely locked, the two monsters threw off their disguises, and all descended into the basement, to indulge in a bacchanalian feast in anticipation of the joys the morrow had in store for them.

The day at length dawned, and dark and gloomy enough was the aspect: yet preparations for the great feast were at once made; and at the seventh hour of the morning the city was again decked out in all the pomp that had been observed on the occasion of the late grand procession. The air was uncommonly sultry and oppressive; a heavy mist obscured the light of the sun; while an undefinable, yet strongly per-

ceptible, something, that boded no good, pervaded the atmosphere.

The volcano mentioned at the commencement of the ninth chapter, which was situated southward and not over a stone's throw from New Babylon, and which had been dormant probably for centuries, had a few days since begun to emit smoke, and occasionally some small streams of lava; and it seemed as if some mighty revolution were preparing in its bowels. But all this was unheeded by the priests, whose thoughts were occupied by the one great object of their hypocritical life; while the inhabitants could think of nothing else but how they might be able to appease the wrath of the terrible Moloch. And now the doors of the temple were again thrown open, the priests of Moloch again emerged, clad in their gorgeous robes of office, and the great procession was formed in the same order as had been observed some three weeks previous.

This time the ceremonial mockeries were greatly shortened, as Shadrach and his confederates were anxious to grasp their victims; and two hours before noon the circuit had been

made and the procession returned to the temple. The people at once took their places, the priests went up to the altar of the idol, and then the wagon that contained the four virgins, three of whom were to be sacrificed, was opened, and the trembling occupants were forced to alight. With tottering steps and colorless cheeks, Rebekah, Dinah, Keturah, and Zilpah were conducted to where the licentious priests had formed a semicircle, to meet their terrible doom. The farce of a lottery was again resorted to; and, while the two youngest members of the fraternity were blindfolded, Shadrach arranged the urns. When all was ready, the blinded priests came forward and solemnly stretched out their arms to draw the first lot.

Sullen and silent, the assembled multitude looked on; and when the bean, that happened to be the only white one in the urn, glittered in the hand of one of the drawers, while the parchment between the fingers of the other was handed to the high-priest, slowly unrolled, and the name of Rebekah, who thus became free, once more pronounced, no answering shout became audible. The liberated maiden fell lifeless

to the floor when her name was pronounced; but not one exclamation of joy at her escape from the terrible doom was heard, while her companions sat, pale as death, erect and motionless.

And now the priests rushed madly forward. Their passion so long frustrated had reached the highest degree: all other considerations were set aside; and, forgetting all decorum, all dictates of prudence, each of the villanous libertines strove to be the first to grasp his shrinking victim. The assembled people were thunderstruck, as they began to see why really the sacrifice had so eagerly been demanded; for the rascally priests, blinded by their passion, had thrown off the masks they had so long and so successfully worn, and now stood revealed in all the hideousness of the impassioned libertine.

But suddenly an exclamation of horror filled the temple. The doomed maidens had been reached; forty rude hands were stretched out simultaneously to divest the victims of their garments, and the first touch polluted the persons of the virgins. Yet, strange to say, the poor girls did not shrink; they did not even try to avoid the indelicate touches; and, when they

were more forcibly repeated, the three maidens sunk down, never more to rise, by the side of Rebekah, whose soul had also departed for the realms of everlasting bliss.

Thus Jehovah had taken away his faithful children pure in soul and body. He had taken them away to spare them the terror of witnessing what was to follow.

When the priests were assured that their victims were dead, a simultaneous exclamation of horror escaped their lips, and then they looked up, to observe the effect of this strange occurrence on the assembled multitude. But their bewildered gaze was met by a sight so terrible that it froze the blood in their veins.

The sky had suddenly grown dark as Erebus, while the temple was illuminated by a large fiery column, that reached high up into the clouds and which slowly and threateningly came nearer and nearer.

The people, too, had witnessed the awful spectacle; and now they turned, and, in wild flight, sought the doors of the temple. But Shadrach had locked all the portals as soon as the participants in the procession had been

inside, to guard against all possible intrusion and recurring interruption, and had secured the keys about his person, thus cutting off all means of escape.

Loud and deep were the execrations and curses hurled at the old villain's head, and at last the word was given to pass him along over the heads of the multitude. Accordingly, the old hypocrite was raised up and started on his aerial voyage.

But he never reached his destination. Before the first half of the journey was performed, a dreadful crash was heard, and the earth was shaken to its very foundation. For one moment the walls, pillars, and ceiling of the temple tottered in their places, and then they came down with a roaring noise, burying the inmates beneath the ruins.

Most of the people were killed by the falling pieces, but the high-priest and his companions were uninjured; and they already congratulated themselves on their fortunate escape,—when they all at once felt the air grow hot and oppressive, and, a minute later, a fiery stream entered the place where they stood. Five minutes after, the

twenty priests of Moloch were a heap of charred bones and ashes. The volcano was at work in earnest. Stream on stream of hot burning lava rolled down its sides; and, in almost less time than it takes to describe the occurrence, the entire city of New Babylon was buried beneath the scorching ashes, not one of the inhabitants escaping destruction.

But this was not all. The subterranean fires had now become thoroughly kindled, and their narrow bed could contain them no longer. The volcano had already disappeared, leaving in its stead a yawning abyss. Yet even this was not sufficient; and, as a consequence, the entire island began to tremble. Shock followed shock, until at length the earth was torn asunder, and the fires were extinguished by the waves, that madly dashed into the apertures. Where, scarcely three hours before, the city of New Babylon had reared her proud walls, there was now a wide expanse of water; while other large portions of the land had been swallowed by the roaring sea. And thus the first city that ever was built in the Western hemisphere was destroyed, scarcely twenty-five years after its construction; thus

were formed that cluster of islands now known as the Bahamas, which once had been one solid country, divided from the continent of America only by a small stream about fifty feet in width.

CHAPTER XIII.

OMAR AND HIS FRIENDS.

We left the fugitive Omar and his three friends in a cave on the banks of the stream which divided the island of New Canaan from the continent of America,—where they led a happy and peaceful life. Fruit and game, as we have seen, abounded in the vicinity of their new abode; and thus they were provided with all the necessaries of life; and, trusting in Jehovah, who had helped them so wonderfully thus far, they lived on, troubling themselves little about the future. It was now three weeks since they had left the neighborhood of New Babylon, and all fear of being found out by their late fellow-citizens had left the exiles. This day had been set apart for a somewhat extended hunting-expedition, in order that they might explore a greater portion of country; and the two maidens were to accompany their lovers. But the morning proved so dark and gloomy that our friends

resolved to postpone the exploration, and accordingly they remained in their cavern, passing away the time as best they could. Near the hour of noon the sky became as dark as night; and shortly afterward the first shock of an earthquake shook the foundations of the cave. Greatly frightened, Omar, Gad, and the two girls left their rocky chamber, and near the margin of the afore-mentioned stream they sank on their knees, to pray to God for protection. But the earthquake did not abate: shock now followed shock, and the earth shook and trembled like a vessel on the bosom of the storm-ridden ocean. The friends were paralyzed with terror, and fear had almost bereft them of consciousness. They had grasped each others' hands, as for mutual protection; and in mute despair they awaited the end. Suddenly the ground beneath them gave way: it sank deeper and deeper; while the waters of the now furious stream seemed to rise, as if to swallow the devoted fugitives.

At last they were afloat; while, as far as their eyes could reach, the land had entirely disappeared. But, with the strength of despair, the

swimmers had retained their hold of each other; and now, while their destruction seemed beyond all doubt, a huge wave took them up and carried them straight to the continent of America, where, rapidly receding, it left the nearly-lifeless forms high and dry on the land. And now the storm had spent its fury; the subterranean fires had found a new bed at the bottom of the ocean, and all was tranquil.

* * * * *

Night had set in, beautiful and serene, and the four friends lay senseless at the foot of one of the patriarchs of the forest. The sun arose bright and glorious, and his genial rays animated and warmed awakening nature. But still the sleepers did not awake. The fiery god of day performed his grand journey, and the shadows of night again fell upon the earth. Yet all remained quiet; not a sign of returning consciousness became perceptible beneath the protecting branches of that ancient tree. And again Aurora gilded the eastern horizon, again old Sol emerged from his watery bed and majestically went on his solitary way, when at length, near the hour of noon, our four wanderers

opened their eyes. They sat up and gazed wonderingly around.

Consciousness had returned: yet it took some time ere the friends could command their scattered senses.

The sudden shock they had received when they felt the earth sink beneath them and they found themselves in the midst of roaring waves had almost been too much for them, and the recollection of their former life had in a great measure been dimmed.

Like some vague and undefined dream, the scenes they had so lately passed through lay behind them; and, although the recollection of their former existence had not been wholly extinguished, yet the circumstances preceding the earthquake, and their own somewhat forcible removal to the continent of America, appeared so remote and indistinct that my readers need not wonder if I inform them that the first inhabitants of our country soon forgot the incidents of their previous life, and that, in the cares and excitement of their new career, all that preceded their miraculous escape became a complete blank to them. Fortunately, however,

the reason of our friends had not been impaired; and so they were still able to enjoy the new life now before them.

Great were their rejoicings after consciousness had been fully restored, and when they found that none of their number were missing and that all had remained uninjured. Tears of joy dimmed the lustre of the beautiful eyes of the two girls when they saw their beloved friends and protectors still beside them, in all the pride and vigor of glorious manhood; while the souls of the young men were filled with pleasant emotions on beholding the ripening womanly charms of their fair companions.

Then the gaze of the young people fell on the surrounding landscape; and although this was altogether new and strange to them, yet they all felt that security one is so apt to experience in the presence of one beloved and respected. The appearance of the new country, too, was well calculated to inspire and to strengthen a feeling of security. The place where our wanderers sat was an open glade, here and there interspersed with some mighty patriarch of the forest. In front, and as far as the eye could reach,

spread the blue waters of the Atlantic, while in the rear the view was bounded by a seemingly boundless expanse of blooming and fruit-laden trees.

And now nature began to demand her rights. The cravings of hunger made themselves felt, and our wanderers looked wistfully around in search of something wherewith to strengthen the inner man. Near the place where they had been deposited by the receding waves grew some bushes, loaded with dark-hued and poisonous berries; and, with the eagerness of children, they fell upon and devoured the deadly fruit until their hunger was appeased. Then they went to a neighboring spring and refreshed themselves with copious draughts of pure water; and, as by this time night had set in again, they again lay down to sleep. Soon the poison began to do its work. Like fire it coursed through the veins of the pain-stricken friends; and it would certainly have killed them, had not their youth and vigorous constitution, but, above all, the great quantity of water they had drunk, and which, fortunately, happened to be powerfully mineral, acted as so many antidotes. Yet, as it

was, the pains of the poor sufferers were almost unendurable, and not before the lapse of forty-eight hours, in which the most excruciating tortures alternated with short snatches of slumber, was the danger past.

When the adventurers arose at last, worn out and feeble, they were greatly surprised at beholding the change in their appearance. Their skins, before so delicate and fair, had become dry and hardened; while their former bright color had been changed to the dark hue of unrefined copper. The cut of their features had remained the same: only the blood seemed to have been affected. But this must have undergone a great alteration: it must in some measure have been burned by coming in contact with the poison, and its consequently darker color must have penetrated to the surface and imparted to the skin its now coppery hue. Certain it is that this hue was permanent: no amount of washing or rubbing could efface it; while the poison must have eaten deep into the system of the fugitives,—as even their offspring have since become distinguished for their dark-red color to this day.

But we return to our four friends. They had been surprised, and somewhat shocked, when they first beheld the change in their appearance; but, like children, they did not trouble themselves much about this, and soon they forgot that they had ever had another color. Omar was the tallest and stoutest of the company; and, led by common instinct, his companions made him their leader, telling him that they were ready and willing to follow him wherever he might go.

Hunger now again made itself felt, and, as the wanderers had no desire to return to the berries which had caused them so much pain, the new-made leader led his followers farther on into the wilderness. Ere long the eyes of the party were gladdened by the sight of some fruit-laden trees, and they resolved to try the new food. But they now ate cautiously and sparingly, and only when they had found, after a fair trial, that this time no evil consequences need be feared, they indulged in a hearty meal. When the demands of nature had been satisfied, the adventurers held an earnest conference, and, after due deliberation, they concluded to stay where

they were, at least so long as the fruit which grew in the vicinity should last.

With his inborn instinct, Omar now looked about him for a place of shelter, where himself and followers might be protected from the burning rays of the sun and all outside dangers; and, to his great satisfaction, he found, while he was going around a huge old tree, that the enormous trunk was hollow, while its interior was easily accessible by means of a large opening on one side. Fearlessly the young man crept in, and found himself in a cool and dry chamber about ten feet in diameter. By the light of day which streamed in through the opening, our hero soon saw that the room was free from all obstacles and perfectly habitable,—after which he went out to acquaint his companions with the happy discovery.

When all had seen the place, they were delighted, and they forthwith concluded to make it their future abode. Then they set to work to make their new residence as comfortable as they could, and, the ground without being strewn with dry leaves and moss, sufficient of this was soon

carried in to form seats and soft couches for repose.

At a little distance from their habitation the two young men found several trees which had been felled to the ground by some storm or the hand of time; and, one of them having been broken by the fall, a suitable piece was rolled to the entrance of the hollow tree, where it served all the purposes of a door, leaving just sufficient room for the admission of light and air.

And in this natural dwelling the fugitives led a pleasant and contented life, the young men providing the means of subsistence, while the maidens did all in their power to render the existence of their companions as comfortable as possible. Hitherto they had subsisted only on the fruit that grew around them in abundance, and, with the thoughtlessness of children, they had never for a moment doubted that the supply would last forever. The laying in of a supply for the colder season, therefore, was out of the question, and as, from some cause or other, our friends had as yet not seen any game that might have served them as food in the event of the fruit giving out, there was some danger of their

perishing for want of proper nourishment as soon as the winter season should set in.

But as yet Jehovah had not abandoned the little party; and, although their ideas of Divinity had become confused and in a great measure obliterated, it had been resolved in the counsel of Providence that these last remnants of the lost tribes of Israel should live to become the founders of a new nation, which, though differing from the rest of mankind in customs and color, were to be as perfect specimens of humanity as all the other and more favored descendants of Adam and Eve, and which to future generations should bear witness to the power and wisdom of the Almighty.

We resume the thread of our narrative. One day, while out in search of a new supply of fruit, Omar and Gad unconsciously strayed far beyond the usual limits of their wanderings, and at length came to the banks of a bubbling streamlet, which seemed to be the rendezvous of innumerable flocks of deer and other game.

With their almost instinctive love of the chase, our friends for some time enjoyed the pranks and gambols of the beautiful animals,

which, having never before seen a human being, seemed to regard the two men as some new kind of their own species; and when their lengthening shadows at last admonished the hunters to return to their forest home, they easily succeeded in capturing as many of the unsuspecting quadrupeds as they wished to take with them.

But, as we have seen above, the wanderers had strayed far beyond the usual limits of their wanderings; and now, when they thought of their lovely and no doubt anxiously-waiting companions, they for the first time became aware of the startling fact that they were in an entirely strange part of the forest, and, worse than all, that they had neglected their habitual precautions to leave on their route such marks as might guide them on their return. Yet all this was now not to be altered, and nothing but prompt decision could avail them in this unpleasant dilemma.

In their frequent wanderings, our friends had fortunately acquired considerable knowledge of forest-life: they had learned to regard each bend of the stout grass, each broken twig, and last, though not least, the regular course of the sun.

All this now came in good stead, and before long they succeeded in finding the way by which they had come,—not, however, before leaving behind all but one of the captured animals. But, although the route toward their habitation now lay partly before them, it required their closest attention to discover the tracks they had left in the luxuriant grass, and consequently their progress was naturally very slow; added to which came the fact that the animal they had retained—a stately deer, which they were resolved on no account to relinquish—at times became restive, and greatly assisted in retarding their homeward journey. We, however, will hasten onward, and, with the permission of my readers, I will introduce them into the presence of Talmai and Adah.

When their friends had left them that morning, the two maidens sat down together to a friendly interchange of their mutual thoughts and opinions. Talmai, whose intellectual superiority over her humbler companion had long been recognized by the latter, by whom she was looked up to as guide and protectress rather than a mere playfellow, as usual opened the conversation.

"Is it not wonderful," the regal girl commenced, "that we should find ourselves inmates of this lovely forest without being able to recall our past existence? For that our existence dates back further than to that moment when we found ourselves awaking from our painful slumber near the banks of the endless water, I cannot doubt, and I can dimly trace in the far past scenes altogether different from these that now surround us. Like some vague and undefined dream, a whole lifetime seems to lie behind me, and yet, while an inner voice tells me that this is actually so, I am utterly unable to recall a single incident with distinctness sufficient to warrant the recollection.

"Yet why should we trouble ourselves about things that lie so far behind us? Rather let us rejoice in our present existence, free from care and sorrow; and, above all, let us exert ourselves to render content and happy the laborious life of our noble friends and protectors. Oh, my Adah, I feel in my heart that my friendship for the noble Omar is giving way to a feeling far more intense, far more delicious! What this feeling is I know not; but it seems to me as if I

had ceased to be myself, and had become a part of him who so bravely has done and still does so much to provide us with all we need! Say, my Adah, hast thou never experienced a similar sensation? Has not the gallant Gad kindled a like feeling in the deepest recesses of thy heart? Nay, do not cast down thine eyes: see, I rejoice. I glory, in the novel sensation of my heart! Speak: is it only friendship thou feelest for the gallant Gad?"

And Adah raised her eyes to those of her friend and companion,—eyes so full of rapture, so full of love, even veneration, that Talmai was answered, and, in the paroxysm of her own feelings, she pressed the fair girl to her bosom and covered her face with burning kisses.

"Oh!" murmured Adah, "I adore him! and willingly could I lie down and die, if my doing so would make him happy."

And in a similar strain the maidens conversed, not heeding the flight of time, until the cravings of appetite summoned them to their frugal meal. This they took in silence; and, even long after it had been ended, Talmai sat speechless, seemingly absorbed in deep thought.

Suddenly she started from her revery, and, perceiving her friend, who was intently watching her, she smiled, and said,—

"Another of my dim recollections, my darling; but this time a little more tangible than before. While eating of the fruit there, I remembered a dish of a peculiarly rich and savory flavor, which in former times we all loved above every thing else; and then it seemed to me as if Omar were returning loaded with something I did not recognize, which, after undergoing a certain process, furnished the ingredients to the above-mentioned dish.

"I should have dismissed the recollection, as I was obliged to do all the former ones; but its distinctness, and particularly the pleasant flavor, which even now seems to linger in my nostrils, led me on to give the reins to my thoughts, and presently they brought me a step further. I remembered that, when last we partook of the dish just described, our situation was similar to that we now occupy, and that, while he had gone out to procure a supply of fruit, Omar had found what he brought; and then I began to hope that our friends might again be so fortu-

nate as to find a similar object. For, to tell you the truth, although I am quite content with what we have, the delicious food I saw, tasted, and smelled has quite spoiled my appetite for our ordinary food.

"But how is this? In our eager conversation we have not heeded the flight of time; the sun has already sunk out of sight, and yet our protectors have not returned!"

The girls jumped up and left their dark abode; they ran as far as their security would permit, incessantly shouting the names of their absent friends. But echo only threw back the sound of their own voices. And now the maidens became really alarmed; yet they were powerless to do more, and, after running and shouting for some time longer, they at last threw themselves down in utter despair. So they lay for several hours, until their swoon passed away, and then they again sat up. It was now near the hour of midnight: the moon shone down full and brilliant, and the mighty forest lay dark and silent. After a little while the girls were entirely restored to consciousness, and the thought of their still absent protectors came back in all force. Once more the fair creatures

jumped up, and once more the names of Omar and Gad rang far out over the wilderness, when—oh, joy!—an answering shout was heard from the depth of the forest, and a little later the maidens, now trembling for joy, were clasped to the bosoms of the happy hunters. But see! what is that which makes Talmai start? and why that joyous glance that suddenly illumines her noble face?

Ha! she has caught sight of a certain something slung across the back of her stout lover. It is the deer which the young men have caught, and which they had resolved to retain as a trophy of their exploit. When already near their destination, the animal had stumbled over some half-decayed branches, and, falling down, had broken a leg; but, being so near their home, our friends had resolved not to leave their prize behind, and Omar, the stoutest of the two, had volunteered to carry it. And now in that deer Talmai had recognized the object she had dreamed of in her revery, and which had furnished that delicious dish she had tasted in imagination.

When Omar had taken the crippled animal

on his shoulders, he had been actuated only by pity, and the desire of at least showing what had detained and caused them so much trouble; but when he was informed of the recollection of the fair being by his side, he was overjoyed; and, not for one moment doubting that she was right, he at once resolved to try the experiment as far as it lay in his power.

And now the reunited friends took their way toward their habitation, while the young men narrated the incidents of their hunting-expedition. Arrived at their hollow tree, Omar forthwith went in search of instruments wherewith to kill their game; and ere long he returned with a sharp-edged stone and a heavy club, one well-directed blow with which laid the animal low and forever relieved it of its sufferings.

Then, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, the deer was skinned with the sharp-edged stone, and the meat cut. Owing to the imperfection of the instrument, these latter tasks were performed with the utmost difficulty; and only after the exertion of the greatest patience and industry on the part of the hunters was the labor at last accomplished. Of cooking,

of course, the friends had no idea; but their tastes were untutored and unspoiled, and when the first raw morsel had been washed down with a draught of the yet warm blood, their joy at having discovered so nourishing and delicious a food was very great indeed. When the meal was ended, the young people for some moments sat silent, each one busy with his own thoughts; then their eyes met, and with one accord they were raised heavenward, while a silent prayer of thanksgiving ascended on high. The ideas of Divinity of our adventurers were obliterated, as we have seen above; but a certain something, they did not know what, irresistibly drew their eyes upward, and, although they could not help feeling and mutely expressing the deepest gratitude, yet they were not aware to whom their fervent thanks were given.

And now our little party sought their couches, and ere long they lay in sweet and sound repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHOW-WAUK-HEE, THE FIRST OF THE RED MEN.

One year and a half had now passed since our adventurers had been landed on the continent of America, and they had become accustomed to their surroundings and the mode of their present life.

The winter had, fortunately, been a very mild one, and, thanks to the fortunate circumstance through which the friends had become acquainted with the use of the meat, blood, and at last the skins too, of the various animals they had now found to exist in such abundance at a little distance from their dwelling, they had been well provided with every thing needful. In fact, long before the cold season had set in, Omar and Gad had succeeded in catching alive quite a number of deer and other game, the flesh of which made a most nutritious food, while their thick and hairy hides afforded ex-

cellent protection against the chill blasts of the northerly winds.

Hitherto the time and attention of the members of our little party had been so engrossed by the care of providing for their mutual comfort, that the nicer and nobler feelings of their souls had of necessity been forced back within the deepest recesses of their hearts. Their original language had almost entirely disappeared; a great many words of their mother-tongue had been forgotten; while the many new objects they saw around them had taxed their ingenuity in inventing appropriate names. And so it happened that, while they retained the guttural tones and pronunciation of their own people, the words used by the first inhabitants of the Western continent had become entirely different from those of their late countrymen.

Now that all the simple wants of our friends had been provided for, and their friendship had ripened into the most sincere and passionate love, the long-pent-up feelings of their hearts claimed the right of asserting themselves. The womanly charms of the maidens, which at first had filled the souls of their companions with pleasant

emotions, now set their hearts on fire, and nature would no longer be denied her just rights.

All the time that was not necessarily employed in the chase or the procuring of fruit, &c., the lovers now spent in each others' company, and, while the girls listened rapturously to the passionate outpourings of their devoted swains, the latter felt themselves lifted into brighter regions by the loving glances of their adored sweethearts. At the distance of about half a mile from their abode was a small but beautiful lake, whose blue and transparent waters mirrored the sky; and here was the favorite trysting-place of Omar and Talmai; while Gad and Adah preferred the protecting shadow of their forest home. Often, when the labors of the day were ended, and when twilight began to fall upon the earth, the son of Harim, accompanied by Nahum's daughter, might have been seen wending their way through the dark and silent forest toward their sky-roofed "temple" of love.

Here, in the deep solitude, surrounded by patriarchal trees, and the crystal liquid sparkling at their feet, the happy lover pours his burn-

ing words into the wide-open ears of his enraptured bride, unheard by any other human being, —save the writer of this tale and his companions.

With the privilege of the author to be present on all occasions where something interesting is going on, and well supplied with all the appliances of witchcraft, I spread my magic mantle—which, besides making its occupants entirely invisible, at the same time with lightning speed carries them to the desired spot—and most respectfully invite my gentle readers to accompany me on the aerial voyage. Come on, ladies and gentlemen; step fearlessly upon the wonderful garment: it is secure and spacious; and, should it be necessary, I shall be delighted to enlarge it with one word of my powerful tongue. Courage, now: make yourselves comfortable. Presto, change! and up we go into unknown regions. Ha! do you feel the cooling breeze fanning your feverish brows? You fear? you tremble? Take my hand: to fall is impossible. See yonder cloud, how swiftly it sails onward. Now it is beneath our feet. On, on it goes, until it falls to the earth in myriads of glistening rain-drops.

Where are we? Behold there the glorious sun, a fiery ball, surrounded by an ocean of ice! On, on, my brave mantle! soar up, higher and higher! Ugh! you shiver? the blood begins to freeze in your veins? No matter: this phial contains a powerful elixir. I throw it up over your heads. How delightful! How do you feel? Warm as on a Fourth of July in the midst of the grateful citizens of this glorious republic? Good! I am content. And now we are near our destination. Look down. Do you behold that bed of liquid silver? It is the lake of our lovers. There! see you that stately, dark-red young man? That is Omar; and the copper-colored beauty at his side is his Talmai. Behold the Juno-like form, those dark almond-shaped eyes, that queenly brow! Her jetty hair falls in natural ringlets down on the well-rounded shoulders. The voluptuous bust is a delicious couch for the weary head of her chosen. There she sits on the trunk of a fallen tree, and her lover nestles at her feet. See! now his lips are parting for love's sweet communion. Be silent now, and let us alight at the foot of yonder sycamore. Hark! now he speaks. But what a lingo! You don't under-

stand him? Well, I shall translate as the words fall from his lips:—

"Joy of my eyes! light of my soul! as the beams of yonder sinking sun warm and animate the creatures of the earth, so the beams of thy glorious eyes warm and animate my innermost heart. When I gathered the luscious fruit, when I hunted the swift doe or the swifter stag, I thought of thee: thine image has been before my eyes, awake or asleep. For thy sake I could have done and dared every thing; and, when sometimes almost insurmountable difficulties arose in my path, the thought of thee sustained me and always made me victorious.

"When first I beheld thee near the banks of the endless water, my heart was filled with pleasant emotions, and I resolved to be thy friend and protector. Then I did not understand the emotions that were born in my heart, and I only knew that thou wert dear to me. But since then the feelings of my heart have grown into strong, all-absorbing love: the voice of nature has spoken within me, and now I claim thee for my own. I feel it within me that man and woman must have been created for some grand

and noble purpose: the voice that spoke within me said that you had been made to sweeten my existence; and therefore let us be forever united, let us share our mutual duties, and let it be our highest aim to render each other happy."

The speaker ceases, and fondly looks up into the eyes of his companion to note the effect of his words.

But what is the matter with you, my brave companions? You look incredulous, and your mysterious whisperings seem to indicate that you do not believe me.

Oh! you don't understand that so uncivilized a being as this Omar undoubtedly is should use such language, which, although bold and to the point, would certainly lead to the belief that he who spoke it must be a man of some refinement and culture. That's it, is it?

Why, bless your dear, innocent souls! don't you know that that entire speech is but a translation? What could it have availed either you or me had I repeated the exact and almost unpronounceable words he uttered? You would not have understood them at all, and therefore they would not have interested you. It is the mean-

ing, not only of the few sentences, but also of the looks and gestures accompanying them, that we want; and this I have endeavored to give you to the best of my ability. So much for that. And now let us look at the lovely Talmai.

How radiant she looks! how that happy smile illumines her brown features! She has eagerly devoured the words of her handsome lover, and —do not start, my fair fellow-travellers—she did not even blush. Pure, simple, and innocent child of nature! With the nobility of a queen, she arises: for one moment she stands proud and erect, her eyes looking her unspeakable feelings; then she slowly raises her right arm heavenward:—

"Beloved, I am thine,—thine through sunshine and darkness, thine to share the duties that may await us, thine forever."

This ceremony, so imposing in its very simplicity, is important.

Thus Omar and Talmai are married.

Rapturously the young husband strains his adored bride to his bosom, and the first fervent kiss seals the sacred compact.

The twilight now has vanished, and night has

set in. One by one the stars begin to peep out from the azure sky, while far off in the east Luna appears on her solitary walk; and in the pale, cold light of the "goddess of night" the wedded pair wend their way homeward. We, too, gentle readers, must now think of returning; for the night-air is chill, and a longer exposure so near the banks of that beautiful lake might cause us a cold as a reward for our temerity. On! on! brave mantle, and carry thy precious load, far up above the mighty forest, back to the place whence we started.

In the mean time Omar and Talmai had reached their forest home, where, by a singular coincidence, or by preconcerted arrangement, Gad and Adah had also gone through the important ceremony of marriage. The congratulations therefore were mutual, and, after a brief general conversation, the "blushing brides" were led to the couches of their new-made lords.

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The next morning broke bright and glorious: the denizens of the forest had left their lairs, and the birds were singing the last stanzas of their morning hymn. But around that hollow

tree all was silent. Contrary to their usual custom, the young people were yet in bed; and the sun indicated the tenth hour before they arose. But now the log was rolled away from the entrance of the hut, and, arm in arm, the two husbands and their smiling wives appeared in the aperture.

The serene and contented expression of the faces of all showed that they were happy indeed; and, after mutually expressing their surprise at the lateness of the hour, our married folks at once made preparation for a joyous festival. A stately deer, that had been secured on the previous day, was brought forward; and, while the two men set to work to skin and cut the animal, —a process that was now greatly facilitated by Omar having, after long and arduous labor, succeeded in sharpening a piece of very hard wood in such a manner as to make it serve all the purposes of the modern knife,—the women went to gather fresh fruit and fill their cocoa-shells with water. No cooking, roasting, or baking being required, the frugal meal was soon prepared; and then our friends sat down to partake of the festive repast. But the order of things

was changed. Heretofore, while at their meals, the young men had found their greatest pleasure in serving their fair companions; but now the latter thought it their duty to lighten as much as possible the labors of their husbands, and in turn now waited on their masters, who, although earnestly remonstrating at first against the unwonted proceeding, soon began to feel and enjoy the comfort of being served; and from that time the Indian wife gradually became the slave of her husband.

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The meal of Omar, Gad, and their brides was in every respect a happy and joyous one. The meat was raw, and there were no artificial drinks to stimulate the appetite, it is true; but these luxuries were unknown to the friends, and therefore not missed. One thing every member of that little party possessed, which gave flavor to their viands and zest to their enjoyments: this was the knowledge of being beloved by the object of their heart's choice.

When the repast was ended, the two families went on a short hunting and exploring expedition, and the rest of the day was spent in social sports. Thus the companions again lived

on, happy and content. Their simple wants were easily supplied; and, as now the women faithfully shared all the toil and labor of their husbands, their days glided by in harmony and comfort.

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Another year has passed away, and Talmai and Adah have become mothers.

This was a new phase in the life of our adventurers; and great had been their rejoicings when the first wail of the infants had fallen upon the ears of the overjoyed parents.

"Chow-wauk-he!" (my first-born,) cried Omar, when Talmai presented him a plump and chubby little son. "Mo-he-ga!" (the beautiful one,) echoed Gad, when Adah showed him a lovely little daughter. The measure of happiness in the little circle was now full. Thanks to their vigorous constitutions, their simple and frugal habits, and, above all, their lives full of healthful exercise in the open air, the young mothers arose a few days after the birth, well and strong as ever, while the children were as healthy and full of life as young kids.

It is impossible to describe the pleasure with which the young fathers now went forth to pro-

vide game, fruit, and other necessaries for their beloved ones at home, while the mothers were busy in the interior of the wigwam, moving about with anxious caution, so as not to awake their sleeping babes, or sat, their little ones hanging on their breasts, impatiently awaiting the return of their husbands, to whom they now felt themselves bound by a strong additional tie. All now had a new object to live and to care for; and never yet has lioness watched more anxiously over her whelps than did Omar and Talmai, Gad and Adah, over their offspring. The children were perfect counterparts of their respective parents; and, thanks to the constant and watchful care of the latter, the former grew up in vigor, beauty, and amiability.

In due time Chow-wauk-he and Mo-he-ga were able to leave the parental dwelling; and then they not unfrequently accompanied their sires on their hunting-expeditions, while the latter strictly observed the divine command, "Be fruitful, and multiply," their families becoming enlarged by some new addition at each natural interval. And thus time passed on.

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Twenty-one years have rolled down the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity, and the increase of their numbers has obliged the two families to separate and seek different dwelling-places.

It is a lovely morning in that delightful season known as the Indian summer. Again I spread my magic mantle, again I invite my gentle readers to accompany me on an aerial voyage, and again that brave and useful garment soars up into the sky with its precious load of civilized beings. This time not a single cloud is visible in the azure of the higher regions, and our view is unbounded. The king of day sends down his warming and animating rays in unbroken splendor, and in his glorious light glitter the broad streams, the dense forests, and the lovely vales that separate us from our destination. Near that silvery lake—the end of our former journey—we again descend, and cordially greet our old acquaintances the patriarchal trees and the waves of liquid crystal. Behold yonder procession of the copper-colored sons of the forest! How elastic and joyous is their step! Now they have arrived on the banks of the lake;

and, see! they are forming a ring around their leaders. Those two stately men in the prime of life are Omar and Gad; the still blooming dames at their sides are Talmai and Adah; and the motley group of young men and women, boys and girls, that surround them, are their children, —all as brown as their parents.

Gently ripple the transparent waters of that beautiful lake, and toward its opposite shores are the eyes of the assembled people directed. What next? Strain your eyes, my brave companions! What see you? Nothing? Well, I declare: I, too, see—Ha! there it is! A bark canoe shoots from under yon overhanging boughs. It comes nearer. See how swiftly it goes! Now you can see its occupants. One is a young man, tall and erect. He is at least six feet high. He is dressed in the glossy skin of the black bear. The other is a girl. How beautiful! What a faultless form! She is dressed in the snowy hide of the white deer. And now the young men on our side of the lake are cheering the new-comers. They speak among themselves. Let me listen. I will try to catch the meaning of what they say. Now I have it. Yonder

brown sailor is to be married. The maiden in the prow of the boat is his bride. They have gone to the opposite shore to hunt their wedding-garments; and, see! they have succeeded. They are returning victorious. Their dresses are new. The blood on the inner side of the skins is yet smoking. Hurrah for the bold hunters!

Now they have landed. They go straight up to Omar and his companions, while the children of the latter stand smiling around. Hark! the tall hunter speaks. He declares his love for his fair companion. He asks Gad and Adah to give him their daughter. They smile. Their consent is given, and the happy bride sinks into the outstretched arms of her stout lover. Now all embrace. Omar and Talmai raise their hands in solemn benediction. "Be happy, my children," falls, in earnest tones, from the former's lips, and the ceremony is over. The lovers are married.

For some moments all are silent. Then a mighty shout reverberates through the dark forest, and echo carries it far out over the country. "Long life and prosperity to Mo-he-ga, the flower of the wilderness! Long life and prosperity to Chow-wauk-he, the bold hunter!"

And thus, my brave companions, we will leave the first of the red men, the first natives of our glorious continent, while our novel conveyance carries us quickly and safely back to the place whence we started.

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THE END.