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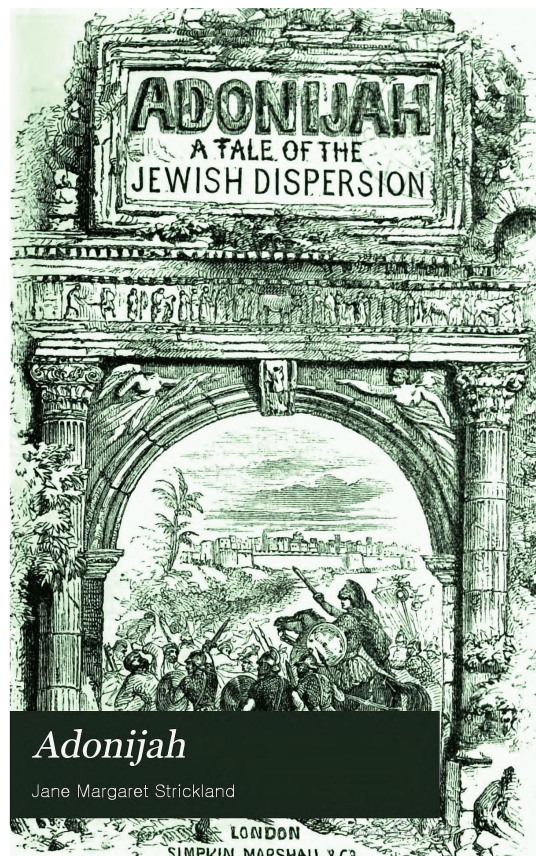
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'Adonijah no longer saw in the person of Lucia Claudia the beautiful and beloved object of his secret affections, but an idolatrous heathen priestess.'

ADONIJAH,

A TALE OF THE JEWISH DISPERSION.

BY

MISS JANE MARGARET STRICKLAND.

"Oh weep for those who wept by Babel's stream,
Whose shrines are desolate—whose land a dream
Weep for the harp of Judah's broken shell,
Mourn where their God hath dwelt—the godless dwell."
BYRON.

"Hebrew, come forth! dread not the light of day,
Dread not the insulter's cry.
The arch that rose o'er thy captivity,
No more shall turn thee from thy destined way."
SOTHEBY.

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PREFACE.

The period included in the reigns of Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian, was remarkable for two memorable events in the annals of ecclesiastical history; the first persecution of the Christian Church by the sixth Roman sovereign, and the dissolution of the Jewish polity by Titus.

The destruction of Jerusalem was stupendous, not only as an act of divine wrath, but as being the

proximate cause of the dispersion of a whole nation, upon which a long series of sorrow, spoliation, and oppression lighted, in consequence of the curse the Jews had invoked, when in reply to the remonstrances of Pilate they had cried out, "His blood be upon us and our children." The church below, represented in Scripture as a type of the heavenly Jerusalem above, and having its seat then in the doomed city, was not to continue there, lest the native Jews composing it should gather round them a people of their own nation, in a place destined to remain desolate till the time when the dispersed of Israel should be converted, and rebuild their city and temple. The city bearing the ancient name of Jerusalem does not indeed occupy the same site, being built round the sacred spot where the garden once stood, in which a mortal sepulchre received the lifeless form of the Saviour of the world.

But happier times seem dawning on the dispersed of Judea. Our own days have seen the foundations of a Jewish Christian church laid in Jerusalem; our Queen Victoria and the King of Prussia united to commence a work of love, thereby fulfilling in part the promise made to the Jews of old, "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." To those readers who feel interested in the dispersed of Israel and Judea, these pages may afford, perhaps, information on an important subject as well as amusement.

REYDON HALL,
March, 1856.

ADONIJAH.

CHAPTER I.

"But woe to hill, and woe to vale,
Against them shall go forth a wail!
And woe to bridegroom, and to bride,
For death shall on the whirlwind ride!
And woe to thee, resplendent shrine,
The sword is out for thee and thine!"

CROLY.

The splendid regnal talents undoubtedly possessed by the Emperor Nero, and the great architectural genius he displayed in rebuilding his capital, had not atoned in the eyes of the Romans for the flagitiousness of his character.

His public munificence to the people, whom a mighty conflagration had rendered homeless, met with no gratitude, because he was believed to be the author of the calamity which had levelled the ancient city with the dust. This sweeping charge has no real historical foundation; and perhaps if the Emperor had not profited by the general misfortune, such a wild conjecture would never have been recorded nor believed.

His appropriation of a large part of the ground-plot, whereon to found his Golden House and its stately parks and gardens, gave to the vague report colour and stability; therefore Nero, finding no assertion of his could disprove the imputation, resolved to fix it upon a class little known and less regarded—a people composed of all ranks and nations, yet united by a peculiar faith in one brotherhood of love. Nero was no stranger to the vital doctrines of Christianity; he had heard St. Paul, when the mighty Apostle of the Gentiles had stood before his tribunal,—to which circumstance allusion has been made by himself in the Second Epistle to Timothy, "And I was delivered out of the lion's mouth."^[1] Since that momentous period the heart of Nero had become hard and inaccessible to mercy; for the conversion of his favourite mistress and his cup-bearer by St. Paul had awakened his undying hatred against the Christian religion and its teachers.^[2]

His terrible persecution had shocked a people accustomed to spectacles of horror. "Humanity relented", remarks Tacitus, "in favour of the Christians,"—an expression which does not, however, imply that Christianity was tolerated, but that its professors were no longer sought for to load the cross or feed the flames.

The Church at this period, thinned in Rome by the martyrdoms of the fearful Saturnalia the Emperor had kept in his imperial gardens some years before, was scattered abroad or hidden in the Arenaria, its existence being only known by isolated cases brought before the tribunals of Helius and his infamous colleague Tigellinus for judgment.

Its influence, however apparently limited, was not unfelt; for in the midst of the blindness of Atheism and idolatry the light shone out, though surrounded by darkness—darkness that might be felt. The prophecies were fast accomplishing which the Divine Head of the Church had spoken respecting the Jews; for the inexpiable war had begun, and the sword of the Gentile was mowing down the thousands of Israel.

During his progress through Greece, the sight of the Isthmus of Corinth inspired Nero with the gigantic idea of cutting a barrier through, which occasioned an impediment to commerce, and

rendered the navigation difficult and dangerous to the mariner.^[3] This undertaking has been left incomplete—a vast work to be effected perhaps in modern times, in which science has achieved wonders never before accomplished by mere human labour.

The prejudices the Romans cherished against the man who had degraded the sovereign by singing on the stage, made a project so grand and useful appear a mad and ridiculous design. Nero, bending all his natural energy to this object, either did not care for, or remained ignorant of, the opinion of his subjects. He despatched letters to the prefect of Rome for labourers to be supplied from the public prisons, and Corbulo and Vespasian, his lieutenants in Armenia and Judea, received his imperial orders for the instant transmission to Corinth of the captives they had taken in the Parthian and Jewish wars.

The plan of cutting through the Isthmus was not, however, popular with the people it was intended to benefit; for the Corinthians ventured to remind the Emperor that Demetrius Poliorcetes, Julius Cæsar, and Caligula had in succession made the attempt, but had fallen by the sword soon after the work had commenced.

To a man of genius, ambitious of distinction, and possessed of the resources of a vast empire, these objections appeared of little moment, and Nero deemed his star too fortunate to set, like that of those princes, untimely in blood. He was not only animated by the hope of bequeathing a vast work of great public utility to posterity, but revelled in the pleasurable idea of gratifying his vanity by exhibiting himself before a vast concourse in the amiable light of a benefactor to Greece, Asia, and indeed to the whole world.

It was seldom Nero appeared in the appropriate costume of a Roman Emperor, the use of the imperial mantle of Tyrian purple and golden laurel being strictly confined by him to state occasions. A loose robe, dishevelled ringlets, and bare feet suited his notions of comfort, and ordinarily composed his attire; but the occasion seemed to demand more attention to outward appearance than he generally thought proper to bestow. He resumed, with the imperial costume, an elegance natural to him, and would have successfully represented the majesty of the greatest throne of the universe, if he had not resolved to display the sweetness of his voice to the vast multitude during the imposing ceremonial of opening the trench intended to divide the Isthmus. Arrayed in purple, the golden laurel-wreath of the Cæsars encircling his unwarlike brow, he advanced towards the shore, singing a hymn in praise of the marine deities, holding in his hand the gold pickaxe with which he designed to break the virgin ground. Amidst the lengthened plaudits of a vast multitude, Nero struck the first stroke into the earth, and raising a basket of sand upon his imperial shoulder looked proudly round him as if to claim a second burst of applause from flattering Greeks and degenerate Romans.

The clapping of hands and loud acclamations his admonitory glance demanded rent the air, and were echoed back from the surrounding mountains, to hail the exertions of the master of the world. Even the unhappy workmen, instructed by their taskmasters, swelled with their voices and fingers the flattering plaudit. One voice alone was mute; for Adonijah, a captive Hebrew, was new to slavery and despised the effeminate tyrant whom the chances of war had made the arbiter of his destiny. The ears of Nero, ringing with the adulatory huzza, perceived not the omission, but his quick restless eye caught for an instant among the crowd of workmen the scornful smile that curled the proud lip of the Jew; then lost his features in the dense mass of labourers surrounding him, whose hands were intended to complete what his imperial ones had begun. Yet, though swallowed up in those living waves, the form, the noble outline, of Adonijah dwelt in the memory of Nero; for never had he beheld hatred, scorn, and despair united with such manly and heroic beauty.

Who was this unknown slave who disdained the Emperor of Rome? Nero frowned as he internally asked the question; the self-aborrent feeling that often made him a burden to himself was stealing over him, even in the face of this triumphant day, when the well-timed flattery of Julius Claudius, a young patrician who stood high in his favour, dispelled the gathering cloud on the imperial brow, and restored Nero to himself. The example of Julius was followed by the court; and the sovereign, forgetting the cause of his disquiet, left Adonijah to breathe a foreign air and to mingle the bitter bread of captivity with weeping.

Jerusalem, that holy city, over whose coming miseries the Lord of life had wept, was now “encompassed round with” the “armies” of the Gentile. The time of her desolation was at hand, and “the cup of the Lord’s fury” like a torrent was overflowing the land. The very heavens showed fearful signs of her approaching doom, for nightly a blazing star, resembling a sword, hung over the devoted city, while the cry of “Woe, woe to the inhabitants of Jerusalem!” rang through every street. Yet her fanatic tribes still confidently expected the coming of the Messiah, still obstinately contested every foot of their beloved land.

Never had Rome, since she first flew her conquering eagles, encountered a foe so fiercely determined to be free. Bent upon exterminating the Roman name, the Jew, whenever he gained a transitory advantage, left no foe to breathe. From the hour in which he conquered Cestius Gallus and his legions he never sheathed the sword, but obstinately maintained the contest till the prophecies were fulfilled, and “Zion became a heap of desolation.”

The time of the dispersion of the tribes of Israel was then about to be accomplished; and the recent victories of Vespasian had given the first fruits of the glory and beauty of the Holy Land into the enemy’s hand. Among these Adonijah was numbered, for he had been taken in arms at Jotapata; ^[4] but, unlike its obsequious governor Josephus, disdained to receive favour or pay servile homage to the conquering Roman general.

He had, during the siege, more than once scornfully rejected the overtures of Vespasian, who vainly tried to seduce him from his duty. Nay, more, when an apostate Jew without the walls, once numbered among his chosen friends, dared, at the bidding of the victor, to tamper with his honour, a javelin, flung with so true an aim that it reached the traitor’s heart and pinned him to the ground, was the only answer the bold young leader deigned to give to the infamous suggestion.

Something like enthusiasm warmed the cold bosom of Vespasian when informed of the tragical fate of his messenger, and a desire to converse with the heroic stripling whose fidelity was so incorruptible made him command his soldiers, when about to storm the city, to take him alive—a solitary exception of mercy to the general order of the day.

Adonijah, throughout the carnage of that dreadful assault, vainly sought the sole reward that Jewish valour might then claim—a warrior's grave. His parents, his kindred, his faithful friends, all perished with Jotapata, while he was delivered alive and unwounded into Vespasian's hands. Bold, haughty, zealous of the law—a Pharisee in sect, and despising all other nations—to be taken captive by the Gentile conqueror was bitterer than death to Adonijah, who, like Job, "cursed his day" and fiercely resented his preservation.

Vespasian, who hoped to make his captive a means to gain over his countrymen, commanded Josephus, the late governor of the conquered city, to visit and induce him by his eloquence and learning to favour his views.

Adonijah received his old commander with lively affection and devoted respect. All that man could do had been done by Josephus, and his young partisan shed tears while he pressed him to his bosom; but when his revered chief spake of submission to the Roman yoke, and hinted things still less consistent with the duty of a patriot, he turned away with indignation, sorrow, and contempt, nor would he again listen to the man who had ceased to love his country.

Then Vespasian himself, accompanied by his son Titus, condescended to visit his captive, but he too found him alike insensible to threats or promises. He charged his prisoner with ingratitude.

"Ingratitude!" scornfully reiterated the Hebrew. "You have left nothing breathing to claim near kindred with Adonijah. The last sound that smote mine ear as your people were leading me away a fettered captive, was the cry of my virgin sister. A Roman ruffian's hand was twisted in her consecrated locks, his sword was glittering over her devoted head; I heard her cry, but could not save her from his fury. O Tamar! O my sister! Would to God I had died for thee, my sister! Such are the deeds, vindictive Roman, for which thou claimest my gratitude: but know, I hate existence, and loathe thee for prolonging mine."

Incensed by the boldness of this language, Vespasian included his intractable prisoner in the number of those captives^[5] required by Nero to carry into effect his projected scheme of cutting through the Isthmus of Corinth.

Bitterer than death, bitterer even than slavery, were the feelings that wrung the bosom of the exile as he turned a last look upon the land of his nativity. All he loved had perished there by the sword, yet he did not, he could not regret them, while he felt the chains of the Gentile around his impatient limbs. They were free—they would rise again and inherit the paradise of the faithful—while he must wither in slavery. No soft emotion for any fair virgin of his people shared the indignant feelings of his heart at this moment, though patriotism claimed not all his burning regret; for ungratified revenge, that ought at least to have had a Roman for its object, occasioned a part of his present grief.

Born of the house and lineage of David, Adonijah gloried in his proud descent, "though the sceptre had departed from Judah," and the base Idumean line reigned on the throne of her ancient kings. Ithamar, a young leader in the Jewish war, boasting the same advantages, rivalled him in arms, and from a rival became his enemy. Both were obstinately bent on delivering their country from a foreign yoke, and for that end would have shed their blood drop by drop—would have done anything but give up their animosity.

It is difficult to define from what cause this unnatural hatred and rivalry sprang up. Perhaps it derived its source from religious differences, Adonijah being a strict Pharisee, Ithamar a Sadducee, and both were bigoted to the peculiar doctrines of their several sects. Their individual hatred, however, bore a more decided character than that they cherished against Rome. Those who are acquainted with the dreadful records of the last days of Jerusalem will not be surprised at the ill-feeling here described as existing between Adonijah and Ithamar.

The moral justice of the Pharisee of that day was comprised in the well-known maxim, "Thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thine enemy;" an axiom adopted by the rival Sadducee in the same spirit, and acted upon with equal fidelity. A perfect unanimity in this one respect existing between the disciples of these differing sects.

The idea that Ithamar would rejoice in his degradation was like fire to the proud heart of Adonijah, who shook his chained hands in impotent despair as the mortifying thought intruded upon him. Must he then die unrevenged, and be led into captivity, while Ithamar enjoyed freedom? He wrapped his face in his mantle, and sank into a state of sullen gloom, whose darkness no beam of hope could penetrate. Yet, in the true spirit of the Pharisee, even while longing to gratify revenge—the worst passion that can defile the human heart—he considered himself a perfect follower of the holy law of God.

[1] Hegesippus, the earliest ecclesiastical historian,—quoted by Eusebius,—establishes the fact that an interval of years elapsed between the first and second appearance of St. Paul before the imperial tribunal.

[2] The reader will find this curious fact in the works of Clemens Alexandrinus and Chrysostom. It is quoted also by Doddridge.

[3] See Appendix, [Note I.](#)

[4] See Appendix, [Note II.](#)

[5] See Appendix, [Note III.](#)

CHAPTER II.

"Night is the time for care;
Brooding on hours misspent,
To see the spectre of despair
Come to our lonely tent,
Like Brutus, midst his slumbering host,
Startled by Cæsar's stalwart ghost."
J. MONTGOMERY.

The Emperor of Rome was intensely jealous of the fame of the great Roman to whom he had given an immense share of power, little indeed inferior to that formerly granted by the senate to Pompey the Great. He did not distrust the commander of whose probity he had received so many proofs; but the splendid career of Domitius Corbulo excited odious comparisons between the sovereign and his lieutenant. His dislike was well known to his confidants, and by them was communicated to Arrius Varus, a brave but unprincipled young man, who, thinking it afforded him an opportunity of pushing his own fortunes at Corbulo's expense, secretly accused his commander of treason, in a letter addressed to the emperor himself.

Nero did not believe the accusation, and he was undecided respecting the use to which he should put it; for he required the services of his lieutenant in the East, and had not quite made up his mind to kill the man whom Tiridates had styled "a most valuable slave." He resolved to be guided by circumstances, and contented himself with writing to Domitius Corbulo a pressing invitation to visit his court at Corinth.^[6] With the profound dissimulation in which Nero was an adept, he informed him of the accusation made by Varus, assuring him at the same time that he did not believe in its truth. The apparent frankness and generosity of his sovereign made the impression he had intended on the honourable mind of his general, who came to Corinth without the slightest suspicion of any sinister design entertained by Nero. He was accompanied by a few friends alone, and without a guard. Among those individuals who were honoured by his confidence was a military tribune or colonel, named Lucius Claudius, whose distant relationship to the emperor gave him some importance in the eyes of the Roman people; a cadet of a house associated by its greatness or guilt with every page of the republican and imperial history,—which had given to Rome more consuls, dictators, and censors than any other line,—which boasted Appius Cæcus, and Nero, the conqueror of Asdrubal,—and of which also had sprung Appius Claudius the decemvir, Clodius the demagogue, Tiberius the emperor, Drusus and Germanicus, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Lucius Claudius had apparently entered life under peculiarly fortunate circumstances; though the military tribune did not resemble in character his ambitious ancestral race. The men we have just cited of the proud Claudian line were before their times, while he was behind those in which he lived. His noble temper, frank, generous, fearless, and true, had been formed by his revered commander, by whom Lucius had been trained to arms; his life had been passed in the camp, far from the corruption of Nero's court and capital. His father was no more, his brother Julius, one of Nero's dissipated companions, was with the emperor at Corinth, and his sister Lucia Claudia was the youngest of the vestal priestesses, but he had not seen her since the hour in which she was dedicated to Vesta.

Lucius came to Corinth, like his commander, without distrust or apprehension, for Nero was beloved in the provinces; his guilt, his licentiousness, were little known on the distant Roman frontier; and when Corbulo requested an audience of his sovereign, he had employed the interval in seeking for his brother. Upon learning that Julius Claudius was in the theatre, witnessing the imperial performance, he had retired to take the repose his weary frame required.

Nero, when he received intelligence of his lieutenant's arrival, was dressed for the stage, in the habit proper to the comic part he was about to perform. The unsuitableness of his garb to that of a Roman emperor, about to give audience to the greatest commander of the time, and the impossibility of denying himself to a man like Domitius Corbulo, decided the fate of his general. Nero took the easiest way of settling a difficult point of etiquette, by sending a centurion with the imperial mandate, commanding his officer to end his days.

Corbulo without a guard or means of defence, received the ungrateful message with the stoical fortitude of an ancient Roman. "I have deserved this," was his brief remark to his friends as he fell upon his sword. Nero went on the stage to play his part out, and in its comic excitement forgot the tragedy of which he had made his brave lieutenant the hero. The plaudits of his audience were at length over, and Nero, withdrawing to his dormitory, gave the watchword, and received the report from the centurion on duty of Corbulo's death. The last speech of his lieutenant awakened a throng of conflicting passions in his bosom; he called for wine and drank deeply to drown remorse, but instead of the oblivion he sought, he became frantically delirious and rushed forth into the midnight air, none of his attendants daring to detain or follow their miserable prince, who, passing through the streets with mad precipitation, never halted till he found himself near the scene of his labours, the Isthmian trench. The beauty of the moonlight, the deep stillness of the night, undisturbed even by a wandering breeze, allayed the fever in the emperor's throbbing veins. Thousands were sleeping around him, sleeping in their chains. He contemplated the toil-worn wretches with feelings of envy. He gazed intently upon them as they lay fettered in pairs upon the earth, and as his mind became more calm he examined their features with curiosity and interest. In sleep the mask, habitual cunning or reserve wears by day, is thrown off, and the true character may be distinctly traced. On the brows of the Roman criminals their crimes were legibly written. Pride, sensuality, rapacity, cunning, and cruelty, marked them as the outcasts of the corrupt and wicked city, the spiritual Babylon. The Jewish captives, who were all young and chosen men, bore the expression of sullen gloom, unsatisfied revenge, defiance, indignation, and despair; and even in slumber murmured, complained, or acted again the strife they had maintained so vainly against the Roman

arms. One alone of all these thousands smiled, and he was the noblest and fairest of them all. From his parted lips a holy strain of melody broke forth, then died away in imperfect murmurs; but the listening tyrant recognised in the sleeper the slave whose scornful look had awakened his angry passions on the day when he opened the trench. Adonijah's dreams are of his own land. He is going up to Jerusalem, to keep the feast of the Passover. His slaughtered brethren are with him, and Tamar, that fair and virgin sister, that Nazarine dedicated from childhood to the Lord, is dancing before them with the timbrel in her hand, singing, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Suddenly, with the capriciousness of fancy, the scene changes. Again he hears the war-cry of his own people, again hangs upon the flying legions of Cestius Gailus, captures the idol standard, and calls upon the name of the Messiah, the promised deliverer of Israel. He comes, the mighty, the long-expected. The Romans are driven forth from the sacred soil, the valley of Hamoth Gog is full of slaughter, and Adonijah hails the king of Judah, the anointed one of the Lord, with holy joy. But swifter than lightning vanishes the glorious vision from his sight, he awakes, and finds himself a slave in a foreign land.

He looked around him doubtfully. The land before him is like the garden of Eden, and the breezes that fan his glowing cheek are fresh and balmy as those that wander over his beloved Judea. The mountains, whose summits are gilded in the radiant moonlight, remind him of those that encompass the holy city. His perception is still visionary and indistinct, the blue waves on either side the Isthmus, the scene of his labours, his raven locks wet with the dews of night, appeal to his scattered senses. The chains upon his free-born limbs sullenly clank as he rises from the earth, memory resumes her powers, he remembers that he is a slave.

Despair seizes upon his heart, his thoughts revert to his beloved sister. He no longer sees her bounding along the rocky heights in all the beauty of holiness and youthful enthusiasm, her form graceful as the palm-tree, from which she derives her name, but mentally views her sinking beneath the cruel sword of the Gentile. Her cry is in his ears, and again he utters the bitter cry, "O Tamar! O my sister! would to God that I had died with thee, my sister! Why was I not buried beneath the ruins of Jotapata? Why am I cast forth like an abominable branch to wither in this strange land?"

The wretched Hebrew sank upon the ground, wrapped his face in his garment, and sobbed aloud in the bitterness of his heart.

Though the emperor was ignorant of the language in which these words were spoken, he knew they were the accents of despair. A few minutes since he believed himself to be the most wretched man in his wide dominions, but this slave appeared as miserable, was he as guilty? as himself; for Nero, burdened with his crimes, felt that utter misery can only dwell with sin.

He addressed the slave in the Greek language, and bade him declare the cause of his passionate complaints.

Surprised, and not immediately recognising the emperor, who was still attired as a comedian, Adonijah unveiled his convulsed features and replied in the same tongue, one which was familiar to him.

"Why troublest thou me with questions? I was free—I am a slave. I had kindred ties—I am alone among the thousands of Israel. I had a God, and he has forsaken me. Whose sorrow can be compared to my sorrow? who among the children of men can be compared in misery to me?"

A wild scornful laugh broke upon the ear of Adonijah, who started upon his feet and gazed upon the figure, doubtful whether the being before him was of earthly mould or one of those evil spirits who were believed to haunt unfrequented places. In breaking the ground groans were said to have been heard, and blood had been seen to issue as from fresh wounds, and apparitions had warned the workmen to forbear. Superstitious feelings crept over the bold spirit of Adonijah; he pronounced the name of God and looked once more upon the countenance of the emperor. The wild expression of derision was gone, despair alone pervaded it. The features, the brow, were beautiful, but it was beauty stained with sin; the lineaments were youthful, though marked with an age of crime; the sneer on the lip bespoke scorn of himself and all mankind, but the eye was cruel, and expressed lawless power rather than princely majesty; although, degraded as he was, there was still an air that showed he had been accustomed to command. In this second glance Adonijah recognised the master of the Roman world.

"Is this all thy sum of care, and darest thou claim from Nero the supremacy of sorrow?" continued the prince. "Slave, thou art happier in thy chains than Cæsar on his throne! Dost thou see the dagger of the assassin lurking under the garments of every person who approaches thee? Art thou loathed by those who flatter thee, and secretly cursed by those who bend the knee before thee? Hast thou plunged in all riot, known all vice, revelled in all luxury, and only found satiety and loathing? Hast thou found pleasure weariness, happiness a chimera, and virtue an empty name? Speak, audacious slave."

"Not so, Cæsar, for all the commandments of my God I have kept unbroken from my youth," returned the self-righteous Hebrew. "Happiness dwells not with excess, for as Solomon saith, 'Better is the wise poor man than the son of a king that doeth evil.' Thou art wretched because thou art guilty."

"Once, once I was innocent," groaned the emperor; "years of sin have not effaced the recollection of that blessed time. No indignant phantom then banished slumber from my pillow, for I was guiltless in those happy hours. Then came ambition, and I grasped the imperial sceptre, and stained my hands with blood, innocent blood. My mother, my wife, my kindred, all perished. Rome was laid in ashes, but not by me; but the Christians died to remove from me the imputation of that crime. Hark! hear you not those cries? See you not a ghostly train approaching?" The eyes of the horror-stricken emperor fearfully expanded, he grasped the arm of the slave, muttering, "'Tis Agrippina, 'tis my mother; the scorpion-whip is in her hand, she comes, she comes to torture me. Octavia, gentle Octavia, stay her relentless hand. Mother, spare your wretched son. I did not bid them slay thee; it was the men you gave me for my guides that urged me to that crime." Cold drops stood on the brow of the emperor, the muscles of his throat worked frightfully, and while he leaned

against the person of Adonijah for support, the Hebrew felt the agonized and audible pulsation of his heart thrill through his own nerves. From this momentary trance of horror the terrors of conscience again awakened Nero. "Thou, too," shrieked he—"thou, too, Corbulo—dost thou pursue me?" Then, with a cry of horror that dispelled slumber from every weary eye, he fled in frantic haste from the new phantom his delirious horror had created.

"This is the hand of God," said Adonijah, turning his eyes on the awakened thousands, amongst whom he might have vainly sought for guilt or woe like Nero's. Even his own misery was nothing in comparison to the terrors that haunted the bosom of the master of the world.

The murmured inquiry that passed along that chained host was like the sound of many waters, but died away instantly into such stillness that the murmur of the waves might be distinctly heard on either shore. The strangely mingled multitude, composed of every creed and nation, looked anxiously around, then pointing to the earth, from whose inmost cavities they superstitiously imagined these shrieks had issued, sank down upon her bosom to sleep and dream of home. Adonijah alone knew the cries came from the tortured spirit of the mighty potentate who ruled the kingdoms of the world, and he remained awake. He had lost his partner in misfortune by death, and no unhappy countryman shared his chain—a circumstance that left him more liberty than those whose deep slumbers he vainly envied.

[6] See Appendix, [Note IV](#).

CHAPTER III.

"The Jews, like their bigoted sires of yore,
By gazing on the clouds, their God adore:
Our Roman customs they contemn and jeer,
But learn and keep their country rites with fear.
That worship only they in reverence have,
Which in dark volumes their great Moses gave.
So they are taught, and do it to obey
Their fathers, who observe the Sabbath-day."

JUVENAL.

The morrow was the Sabbath of the Lord. Unused to labour, the toil-worn Hebrew slaves hailed its approach with joy. Even a Roman enemy had respected the sacred day of rest, but the bosom of Nero was a stranger to the generous feelings of Titus. The boon the prisoners confidently expected he would concede to them was peremptorily refused, and the work was commanded to be carried on as on other days. The Hebrews looked upon each other in silence, and with dejected countenances took up their tools, groaning within themselves, yet preparing to obey the mandate of the emperor. Adonijah contemplated these preparations with a glance, in which pity, indignation, surprise, and contempt were strangely blended. The burning blush of shame overspread his fine countenance as he cried, "Will ye indeed sin against the Lord, my brethren, and disobey his commandment at the bidding of a heathen master?"

Some of the captives sighed and pointed to their chains; others boldly averred "that it was useless to serve a God who had utterly forsaken them;" the timid reminded Adonijah that resistance would be vain, that they must obey Cæsar or perish miserably.

"Better is it for ye to die, O house of Israel, than to suffer such bitter bondage. Death is to be chosen rather than sacrilege. The Lord of Hosts perchance hath only hidden his face from us for a little while, and may yet turn our captivity as the rivers in the south. We are too many to be given up to the sword; the tyrant cannot spare our labours from his vain attempt." The ardent youth paused and looked around him upon his countrymen, hoping to excite a kindred feeling among the children of his people.

Sighs and groans alone met his ear, like the last wail of crushed and broken hearts—hearts that felt their degradation, but that could not yet resolve to die.

"Hearken to me, my countrymen," continued the speaker; "this Nero, whom ye fear more than Jehovah, hath nearly filled up the measure of his crimes. I saw him last night, when the terror of the Lord was upon him, driven forth to wander like the impious king of Babylon in madness and misery, and will ye obey such a one rather than God?"

The sullen Jews gave him no reply, but silently resumed their detested tasks.

Burning tears of indignation filled the eyes of the devoted and enthusiastic Adonijah. He threw himself upon the earth, exclaiming as he did so, "Here will I hallow the Sabbath of the Lord, even in the midst of this idolatrous land will I glorify His name."

"What are you about to do, rash man?" said a military tribune, approaching Adonijah, and accosting him through the medium of the Greek tongue.

"To die," replied the Hebrew, undauntedly regarding the interrogator.

"For what?" remarked Lucius Claudius sarcastically, "for a mere superstitious observance that doubtless took its rise from an indolent love of ease."

"No, Roman, no," returned the captive, "our Sabbath was hallowed and ordained by God Himself when He rested from all His works upon the seventh day, and pronounced them good. The first Sabbath was celebrated by the holy angels, for it is written, 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.'"

Lucius Claudius put back with his hand the lictors who approached to seize Adonijah, and then drawing nearer to the Hebrew, said in a low voice, "I have heard strange things respecting the

worship ye pay some unknown god in the temple at Jerusalem. 'Tis said that Antiochus Epiphanes found there the image of a vile animal in the secret place ye call the Holy of Holies."

"Roman, 'tis false," replied the slave. "We worship the great First Cause, the Source of light and life—the creative and preserving Power who formed the universe and all that is therein, and continually sustaineth by His good providence the things that He hath made, and we worship Him under no similitude, for nothing is worthy in heaven above, nor earth beneath, to typify His glorious majesty."

The tribune listened to this description of the only true God with the ear of a man who hears surprising truths for the first time in his life, which he neither rejects altogether, nor receives. Like Felix, he contented himself with saying, "I will hear thee again on this matter;" adding, "Take the counsel of a Roman who wishes you well, resume your labours, which it shall be the care of Lucius Claudius to lighten, and look for better times." Thus saying, he placed the tools that lay near Adonijah in that daring Hebrew's hand, with the air of a man more accustomed to command than persuade.

Adonijah put them back with a gesture indicative of horror. "No, generous Roman, I cannot break a Commandment which has been hallowed by me from my youth; I have fought for my faith and my country, I will die as I have lived, true to the God of my forefathers."

"You have been a warrior, and death appears less dreadful to a soul like yours than slavery; but look around you, Hebrew, for it is no soldier's death that is preparing for you; to a lofty mind the shame of the scourge and the cross is bitterer even than the torturing pangs they inflict."

The lofty glow of enthusiasm faded from the flushed cheek of Adonijah, and the spirit that could have endured the sharpest pangs unmoved, shrank in horror from the idea of disgrace; but this weakness was momentary, the next instant he raised his majestic head and said, "Be it so, be mine that doom of shame, for even that will I endure for the honour of my God."

A tear glistened in the manly eye of Lucius Claudius, but he was evidently ashamed of the unwonted guest, for he hastily dashed away the intruding witness of his sympathy. "Why were you not a Roman, noble youth?" cried he; then after a pause, he added, "If I can procure your freedom, will you cease to be an enemy to Rome?"

"Not while your idol ensigns pollute the hills of Judea can I cease to be a foe to Rome. Released from slavery, I should again wage war with your people, and fight or die in defence of the land that gave me birth."

"Then you would disdain to serve me, though the bonds of friendship should soften those of slavery. Tell me why a haughty warrior could submit to chains at all? I had thrown myself upon my sword; but perhaps life then had charms."

"Suicide is held in abomination by us Jews," replied Adonijah, "for we know the spirit shall survive the grave; to be united again to the body at the resurrection, when every man shall be judged according to his works. The Gentiles, plunged in dark idolatry, are ignorant of this great truth, and therefore, shrinking from the trials of adversity, to avoid the lesser evil rush upon the greater. Life for me has no charms, though I endure its burden. Seest thou yonder tree, over which the storm hath lately passed? In its days of strength and beauty it was a fitting emblem of Adonijah, so now in its ruin you may behold a lively image of his desolation. Like him it still exists, though like him it will never renew its branches, or fulfil the glorious promise of its youth. Yet, generous Roman, I should not refuse to serve him who would save me from a shameful and accursed death."

The reverence and self-devotion of Adonijah for the Supreme Being was perfectly unintelligible to the tribune, whose mind, although it had shaken off the superstitious idolatry of his ancestors, was deeply infected with the atheistical philosophy of the times. Matter was the only divinity the young soldier acknowledged; for Lucius Claudius believed either "that there were no gods, or gods that cared not for mankind." The existence of the soul after death, and a future state of reward and punishment, had never been entertained by him for a moment. The heathen mythology indeed darkly inculcated these two great points of faith, but Lucius Claudius derided the heathen deities whose attributes rather gave him the idea of bad men exercising ill-gotten power than those which his reason ascribed to divinity. Murder, rapine, lust, and cruelty, that in life deserved, in his opinion, the scourge and cross, had been deified by flattering men after death. Yet, though refusing to pay any worship to the host of idols Rome with blind stupidity had gathered from all the countries she had conquered, Lucius Claudius had dedicated his fair young sister to the service of Vesta before his departure for the Parthian war, either from the idea prevalent among free-thinking men, even in our day, that women ought to be religious, or that he thought to secure Lucia Claudia from those snares which a corrupt city like Rome offered to her youth and beauty. Julius Claudius, the younger brother of the tribune, was esteemed too careless and dissolute a character to be intrusted with the guardianship of a lady of whose family every daughter had been chaste.

Lucius bribed the lictors to delay the execution of the refractory slave till he had spoken to the emperor, and departed to consult with his brother respecting the means to be taken with Nero, to avert the doom of a person whose constancy he deemed worthy even of the ancient Roman name.

CHAPTER IV.

"But thou, with spirit frail and light,
Wilt shine awhile and pass away,
As glowworms sparkle through the night,
But dare not stand the test of day."

BYRON.

The magnificent apartment into which the manly step of Lucius Claudius intruded was darkened with painted blinds, and yet further veiled from the beams of day by curtains of rose-coloured cloth. The furniture glittered with gold and gems, and the delicious odours of the costly bath preparing for the voluptuous Julius in the adjoining bathing-room filled the gorgeous dormitory. The sleeper was lying on a couch under a gilt canopy, wrapt in such deep repose that even the bold approach of his brother did not disturb his rest. It might be that the foot of the indignant Roman fell on a carpet of unrivalled brilliancy and softness, or that the last night's banquet had been prolonged to an unusual hour. With an air of contempt Lucius Claudius motioned to the attendants to depart, and hastily flinging back the curtains, threw open the lattice, and suffered the morning sun and breeze to play over the beautiful but effeminate features of the slumbering Roman. For a moment the rough soldier gazed upon his brother with an expression of scorn, which quickly yielded to tenderness as the remembrance of their boyish days came across his mind. How dear had that brother once been to him, before the corruption of Nero's court had blasted all the fair promise of his virtuous youth! and even now, degenerate as he was become, Lucius felt that he still loved him. So holy and unalterable are kindred ties and early associations to a virtuous mind.

While indulging these feelings of returning affection, Lucius suddenly remembered the occasion that brought him hither, and flinging his warlike hand upon the chords of a lute that lay near him, with some force he cried, "Wake, Sybarite, thy brother calls thee."

The broken chords jarred dissonantly on the musical ears of the sleeper, who awoke with a peevish exclamation of displeasure on his lips, and unclosing his languid eye, looked upon the fine though sun-burnt features of his brother. "Lucius in Corinth!" cried he, "or doth sleep deceive my senses?"

"Nay; can this be Julius? Now, by Jupiter, I should believe it was my fair sister Lucia, but that the lovely maid hath offered, doubtless, her spotless vows at Vesta's shrine some hours ago," rejoined Lucius with a scornful smile.

"Wouldst thou have found me at the plough, good brother, like Cincinnatus? But wherefore art thou here?—old Roman, Nero loves not men of thy metal."

"I landed with Corbulo from Parthia, at Cenchrea, yesterday," replied Lucius somewhat drily.

"Ha! Corbulo in Corinth! sure his better genius might have warned him back." Julius lowered his voice so that his brother did not catch the ominous conclusion of the sentence, and then resuming his ironical tone, he continued his raillery, "Corbulo still rises with the sun, as thou dost, old Roman. His master and mine have long forsworn such antiquated customs. We revel all the night, and then, fatigued with pleasure, slumber half the day. In Nero's court thou must forget the rustic manners thou hast learned in war."

"Never will I forego the honest plainness that becomes the Roman. Valiant Corbulo, still be my model; for in thee Rome yet may boast a citizen valiant as Scipio, frugal and wise as Cato."

"Beware of praising Corbulo; that name is out of date at court," returned Julius significantly.

"It should not seem so, for even Nero acknowledges the worth and valour of his brave lieutenant. 'Tis at Cæsar's own request he comes to Corinth to receive the thanks and praises of his degenerate master. Perhaps his great example may recall Nero's soul to virtue. But, Julius, while dwelling on the shining qualities of my valiant leader, I forget mine errand, which was to crave of Nero a Hebrew slave, condemned to labour on the Isthmian trench. This is his Sabbath, it should seem, which rather than profane, he braves the horrors of the cross and scourge. Despite his superstitious scruple, I like his spirit, and wish to place him near my person. I would crave the boon myself of Cæsar, only that the suns of the East have darkened my face, and that my long sojourn in camps hath lent a roughness to my mode of speech that might perchance ruin the cause I pleaded. Give me some counsel, Julius; thou art used to courts, and—to thy shame I speak it—art one of Nero's friends."

"First, then, my soldier brother, let me tell thee that a bath of asses' milk frequently used, will soon remove the sun-specks from thy face; singing to the lyre will dulcify thy voice; and but once repeat the imperial numbers in Nero Cæsar's ears and thy cause is won, and I may wish thee joy of an obedient servant, who will say, 'I cannot do thy bidding; it is my Sabbath, and I must keep it holy.' Practise what I tell thee, and the slave is thine."

"These arts are not for me," replied Lucius, laughing. "Go ask the boon for me, and for once I will overlook your courtier habits."

"Well, I will do your bidding with the emperor; but be warned, Lucius, and depart from Corinth by evening-tide or earlier. Even Rome is hardly safe; your villa at Tusculum is better suited to your rustic plainness. Such men as you are dangerous, and Nero might forget his friendship for me, and only recollect that we are brothers. Go, hasten to the trench; I soon will bring thee favourable tidings."

CHAPTER V.

"A mighty spirit is eclipsed—a power
Hath passed from day to darkness."

BYRON.

The horrors of conscience so lately endured by Nero were still visible on his ghastly brow, and his gloomy eye glared ferociously upon Julius Claudius as he entered his presence. The artful courtier's countenance, however, betrayed no alarm, and he commenced singing some verses of Nero's composition in a voice of exquisite sweetness. The imperial frown vanished, the stern features relaxed into smiles, and when Julius Claudius besought his pardon for joining such lofty

strains to notes so feeble, the illustrious bard caught up the words, which he sang in a voice destitute alike of strength or sweetness. Julius affected unbounded rapture, and Cæsar forgot his nocturnal agony in delighted vanity. The artful flatterer had but to name the favour his brother had requested, and it was instantly granted.

As soon as he had obtained the order for the transfer of Adonijah's person, he hastened to the Isthmian trench, where he had appointed to meet his brother.

Well pleased at the success of Julius, the tribune commanded the fetters to be stricken off the limbs of the captive, who, before he made the slightest acknowledgment to his benefactor, kneeled down, and in an audible voice returned thanks to that Almighty Being whose instrument only he considered Lucius Claudius to be.

"Truly thou art likely to possess the most grateful of all servants," remarked Julius, "and the most courteous too withal. He would make, in truth, a noble gladiator; for I never saw a form more perfect, or features more symmetrical: but for a household slave the fellow is useless. You had best send him to the circus."

"Thy jests are bitter," returned his brother, "but I forgive thee since the slave is mine."

"Set sail for Rome to-night, and I am paid for all my pains," replied Julius, with an expression of peculiar meaning on his face, as he bade Lucius Claudius farewell.

Near the gate of the city Lucius Claudius met Sabinus, the freedman of Corbulo, with consternation and grief painted on every feature. The tribune uttered the name of his revered commander. He remembered his brother's hints, and feared that Nero's jealousy might be awakened by the great leader's glory. Sabinus briefly told the tragic fate of a hero worthy of a happier destiny and better times.

For a moment Lucius Claudius stood transfixed with horror, and then drawing his sword, was rushing forward with the evident intention of seeking out the emperor and revenging his friend, when Sabinus, guessing his design, caught him by the arm, and drawing him aside, represented to him the madness as well as uselessness of such an attempt. Apparently his reasons were too solid to be resisted; for, motioning Adonijah to follow him to his lodging, he entered the city with an air of forced calmness that formed a strange contrast to his late paroxysm of resentment.

Sabinus employed himself in making preparations for the funeral rites of his friend and patron, while Lucius Claudius, with Roman fortitude, forbade his countenance to wear the guise of grief; but, following his effeminate brother's advice, engaged a passage in a merchant-ship for himself and his followers to Italy.

The shades of evening had long descended on the wooded heights of Mount Cithæron, whose rugged brow cast a deep lengthened shadow on the plain. The moon-beams slept upon the deep blue waves that washed the Isthmus, while the stately city, with its Acropolis rising like a majestic crown above it, looked, as it shone in the lunar ray, like an enchanted place called up by magic from the deep rather than the abode of man. The vivid flame that suddenly shot up along the shore, casting the figures moving solemnly around it in deep shadow, might have suggested the idea of magic rites. But the forms that paced about that blazing pile were engaged in no unholy practices. Theirs was the hallowed office of rendering the last honours to the remains of Corbulo, previously to their quitting these fatal shores.

Long, long did those faithful friends and followers gaze upon the features of the illustrious dead, before the hand of Lucius Claudius fired the pile. With wonder Adonijah contemplated the lofty lineaments and singularly grand figure of the murdered Roman of whose fame and virtue he had heard so much; for Domitius Corbulo soared in stature as much beyond all other Romans of his day, as he exceeded them in glory.

The manly eyes of Lucius Claudius overflowed with tears, but tears soon dried up by the hope of vengeance. Each of that mourning group, dipping their hands in the streaming blood of Corbulo, swore to revenge his death on Nero, or perish in the attempt. The pile was fired; and Lucius Claudius and Sabinus watched the dissolution of the form they loved, gathered up the ashes in an urn, and, deeply sorrowing, bore them on board the vessel hired to convey them to Italy.

Adonijah beheld the classic shores of Greece receding from his sight with the indifference of one to whom all countries could only offer variety in bondage. The apathy of slavery began to steal over him; and it was not till the emotions of the long-absent Romans grew apparent as they approached the coast of Italy, that the remembrance that he was an exile from his own country returned in all its bitterness to his soul.

With feelings of rapture, of patriotism, that even prevailed over their sorrow, the Romans stretched out their arms towards their fatherland,—tears filled their eyes as each imaged to himself the dear unforgotten ties of home. "Italy, dear Italy! once more I look upon thy sacred soil," cried Lucius Claudius. "Soon, soon shall I behold the seven-hilled city; shall see thee, dear vestal maid, sweet Lucia, sister of my heart. Sabinus, you have been at Rome since she attained to womanhood, for she was but a child when she took her virgin vows upon her. Tell me, how looked the maiden when you last beheld her?"

"Like a pure and spotless lily among the gaudier flowers of Rome," replied Sabinus. "Her vigils have somewhat stolen the rose of childhood from her polished cheek, but lovelier looks, methinks, that holy paleness than the brightest hues of health and gladness. The vestal priestess in her sacerdotal robes eclipses the proud dames of Rome in beauty as in virtue."

"She, she, Sabinus, and the mighty recollections of this fallen land, are all that make life bearable to me." The tender feelings of his heart filled the tribune's eyes; he turned to Adonijah, of whose observation he felt jealous, and said, as if in extenuation of his emotion, "Thou hast a country—perhaps a sister too."

"I had, but she has fallen a victim to the slaughtering sword of the Gentile," replied the Hebrew, "and gone down to the grave in the virgin beauty and glory of her youth. Yet art thou happier, Tamar, than thy miserable brother; for thy ashes are mingled with the sacred soil of thy country, whilst I am cast out to wither like an abominable branch in a strange and idolatrous land." Then,

relapsing into his own language, Adonijah poured forth a strain of wailing lamentation, with the spontaneous eloquence natural to the Eastern nations, unrestrained by the presence of Lucius Claudius and his followers.

The tribune respected his grief, nor did he intrude upon it by again addressing him; and the silence remained unbroken till the master of the vessel landed them at Baiæ, from whence they proceeded to Rome.

CHAPTER VI.

VOL. "Do you know this lady?"
COR. "The noble sister of Poplicola,
The moon of Rome: chaste as the icicle
That's curdled by the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Dian's temple: dear Valeria!"

The ancient city of Romulus had risen from her ashes like the fabled phœnix, with renewed youth and beauty. So greatly was her appearance altered, that Lucius Claudius knew not where to seek his ancestral home, as, regardless of the directions of his attendants and the proffered guidance of Sabinus, he wandered on bewildered and amazed amongst sumptuous edifices and streets of palaces. All indeed seemed new to his eyes and heart. It was no longer the city founded by the Latian twin, and rebuilt by Camillus, that he beheld, but the palace of Nero Cæsar, the master of the world. She looked indeed more like the metropolis of a mighty empire, though her real greatness had vanished with her ancient simplicity and virtue. Even in the midst of her grandeur and magnificence she was tottering to her fall, for her deep corruptions were gradually unbarring her gates to the Goths of future ages. All that was beautiful or venerable in her customs was gone "as a tale that is told," and the martial form of the military tribune, the worthy representative of her illustrious sons, seemed as out of keeping with the pomp that surrounded him on every side, as the appearance would have been of one of his own warlike ancestors. The dominion of Rome indeed was departing, for a highway for the promulgation of the gospel had been opened by her armies to all lands—for which end alone she had been given rule over the nations of the earth. Neither the heathen nor the Hebrew perceived this. To Lucius Claudius the name of Rome was synonymous of victory and power; to him she was sempiternal and invincible, while to Adonijah she appeared only a magnificent prison, within whose walls he was destined to waste away his life, the living grave indeed of hope. Still, the curiosity inherent in human nature made him suddenly ask the meaning of a sad procession they encountered near the Forum.

Sabinus replied, "Some Roman citizen is led to execution, attended by the lictors with their fasces. See, the axe before him denotes that it is no slave about to suffer, but a person entitled to the privileges of the free. A Christian, I should think, by his dress and bearing. If I mistake not, Nymphidius and Tigellinus, the præfects of the prætorian camp, are present, both low-born upstarts and favourites of Nero; the first, the son of Nymphidia by Caius Cæsar,^[7] as he would have it thought, and many think his person bears a strong resemblance to that frantic emperor: in cruelty he certainly can claim a kindred disposition. The victim is unknown to me, but his venerable face expresses goodness, now become a crime in Rome."

While Sabinus was yet speaking, a magnificent chariot approached, drawn by four white horses, containing a young female attired in white robes bordered with purple. She wore on her head a species of cap decorated with ribbons, but her brow was bound with a fillet, and the beauty of her complexion, which was very fair, accorded well with her snowy drapery and modest dignity of mien. A lictor preceded the chariot, which was followed by a number of female attendants, likewise dressed in white.

The sudden halt of the vehicle gave Adonijah time to observe the vestal virgin and her suite more closely, but he noticed that every one but him stepped respectfully back to permit the cortege to pass unimpeded.^[8]

The vestal and her train appeared by no means inclined to avail themselves of the passage thus opened for them by the reverential crowd; on the contrary, her attendant lictor seemed bent upon contesting some matter with those who were bearing the condemned Christian to death.

"By Jupiter, the deliverer!" cried Lucius in an animated tone: "the vestal virgin hath claimed her privilege in favour of the Christian. See, the lictors prepare to unbind him at her bidding."

"The prætorian præfects deny her claim," replied Sabinus, "and motion to the lictors to advance—who hesitate, yet lower their laureled fasces reverentially before the sacred maid. Hark! she speaks."

The import of the vestal's words might rather be guessed from her manner than understood by the ear, but it was evident that those to whom she made her claim were determined to disallow it.

"Forward, Sabinus! forward, friends and clients! forward, Roman citizens! let us defend the privileges of the vestal order." Thus saying, Lucius Claudius endeavoured to pierce through the crowd that now closely environed the chariot, yet could not at once accomplish his intention, though he was near enough to hear the conference between the contending parties.

"No; let her ply the distaff, watch the sacred fire, be borne in triumph through the streets, enjoy the homage with which old superstitious times and customs have invested her; but let her not presume to interfere with Cæsar's ministers in matters that concern the state," cried Tigellinus, addressing the listening crowd.

"Roman citizens," said the vestal, turning to the people, "I claim of you the privileges granted by holy Numa to our order. The laws of Rome grant to us the power of saving any criminal we may

chance to meet upon his way to execution." She blushed deeply as she made her dignified appeal, and her voice though sweet was tremulous.

"My sister's voice and person, if my ears and heart tell truly," remarked Lucius Claudius in an under tone to the freedman.

"It is indeed the Lady Lucia, the pride of Roman ladies, the glory of the vestals," returned Sabinus.

"We will protect thy privileges, Lucia Claudia," cried a thousand voices, which the deep tones of the delighted brother united with his followers to join.

"I swear," continued Tigellinus, "that the meeting was premeditated. She knew Helius occupied the tribunal, and came to snatch the atheist from justice."

"I call upon the name of Vesta to attest my truth," replied the vestal in a firmer tone than that in which she recently made her claim; "I plead the law of Numa."

"I abrogate it thus in Cæsar's name," cried Tigellinus, snatching an axe from the hand of a lictor, and upraising it to slay the Christian.

Lucius Claudius sprang forward to defend his sister's privilege, but before he gained the spot, the colleague of Tigellinus had caught his arm and preventing his design, bowed low before the vestal whose beauty had subdued his wish to slay, saying, "Forbear, Tigellinus, to infringe the privileges of the vestal order. Respect the goddess Vesta herself, in the person of the noblest and fairest of Roman ladies." Then fixing his bold eyes admiringly upon Lucia Claudia, he continued: "The man who can resist charms like thine were worse even than the churlish Greek who wounded Venus in his ireful mood. See, the sword of justice is edgeless before the pleading voice of beauty." He motioned to the lictors to unbind the Christian, still gazing ardently upon the fair countenance of Lucia Claudia.

From the licentious stare and free speech of Nymphidius the vestal virgin shrank abashed. Her modest eyes sank beneath those the præfect boldly turned upon her lovely face. She looked no longer like the high-minded heroine who daringly opposed bad men in power to plead her rights of mercy, but like a timid maid whom compassion had led to overcome the weakness and fearfulness of her sex, but who now blushed at the effect of her own temerity, ashamed of the triumph her virtue and charms had won. This beautiful shame, this touching timidity, the expression of wounded modesty in her bashful eyes, excited a new feeling in the bosom of the Hebrew slave, who no longer regarded the sister of Lucius as a heathen priestess, but as a woman the loveliest and purest of her sex.

Linus, the rescued Christian, turning to his preserver, thanked and blessed her; but with an air of offended dignity the vestal turned away. "Go," she said, "amend thy creed and live."

"So near the gate of heaven—and yet so distant!" rejoined the Christian. "Farewell, Lucia Claudia, and peace be with thee: we shall meet again."

Linus, the second bishop of Rome, though rescued from martyrdom by Lucia Claudia, was still, he saw, an object of scornful pity in her eyes who had prolonged his life for other labours, and perhaps other trials, by her instrumentality. He thanked God who had inclined an idolatrous priestess of Vesta to assert her privilege in his favour. Some words of saving truth he would have addressed to his benefactress, but that he saw this was no time or place to preach the gospel. She looked too obdurately upon the man she had lately preserved, to listen to the wonders of redeeming love. Gratitude, however, that very essence of true Christianity, forbade Linus to forget he owed his life to her. From that day he never ceased to pray that the bright effulgence of Divine light might dispel the darkness that overshadowed the soul of the young Lucia Claudia.

She, indeed, turned coldly away from him. This was not unnatural in the heathen priestess, but it pained the Christian who withdrew to the asylum the labyrinth of the Arenaria afforded, resolving to use every effort to convert the young vestal to the pure faith of Christ.

Lucius Claudius, full of fraternal pride, gazed fondly and admiringly upon his lovely sister. His eyes betrayed indeed more emotion than he cared the crowd should witness, yet he could not delay making himself known to her.

"Noble Roman maid, thou shouldst be my own beloved Lucia. The blue eyes, the fair complexion of the Claudian line, should denote my sister," cried he, endeavouring to force a passage to the chariot.

The vestal looked upon him intently, but her memory retained no trace of her elder brother's person.

"'Tis Lucius Claudius, 'tis thy brother, returned from Parthia, to behold in thee, dear maid, all that fraternal love could hope to see," said Lucius, advancing to greet his sister.

Lucia again raised her eyes to his face, but with a look of glad surprise, as with speechless rapture she motioned to him to ascend the chariot, and then, throwing herself upon his neck, wept with all the fond familiarity of long-remembered affection. She conducted her brother to his home in a sort of triumph, where she took leave of him, and returned to Mount Palatine where she dwelt.

Adonijah could not efface from his mind the image of the vestal virgin; could it be that he, the strictest of the strict Pharisees, should behold with interest and tenderness this idolatrous priestess who had looked upon the stately maids of Judah with coldness. If this were love, he knew it to be forbidden by the law, and therefore sinful as it was hopeless. He tried to exclude from his mental vision the form of Lucia Claudia, but in vain; and when he slept, he slept to dream of her sweet image.

Nor was it only in the breast of the Hebrew slave that the beauty and virtue of Lucia Claudia had kindled an unextinguishable flame. Nymphidius, that bold bad man, was no less captivated with her charms and spirit. He determined to win her for his bride, in defiance alike of the sanctity of her profession or her patrician birth. To a mind so lawless what was custom? to one so aspiring what was the nobility of the beloved object but an additional motive for the alliance? His grasping hand, already struggling for the imperial sceptre of the Cæsars, would not hesitate to tear from its seclusion "this white and virgin rose," whose purity had inspired that passion in his bosom the

corrupt and dissipated ladies of the court had failed to kindle. Bad as he was, he felt the power, the majesty of virtue, and did homage to it in the person of the priestess of Vesta, and even the empire of the world without her to share its honours appeared too poor to satisfy the wild ambition of the reputed son of Caligula.

[7] Caligula.

[8] See Appendix, [Note V.](#)

CHAPTER VII.

“No gods, or gods that care not for mankind.”

CLAUDIAN.

“There surely is some guiding Power
That rightly suffers wrong,
Gives vice to bloom its little hour,
But virtue late and long.”

CAMOENS.

Adonijah, through the courteous kindness of his preserver, viewed the sumptuous buildings and edifices of Rome. There was much in the survey to delight and interest a stranger,—one, too, who was familiar with the historic records of this celebrated city. Nothing, however, surprised the Hebrew, who was born under the light of revelation, so much as the number and variety of the idols of Rome. He justly considered this apostasy from that natural religion which is written in the heart of every man, as the fruitful source of all the corruption and infamy into which the inhabitants of the metropolis of the world were sunk. To be vile was, in reality, to claim an affinity in nature to the very gods the people worshipped, who appeared to him to be demons or bad men, deified by fools and knaves, though some attempt had been made to improve the morals, and inspire the soul with virtue; for the Romans had raised altars to Concord, Justice, Fortitude, and Filial Piety.

In the writings of the philosophers of the period Adonijah vainly sought for any allusion to the patriarchal religion which had existed before the giving of the Law to his own people, and which must once have subsisted among the Gentile nations. They appeared to have discovered a First Cause, to whom they paid neither reverence nor worship. His own religion he found regarded with contempt, its rites derided, and adherence to its customs styled “a sullen hatred of all mankind;” the bringing forth of his people from the land of Egypt, disguised and vilified by the most absurd fables, by men who possessed great wisdom in treating all other matters, though in this respect they were indeed fools. To believe in the existence of a God, and yet to assert that He cares nothing for the creatures He has made, is to liken him to a cruel father who abandons a child in infancy, leaving him to find his way in the wilderness of that world through which he is destined to pass, without a precept and without a guide. “No gods, or gods that care not for mankind,” was the real creed of many at that period, who, according to the words of St. Paul, “professing themselves to be wise, became fools.”

A synagogue beyond the Tiber afforded Adonijah the privilege of worshipping after the manner of his fathers. The seven-branched candlestick used by the Jewish congregation has been discovered in modern times on the spot where once it stood. Adonijah, who had learned to hate the Christians before he came to Rome, found his detestation strengthened by his fellow-worshippers. The persecution in the twelfth year of Nero had banished the converts to the new faith to the dark recesses of the Arenaria, so that though the sect was known to exist in Rome it was maintained in the greatest privacy.

As many Roman proselytes had been made in Judea, before the commencement of the war, to the Jewish religion, Adonijah did not despair of making a convert of his patron, for whom he had conceived a great affection. Still, in defiance of his own zeal for religion, and the deep interest he took in the deadly struggle in which his country was then engaged, he could not forbear watching for the chariot of the vestal Lucia, or lingering round the temple of Vesta to catch a glimpse of her figure. As no image was worshipped in that fane, he hoped that, if he could win the brother from his unsettled notions, the sister, who appeared to worship an abstract idea, might be gained over to the true faith. Thus religion, wherever it exists in a revealed form, is a benevolent principle, leading its votaries to diffuse its blessings as widely as possible, but still selecting the dear ties of friendship and kindred as its first objects.

Although secretly planning the destruction of Nero and the freedom of his country, Lucius Claudius took much pleasure in the society of Adonijah. Frank and open in his temper, he boldly avowed his contempt for his country’s gods; and, though he by no means seemed inclined to treat the God of Adonijah with more veneration when speaking of Him, he felt curious respecting a religion whose followers were distinguished from all people on the face of the earth, by the peculiarity of their laws and worship. Leaning upon the arm of Adonijah as they walked together in the delightful gardens of his villa at Tivoli, he suddenly asked the Hebrew “what evidence he could bring of the actual existence of the God he worshipped.”

Adonijah naturally quoted those sacred books which contain the earliest revelations of God to man.

The heathen soldier did not appear to think the evidence he deduced conclusive, for he demanded a proof that should be at once apparent to his outward senses and convincing to his

understanding.

"Such a demonstration I am prepared to give," replied the Jew. "'Behold, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge: there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.' It is the hand of Omnipotence that hath placed these lights in the firmament, and by them still claims the worship due to the Creator from man."

Lucius looked up at the glorious starry dome of heaven, and then down on the enthusiastic countenance of the slave, and smiled sceptically. "Chance or accident has placed these lights on high, Adonijah, which you superstitiously ascribe to the hand of an unknown God. This world and all things it contains, whether animate or inanimate, owes its existence to a fortuitous union of atoms, mysteriously attracted towards each other by some incomprehensible influence."

"What gave rise to the atoms of which thou sayest all things were compounded, before they arranged themselves into form or being?" demanded the slave. "Even your belief in matter admits, of necessity, a First Cause, which you miscall Fate, Chance, Accident, but that the Hebrews acknowledge as the creative power of God. All that we see was the work of that Almighty Being whom we Hebrews adore under the name of Jehovah; worshipping Him by faith, not profaning His glory with likening Him to anything in heaven or earth, but serving Him according to the revelation He has made of Himself from the beginning of time; believing that the same Wisdom that called all things into being supports and governs them, and will continue to do so for ever."

"I am ready to allow that you have reason on your side with respect to the existence of a First Cause, which many of the philosophers of Greece, with Seneca in our own day, have acknowledged; but then if He really cares for the creatures He has made, why is a Nero suffered to prosper while the virtuous and good are slain or sent into exile? What, then, is the use of worshipping a Being who cares nothing for the creatures He has made?"

Adonijah started back at the boldness of this speech, with gestures indicative of horror. "Lucius Claudius," replied he, "in this world we often see the good suffer and the bad prosper, but be assured that God will punish the wicked and recompense the just at that day of final account, when the dead shall be raised, and the Judge, seated in the valley of Jehoshaphat, shall call every man to an account for his works done in the flesh."

"The dead raised!" exclaimed the Roman; "you speak enigmas, fables. What Power, Adonijah, can unite the body and soul together again, and form man anew from his ashes?"

"The Power that first united them, 'who formed man originally from the dust of the ground, breathing into him the breath of life, till man became a living soul.' Thinkest thou, Lucius, that the spirit of the murdered Corbulo perished with his body? or, imbibing the cold, joyless notions of the Greek mythology, dost thou imagine it wandering round its ashes, seeking in vain its ancient prison? No, Roman, no; it hath gone to its 'appointed place, again to be united to the flesh, and to plead against the murderer at the judgment-seat of God.' Such is the doctrine of the Pharisees respecting the resurrection, though even among the Jews an impious sect hath arisen, holding notions as foolish as the ignorant Gentiles themselves. The sacred Scriptures can fully inform you respecting the laws and worship of the true God, and these oracles are in the hands of the Jews, and our Scribes can fully make them known to you."

The belief in the immortality of the soul never appears more reasonable than when we lament the death of a friend. Though new to Lucius Claudius, it now appeared strange even to himself that he had never considered its possibility before. The existence of a Supreme Being, and his superintending Providence and future judgment, made a deep impression upon his mind, although these impressions did not quite amount to absolute conviction. He expressed willingness to become acquainted with what he called the Jewish records, and Adonijah indulged the hope that this upright Roman would eventually become a proselyte of justice and a believer in the one true God.

He obtained from the rulers of the synagogue the rolls containing the sacred oracles, and commenced reading and explaining them to his patron. The beauty, the sublimity of the inspired truths thus made known to the Gentile dispelled the darkness of ignorance from his mind. The great, the vital doctrine of a Messiah, presented to his view as a point of faith by the slave so strangely become his teacher, bore little resemblance to the "Man of sorrows," whose atonement for sin was pointed out in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and whom the Jewish nation had obstinately rejected. They interpreted His kingdom as a temporal kingdom, and, catching at the idea so prevalent at that time that the ruler of the world was to arise out of Judea, expected their Messiah presently to appear among his people, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. Of the real end of the Messiah's coming, "to put away sin," Adonijah was as ignorant as his Gentile convert, who would thankfully have embraced the sublime doctrine the Pharisee rejected, if it had been made known to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Whom in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led
His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah."

MILTON.

The anxious solicitude of affection made Lucius Claudius desirous of imparting his better knowledge to his sister, though he knew her to be not only devoted, but bigoted, to the superstition to which, from motives of prudence, he had dedicated her in infancy. The worship of Vesta was

pure, and far better calculated to interest an enthusiastic mind like Lucia's than the absurdities then prevalent at Rome. The watching the sacred flame, upon the preservation of which the existence of the state was believed to depend, the chastity of its votaries, and above all, the deep mysteries which the faith itself contained, either no longer apparent to the priestesses themselves, or lost in extreme antiquity, rendered this religion very holy in Lucia Claudia's eyes. The family of the Claudii already boasted two illustrious vestals,—the Claudia whose chastity the goddess herself had deigned to vindicate, and her whose filial piety had insured her father's triumph;—and Lucia Claudia, the third vestal of her line, sustained the same lofty reputation, and enjoyed the same privileges, as her predecessors had done. The universal honours paid her, the power she sometimes exerted in favour of the unhappy, the veneration of the people, endeared a faith hallowed by the early recollections and prejudices of infancy. The homage she received touched a soul deeply alive to the love of glory, while Cossutia, the chief priestess of Vesta, lavished upon this youngest and fairest of the sisterhood those affections whose natural current had been chilled in youth. To convince Lucia Claudia that all her devotion was misplaced, and her worshipped goddess a chimera, seemed no easy task even to a man of Lucius's resolute temper. Nevertheless, he resolved to undertake it. To this end he solicited the sovereign pontiff to permit his sister to visit him at his villa in Tivoli. According to the ancient regulation, this permission could neither have been asked nor granted; but the old strictness was greatly relaxed, and Lucia, attended by her virgin train of slaves, and accompanied by Cornelia, her nurse, arrived soon after at her brother's villa.

If the first impression made by the fair heathen priestess had inspired Adonijah with a passion he had never felt for his own more enlightened countrywomen, her gentleness and domestic qualities deepened it into the most devoted love. It is in her own home that woman is best known, because within that little circle her tenderest affections expand, and, like the sunbeams, gladden and bless all within their influence. Sovereign lady of the household, no haughty gesture nor harsh language ever enforced her authority, and the meanest slave revered in her a benefactress. To their complaints she lent an indulgent ear, nor did the high-born lady think it any degradation in their sickness to perform those little offices which none but female charity yields, or knows how to apply. Few of the numerous domestics composing a Roman household at that period were free; for it was considered degrading for a citizen to serve in a menial capacity. All were slaves—either captives taken in war, or the children and descendants of such unfortunate persons. These filled various offices according to their several abilities, from the tillers of the ground to the amanuensis, or even the tutor of the heir. Among them might be found natives of polished Greece, of Africa, Parthia, Armenia, Gaul, Germany, and Britain, disguised in the same servile habit, yet distinguished by the characteristics of national complexion, feature, and language. Some of these vast establishments were so ill provided with the necessaries of life, that the miserable creatures composing them were forced to obtain food by plunder. Lawless troops of banditti were thus gradually organized to destroy the state whose victims they had been, and thus the very victories of Rome were promoting her own ruin. Most Roman gentlemen enfranchised one or two favourite bondmen, who were called freed-men upon assuming the cap of liberty. Adonijah, although a slave, was but a slave in name. He wore the costume peculiar to his nation. The phylacteries, or portions of the law contained in the fillet or frontlet between the eyes, were wide and richly ornamented with gold, as were those appended to the sleeves, while the broad blue fringes commanded to be worn on the garments of the Israelite were deeper than ordinary, denoting the wearer to be a Pharisee, and claiming for him the reputation of that outward holiness his sect arrogantly claimed for themselves, to the exclusion of all who differed from them in opinion.

The singularly noble person of the Hebrew, the curious fashion of his garments, and the deference with which her brother treated him, excited Lucia Claudia's curiosity. She asked Lucius "who this stranger was whom he honoured with his friendship." The account he gave of his first interview with Adonijah interested her greatly; the patriotism of the slave appeared to her worthy of a better country; and reverencing his character, and pitying his misfortunes, she softened her voice when addressing him, and permitted her mild eyes to express the compassionate interest she felt for his condition. Indeed she even listened without condemnation to the account Lucius gave of his singular creed, though too much devoted to her own superstition to suffer at that moment her reliance on its truth to be shaken; nor did she suspect that her brother was a secret proselyte to a religion so mysterious, and to her present bounded views so inexplicable.

While gazing on the beautiful countenance of Lucia, or listening to the touching sweetness of her accents, Adonijah forgot that she was a heathen; even the sacerdotal robes with which superstition had invested her appeared only a dress admirably calculated to set off the symmetry of her form. The deep melancholy into which captivity and slavery had plunged him yielded to the new feelings that now filled his heart, and, giving way to the sweet influence of virtuous love, he remembered not that the law he revered forbade him to cherish such a sentiment for the unbelieving daughter of the stranger, whom he preferred to the maidens of his own people. A slight incident dispelled the illusion, and warned the Hebrew that the creature he doted upon was indeed a blind and bigoted idolatress.

Within the bounds of the garden stood a ruined fane, whose orbicular form showed it had been formerly dedicated to the worship of Vesta; but though time had exerted its power, and levelled many of its pillars to their base, nature, with gentler hand, had wreathed them round with ivy, and bade fair flowers spring up to veil the work of her destroying foe. Among these broken columns, now garlanded with blossoms, and breathing out perfume to the passing gale, Adonijah had found a retreat from the heat of day and bustle of the household, and here retired from man, bent his knee before his God, or perused those wondrous records of His power and love preserved in the Scriptures. Thither at noon, one day, he withdrew to offer up his prayers, but stepped aside when about to enter the roofless oratory, on perceiving it to be already occupied by the priestess of Vesta. She was kneeling with her face towards the meridian sun, though her eyes were cast upon the ground, seemingly absorbed in deep meditation. Sometimes, as if unconsciously, some low sweet

words escaped from her lips, but though Adonijah held in his breath, that he might not lose a word, the sound alone reached his ears. Suddenly she held up a triangular instrument towards the orb of day, and directed the solar ray towards a vessel of a curious form, containing combustibles. As the flame descended into the receiver, the devotion of the vestal soared into enthusiasm. A brighter glow suffused her fair cheek, and she bent over the heaven-kindled fire with rapturous adoration that seemed to absorb her whole being.

The long white stola, purple-bordered mantle, and snowy head-dress, accorded well with Lucia Claudia's beauty, which was at once sublime and touching in its character. Nothing could be more graceful than her attitude, or more holy than the expression of her face. It was piety that lighted up every perfect feature—piety which, though mistaken in its object, still looked beautiful in her, while the red parted lip seemed rather formed to pour forth the praises of the living God, than to offer up sinful prayers to the element He had created.

Adonijah beheld these impious rites with unfeigned horror; he no longer saw in the person of Lucia Claudia the beautiful and beloved object of his secret affections, but an idolatrous heathen priestess, practising abhorrent ceremonies, offering up unholy worship in the very front of day. Reckless alike of consequences or the difference fortune had placed between them, and only jealous of the honour of the living God, Adonijah rushed forward, dashed the vessel over, and scattered the fire upon the ground, exclaiming in a terrible tone, "Idolatress, what are you doing? How dare you offer to the creature that worship which is due to the Creator alone?"

The stern voice, the act of violence, dispelled the trance of devotion into which the priestess of Vesta had fallen. All the proud blood of her proud line seemed to mantle in her face and flash from her eyes as she sprang up, and, confronting the intruder, turned upon him a look in which horror, indignation, and amazement were all blended, crying, as she rent her garments, "Sacriligious stranger, your death alone can atone this impious deed! The gods, the gods, will punish your impiety!"

"Maiden, I invoke their fury, open my bosom to the wrath of Heaven, but lo! their thunders sleep. Thy goddess does not deign to vindicate her cause. She cannot, Lucia, for she has no being. The God I worship, Lucia Claudia, is a spirit immortal and invisible, seen with the eye of faith alone, whose throne is in the highest heaven. The fire thou worshippest is but an element formed by Him for the service of man, of whom He is the great Creator. The bright sun himself we call by a name signifying a servant."

"The laws will do me justice, insulting Hebrew!" replied the vestal, not deigning to attend to his speech.

"Denounce me, if you will; yet hear me, Lucia Claudia, before you give me up to certain death."

"Release me, slave! Even to grasp my robes is sacrilege. Pursue your cold inexplicable faith, but leave me to follow mine in peace."

"I cannot leave you, Lucia Claudia, in darkness and idolatry to provoke the anger of the living God, for I love you too well to overlook your sin; yes, daughter of this strange heathen land, I love you, and would save your soul from ruin." He sank at her feet, still grasping her garments, while he regarded her with eyes full of grief and hopeless passion.

"Release me, Adonijah!" repeated the vestal, but in a milder tone, and the Hebrew perceived that she trembled. "Go, Adonijah; I wish not your death. Strange to the customs of this land, you know not the penalty you have incurred in daring to lift your eyes to a vestal virgin."

"I know it, Lucia Claudia, but I fear not to die; death may have terrors for the unbeliever, may be dreaded by the happy, but to the Hebrew captive it will only open a higher, nobler existence. Idolatress, my heart bleeds for you; I see you gentle, fair, and good, a creature formed for truth, yet misleading men to falsehood, the victim of a fraud, alike deceiving and deceived. Why were you not a daughter of my people? then you had worshipped the great Jehovah, nor lent yourself unto a lie. Then it had been no crime to love you; now it is deadly sin."

The priestess made no reply; she renewed her efforts to escape, and Adonijah did not attempt to detain her. Silently he watched the fluttering of her white garments as if every sense were locked up in sight, and when her form was no longer visible, caught up the triangular instrument she had dropped in her hasty retreat and put it into his bosom, though he really believed it to be a magical instrument; so inconsistent often is the conduct of a lover.

Lucia Claudia had not listened to the rash declaration of Adonijah without emotion. No one had hitherto, besides Nymphidius, dared to cast even a look of admiration upon her, much less presumed to speak to her of love. The austerity of her carriage, her virtue, and consecration to virginity, had deterred the boldest from seeking to inspire her with affection. In spite of herself, the presumption of Adonijah did not give birth to the anger she felt it ought. He was unhappy, and he loved her; and she recalled his words and looks, and found a latent feeling of pity and intense interest lurking in her bosom for the daring slave. She no sooner discovered her danger than she resolved to fly from it, and, summoning her attendants, quitted the villa for Rome that very day, without even venturing to bid her brother farewell, lest his penetrating eye should discover the cause of her inquietude.

CHAPTER IX.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O death."

HEMANS.

During the absence of the emperor Rome groaned under more frightful tyranny even than his own. The low-born upstarts to whom he had resigned the reins of government, Helius, Polycletus, Nymphidius, and Tigellinus, were more wicked, more odious than himself. The citizens could better brook the despotism of the descendant of the Cæsars than the rapacity and insolence of Helius and his colleagues, who sprang from the very dregs of the people. Their dissatisfaction became alarming, and Helius set sail for Greece to persuade Nero to return to Rome. That vain prince was, however, in no haste to quit the theatre of his follies: the Greeks, in his eyes, were better judges of his merits, and appeared to value his talents more, than his Roman subjects. Scarcely could Helius make him sensible of the danger of the empire, and then he contented himself with writing letters to the Senate, of which Julius Claudius was the bearer, still delaying from day to day the unwelcome one of his return.

Some hints that Lucius Claudius was engaged in a secret conspiracy against the life and government of Nero were thrown out to Julius by Nymphidius, who did not wish the brother of the woman he loved to become a victim to Nero's proscriptions, because the jealousy of that prince was seldom satisfied with one victim, and not only Lucia Claudia, but himself, if allied to her, might fall with her family. Julius, much alarmed, hastened to his brother's house to reason with him respecting the imprudence of his conduct. The interview was short and unfriendly, and when they parted the slaves caught some expressions of contempt on the part of Lucius, and noticed that Julius appeared displeased and agitated.

As soon as Julius quitted his brother's presence he hastened to Nymphidius, and related the ill-success that had attended his remonstrances; and then that bold bad man unfolded a dark plan that involved the destruction of Lucius Claudius. The advantages to be gained by the death of his brother were temptations too mighty to be resisted by a corrupt mind like that of Julius. Hitherto he had possessed the princely fortune, the villas, and farms of Lucius, as if they had been his own. His extravagance had nearly dissipated his own inheritance, as well as the portion of Antonia, his wife, whom he had married for her riches, and not for love. He dreaded, too, that Nero's jealousy would not spare him if his brother's conspiracy should be discovered, and agreed finally to the wicked plot Nymphidius proposed. The præfect demanded the hand of his vestal sister as his reward, whose vows he affirmed he would find means to annul; to which Julius readily assented. The infamous Locusta was to provide a poison, whose slow operation would assume the appearance of natural disease, and not only relieve Julius from his fears, but make him the wealthiest subject in Rome.

The victim of this dark conspiracy had just despatched Sabinus into Gaul, to Julius Vindex, who was then about to fling off the yoke of Nero, and heroically appear as the champion of virtue and independence, and, like too many other patriots, fall a martyr to the cause of liberty. Lucius hoped soon to call upon the Senate and people to aid the virtuous Gaul, and punish the monster of whom the whole world was weary. In the midst of his brightest hopes, and in the very beginning of a career whose glory might yet have eclipsed that which shed an imperishable light round the heads of his ancestors, he suddenly felt a mortal malady stealing upon him. So insidious were its approaches, that he never suspected its nature, nor even when the hour of death drew nigh imagined that he owed his destruction to the avarice of a brother. One person alone suspected poison, and that was Tigranes, a Parthian slave, who loved Lucius Claudius, and was possessed of some skill in medicine. This man had been absent during the first days of his master's illness, and he had the hardihood to express his opinion to Julius himself. "In that case the whole household shall be put to the torture, yourself among the rest," remarked the murderer coldly; hastening himself to his dying brother to acquaint him of the suspicion, and the posthumous revenge he meditated.

"I have injured no one," was the magnanimous reply of the dying Roman; "and even if the fact be as you suspect, I will never punish the innocent with the guilty: God will avenge my death." He then dictated his last will, and ordered his sister to be sent for, to receive his farewell.

About to enter "the valley and shadow of death," in the prime of manhood and glory of his strength, the new-born rays of revelation brightened the last hours of him who had believed in God, and forsaken the errors and darkness of atheism; but, oh, how gladly would he even now have received that better light, that "day-spring from on high," which, in the incarnation of a Saviour, gave light unto the Gentiles! But as it was, even the knowledge of the immortality of the soul, and its future reunion with the body, cheered the last hours of the proselyte to Judaism. Drawing his weeping sister to his bosom, and directing her attention to Adonijah, he said, "The God of Adonijah is my God,"—and more he would have added, but his words were inaudible, and the commencement of the sentence alone met her ear. He expired, leaving it incomplete, and her not only inconsolable, but in an agony of despair. None of those hopes that had softened the pains of the dying Lucius Claudius consoled his sister; she wept as one who could not be comforted. All was dark and cheerless in her mind as the grave; for her only friend appeared lost to her for ever. Adonijah mourned his benefactor with manly sorrow, not with hopeless grief, and he longed to claim a brother's privilege in the maid, and to tell her that her Lucius would not remain the prisoner of the grave for ever. He saw her borne from the chamber of death in a state of insensibility, cold and motionless as him she mourned, and, turning himself to the dead, wept like a woman.

The obsequies of Lucius Claudius were performed with unwonted magnificence; the usual games were continued many days; and his murderer, with every appearance of fraternal love, pronounced the funeral oration, and placed the urn containing the ashes of the virtuous Roman in the mausoleum of the Claudii, which distinguished family enjoyed the privilege of burial within the walls of the city.

By his last will Lucius Claudius provided for the future emancipation of Adonijah, which was to take place at the conclusion of the Jewish war. He was in the interim to be exonerated from all servile labour, as he had been during his master's life. Nor when restored to freedom was he to depart without receiving a sum adequate to his future wants. The testator gave his large estates to his brother and sister, assigning to the former the larger portion, as the head of his house. Nor did

he forget the Roman people, nor his own slaves. The name of the emperor did not appear in the instrument, but the justice and generosity of the deceased Roman was displayed even in his last testament.

CHAPTER X.

“Child of heaven, by me restored,
Love thy Saviour, serve thy Lord;
Sealed with that mysterious name,
Bear thy cross, and scorn the shame.”

BOWDLER.

The return of the emperor did not allay the discontent of the public. His frivolous pursuits, his ridiculous triumphal entry, disgusted all; and, far from curbing by his own authority the rapacity of his favourites, his presence gave the signal for renewing those crimes which had been perpetrated under his name during his absence. Cruelty seemed born of luxury; whatever could enervate the soul or corrupt the heart being united with the most unfeeling barbarity. Avarice and prodigality, forgetting their ancient opposition, appeared to sway the conduct of Nero and his satellites, whose rapacious gains were dissipated in voluptuous feasts and sumptuous shows. Till the death of his revered patron, Adonijah had never been present at any public spectacle or private entertainment; for Lucius, plain and simple in his manners, charged all the degeneracy of Rome upon the innovations of luxury: but Julius was fond of grandeur, and chose to be attended in public by the Hebrew, whose commanding stature and majestic features greatly added to the splendour of his retinue. In these scenes of riot and intemperance, Adonijah again beheld the master of the world. The laurelled brow, the sceptered hand, the smile, nay, even his wild participation in the unhallowed revelries in which he delighted, could not disguise Nero Cæsar from the eye of the slave who had witnessed his agonies of remorse at Corinth. To him the smile appeared mockery, and the mirth unreal; for in its very tones he seemed to hear the frantic cry with which he had fled from the spectral train his conscience had called up. He marked the guilty glare that shrank affrighted from every shadowy nook, as if he feared to see his mother rise armed with the scorpion-whip with which his agonized remorse had armed her hand; and in the gloomy, joyless eye, the lurking fear that saw the dagger in every hand, the poison lurking in every bowl, he recognised the imperial wretch who envied even laborious slavery its slumbers.

Within the circles of the great and gay, Adonijah sometimes saw the vestal priestesses, whose order Nero had invested with new privileges. Among them the ardent lover marked the object of his secret passion, and perceived by her pale cheek and languid eye how heavily her brother's death pressed upon her heart. According to the strict rules of her profession, she wore no mourning, nor was allowed the seclusion to which other Roman ladies were confined for many months after such bereavement. Her abstracted manner and downcast look were out of keeping with the scenes of festivity in which she mingled. Sometimes indeed a light word or bold look from those around her flushed her fair face with the crimson glow of wounded modesty, and her eyes sparkled till tears of shame dimmed them, and again she looked like a sculptured personification of purity and sorrow. The deep sympathy of Adonijah, although unexpressed by words or manner, was conveyed by looks whose language needed no other eloquence. She felt that one being among the heartless throng regarded her with interest, with compassion, and with love. From the undisguised admiration of Nymphidius she shrank back with unrestrained aversion, which only served to inflame his passion. He had hoped to corrupt her mind by the tainted atmosphere in which his influence with the emperor compelled her to move, but Lucia remained unchanged in manner, as pure as within the secluded temple of her goddess, and he prized her virtue beyond her beauty.

Much as she abhorred the mandates that compelled her attendance on those public occasions, even the service of the temple had become distasteful to the young priestess. Strange doubts had arisen in her mind, and those words of Adonijah often recurred to her remembrance, which affirmed her worshipped goddess to be a wild chimera, an empty name. Then came those yearnings after immortality, those conjectures respecting a future state, which those who lose their dearest kindred ties feel when bereaved of them, if they never felt them before. Nature, with fond fidelity clinging to the ashes of the dead, forbade her to think her Lucius lost to her for ever; but reason, quenched in the night of pagan darkness, presented no hope to the mourner's view. She wept in despair, and, turning wearied and dispirited from the cheerless gloom with which polytheism invested the grave, recollected that her beloved Lucius had affirmed himself to be a worshipper of the God of Adonijah with his latest breath. To him she resolved to apply for information, and, suddenly overstepping the bounds of prudence, appointed a meeting with him at the house of her nurse.

Cornelia, the person who stood in this endeared relation to the priestess, was a freedwoman of Grecian descent and some learning, and the doubts of her foster-child had been frequently discussed with her before she agreed to become her assistant in this difficult affair. It was a question in which her inquiring mind became anxiously interested, while her prudent foresight took every necessary precaution to preserve the reputation of her beloved charge from suspicion, and her life from danger.

Adonijah came; his auditors were attentive and willing; the evidence he brought appeared to their unsophisticated minds conclusive. The creation of man, his fall, the calling of Abraham, the patriarchal history, the law, the divine voice of prophecy, were received with wonder, adoration, and faith. To these sublime truths the heathen mythology did indeed appear “idle tales.” He spake

of a future state of existence, and Lucia seized the idea with all the enthusiasm that formed so striking a part of her character. She wept still for Lucius, but holy hope, like the rainbow, glistened through her tears.

While thus employed in the daily instruction of his proselyte, Adonijah forgot the sorrows of captivity, of exile, of loss of kindred, as he listened to her sweet voice, or gazed upon her fair face now glowing with the brilliant tints of health, happiness, and love. Together they prayed—together discoursed on the chosen people of God; while his disciple hung entranced over the wondrous record of Israel's triumphs and Israel's woes, now weeping with the captivity of Judah, now exulting with the return of the exiles to the promised land, till the scholar and preceptor seemed to have one heart, one faith, one soul.

As soon as the light of revelation dawned upon the vestal's mind, she felt she dared not continue her daily ministrations at the altar of a pagan deity. To avow her faith was to doom her beloved preceptor and herself to a cruel death, but even death she preferred to taking her sacerdotal part in the approaching festival of Vesta.

The struggle of her soul between her duty to God and regard to her reputation, by affecting her health, allowed her an opportunity of returning to her brother's house till her recovery. An old law in such cases gave the sick vestal a change of abode, and the privilege of choosing three of the noblest matrons in Rome for her nurses. Lucia Claudia named her sister-in-law, and thus gained the asylum she required. Some weeks had elapsed since she had watched the sacred fire, upon the preservation of which the Roman people believed that of their state to depend. The vestal priestesses might quit their profession after thirty years' attendance in the temple, and marry; but as Lucia Claudia was still in the flower of her youth, many years must elapse before she could be free to leave the altar.

She had been dedicated at seven years to Vesta by her eldest brother, at an age when she was an irresponsible agent, and had no means of opposing his will. Her father was dead, but Lucius Claudius as his representative could legally exercise his absolute rights over his child. She determined to consult Julius upon the possibility of her leaving her profession, since to remain in the Vestal College was incompatible with the faith she had embraced.

In Rome every young man of rank was a pleader, and Julius possessed the eloquence of the Claudian family, united to a competent knowledge of law, and was well qualified to advise his sister on a point so delicate and intricate as that on which she ventured to consult him, though not without dreading his sarcastic censure.

Julius Claudius neither reprov'd nor annoyed her; he was delighted at her resolution, and praised her courage. He had always regretted a measure that had devoted to joyless celibacy a beautiful and high-born lady, who might, but for that bar, have been the consort of an emperor. He entreated Lucia Claudia to intrust her cause to him, promising her a complete and honourable release from her vows, as the reward of her confidence in his friendship and talents.

Julius Claudius, who intended to give his sister in marriage to the favourite minister of Nero, Nymphidius Sabinus, of whose passion he was the sole confidant, was prepared to exert his eloquence and legal skill in order to render Lucia an agent in his own aggrandizement. He wished to be Curule Ædile, and resolved to purchase that office by the influence of Nymphidius with Nero: Lucia's hand was to be his bribe to the enamoured prætorian præfect. From Nero he expected no opposition; the emperor had no veneration for Vesta, whose priestess Rubria he had seduced. He was Pontifex Maximus too, and if he did not prosecute Lucia Claudia, no other person could arraign the ex-vestal. Nymphidius insured his concurrence, and Julius undertook his sister's cause as soon as he knew that the imperial High Priest of Jupiter, the legal guardian of the Vestal College, would sanction the proceeding with his sacerdotal authority. Julius Claudius alleged two points against the legality of his sister's admission into the feminine priesthood of which she had been such a distinguished member; one of which was based on truth, the other on deliberate falsehood. The first stated that she had not been balloted into the college, but presented against her will by her brother; the second declared her to have been previously contracted to Nymphidius Sabinus during her father's lifetime, and therefore rendered ineligible for an office which required those who filled it to be free from matrimonial engagements. The assertion was received with murmurs of indignation, but Nero pronounced that Lucia Claudia had ceased to be a vestal, and no member of the sacerdotal colleges dared resist his will. Even the Maxima Cossutia remained silent; but Cornelia Cossi, the second in rank, was less cautious. She denied the pre-engagement of Lucia Claudia, and declared her worthy of the living grave decreed by the laws of Numa as the fitting punishment of the vestal who violated her vows. Nero heard her in sullen silence, but Rubria was observed to tremble. Did no dire presentiment cross with its ominous shadow the haughty priestess who then appealed to Nero in his sacerdotal character to revive a fearful law that long had slept, but was destined to be revived to condemn and destroy her. That night Cornelia dreamed she was Maxima, and that Lucia Claudia was buried alive.

The sister of Julius remained at his Tarentan villa while these proceedings took place in the Vestal College, but the summons of her brother brought her to Rome, where the sight of a garland suspended over the portal of his house on the Palatine Mount informed her that her cause was gained.

Julius, in narrating his legal proceedings, dared not mention the false pretext he had audaciously devised and urged; indeed, he shrank from insulting a noble and chaste Roman virgin with the plea that had virtually compromised her reputation in freeing her from her sacerdotal vow. He left the odious task to the præfect himself, whose daring mind might have scrupled to unveil the fact, if he had not imputed Lucia Claudia's resignation to motives more in accordance with his views than he had dared to hope; but even Nymphidius Sabinus was abashed by the virtuous indignation manifested by the woman he loved, and dared to claim. Lucia Claudia had expected to meet contempt, reproaches, derision; but for this dreadful blow she was not prepared. She knew that even by the good and virtuous she should be censured; but to become their abhorrence—to be

claimed by Nymphidius as his wife—to be perjured thus in the eyes of all men, was worse than death to her high spirit.

Young, fair, and noble, admired, venerated, almost deified by those whose superstitious notions made them regard the vestals as the guardians of Rome, Lucia Claudia was not insensible to the homage paid to her charms and virtue. She gloried in her spotless character, and prized, dearly prized, her popularity. She now experienced the annihilation of all her earthly hopes, and felt the reverse most severely; for those whose idol she had lately been, loaded her with invectives; nay, worse, the dissipated, the vicious, dared to place themselves upon a level with her purity, and insulted her with their congratulations. If she sought refuge in the solitude of her own apartment, Julius Claudius invaded its privacy, either to bring her into society she detested, or to subject her to the suit of the bold profligate man who dared to call her his affianced wife. Lucia found her trial bitterer than death, but she still relied upon the God of Israel, for whose sake she was suffering shame and reproach.

On the ides of March, the anniversary of that festival when the priestesses of Vesta rekindle the sacred flame, an unusual gloom oppressed her mind. The weak spouse of Julius, who had wounded her ear by repeating the idle gossip and malicious comments circulating at her expense among the higher circles of Rome, concluded her oration by advising her to marry Nymphidius, as the only measure likely to restore her reputation.

Lucia abruptly quitted her sister-in-law, and, stealing out of the house, attended by Cornelia, entered the gardens of Lucullus, at that time, she knew, deserted for the temple of Vesta. She was enveloped in the pallium, or large mantle worn by the Roman lady abroad, her face covered with a thick veil, and thus disguised from observation threw herself down by the side of a fountain, under a cypress tree, and, leaning her head on the bosom of Cornelia, wept bitterly. Feminine and gentle as she was, Lucia was not devoid of the lofty pride of her family. A Roman by birth and education, she attached great importance to general opinion, and valued her reputation beyond her life. Her deep sighs, her streaming eyes, betrayed the warfare of her soul. Disgrace and shame hung over her fair fame, and would cleave to it in this world for ever. Yet she blushed at her weakness even while abandoning herself to sorrow, and, suddenly falling upon her knees, prayed for strength and support from that God for whose sake she had given up all earthly distinctions to suffer contempt and obloquy.

The sound of her voice drew the attention of a venerable man who was passing through the garden, who, attracted by its tones as with something familiar, approached the spot, and regarded the kneeling form of Lucia with the deepest interest and compassion. Her veil, falling over her face, partly concealed it from his view, but its elegant outline had left an indelible impression upon his memory. It was that priestess of Vesta who had delivered him from the rage of his enemies,—then high in the esteem of all men, happy, admired, beloved, almost adored; now despised, reviled, forsaken. Full of benevolence and holy love, Linus mildly addressed his preserver, and, taking her hand with a paternal air, said, “Weep not, Lucia Claudia, like those who have no hope. Look unto Jesus Christ, who is strong in salvation, mighty to save, and be comforted.”

Lucia raised her streaming eyes, and recognised the Christian bishop whom she had preserved from martyrdom by claiming her privilege as a vestal priestess, when her womanly heart had led her to pity the Christians as victims of Nero’s cruelty, though without feeling any interest in Him for whose sake “they suffered such things,” or even inquiring into the nature of the doctrines they professed. To her they had only appeared “setters forth of strange gods;” mystics who led inoffensive lives, and held secret worship in honour of some deceased person whom they deified. There was something so compassionate in Linus’ manner, so venerable in his appearance, that, disconsolate and distressed as she was, commanded Lucia’s attention, and compelled her to listen to him.

“Noble lady,” continued he, “you preserved my life, and gratitude will not suffer me to leave you without offering you sympathy and counsel. Through the grace of God you appear to have ‘cast away the works of darkness,’ for I hear you, who of late were a heathen priestess, calling upon Jehovah in prayer; but how is it that you omit to offer it through His name for whose sake alone it can find acceptance with your Heavenly Father—even through Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, ‘in whom He is well pleased’—the Redeemer of a lost and ruined world, ‘who was crucified for our sins, and rose again for our justification’?”

“Father,” replied Lucia, wiping her eyes, and looking up with an air of earnest attention, “I know not Him of whom you speak. Convinced of the vanity and blindness of that idolatry to which I had been dedicated, I have become a convert to Judaism, and have learned to worship the God of Israel as the Creator and Preserver of all men; and I look for another life, after this transitory existence shall have passed away: but of this Christ, from whom your sect is called, I am ignorant altogether.”

With the dignity and simplicity of truth Linus unfolded the divine mission of the Saviour to sinners; the necessity of such an atonement, and the impossibility of coming to God by any other way than through faith in His blood; declaring that the Messiah, whose coming Lucia had been already taught to expect, was indeed “this very Jesus whom the Lord had made both God and Christ.”

The mysterious doctrine of the cross, “to the wisdom of this world foolishness, and to Israel a rock of offence,” was a saviour of life to the meek females who now heard it for the first time. Upon their minds the bright effulgence of “the Sun of Righteousness arose, with healing on his wings.”

“And did Cæsar slay the Christians for such pure doctrines—for following such a Saviour as this?” demanded Lucia. “Unhappy Christians! what tortures did ye not undergo on this very spot!”

“Call them not unhappy, noble lady,” replied the venerable man. “Here was the scene of their martyrdom, it is true, but it was also the scene of their triumph. They ‘counted all loss, nay, even their lives were not dear to them for Christ’s sake.’ Here, invested with the tunic of the incendiary, they were lighted up as a spectacle to a barbarous and unbelieving people.” He paused; tears filled his aged eyes as he recalled the sufferings of his Christian brethren, and Lucia’s now flowed as fast

from sympathy as they had lately done from 'the sorrow of this world.' "This is human weakness," continued he; "but you did not see me weep when your compassion saved me from death. For the sake of the persecuted flock of Christ, I rejoice that my life was prolonged, but 'to depart, and be for ever with the Lord,' is the desire of his unworthy Servant."

He then invited his attentive auditors to meet him in the oratory of St. Peter—a secret chamber on the Ostian Way, where that great Apostle had been accustomed to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and where he nightly instructed the heathen, and ministered to the Christians. His flock was rapidly increasing, and included several members of Cæsar's household. For though not many noble were called, yet the Christian Church was composed of persons of every degree, who were prepared to seal their faith with their blood, should a second persecution expose them to that trial. He made Lucia Claudia acquainted with the mysterious sign by which the brethren knew each other in the crowded streets of the Roman metropolis. He would charge the slaves of her household, who were members of the Church, to conduct her and her nurse to their oratory, who would make themselves known to her by crossing themselves in the fashion he had shown.^[9]

Linus then bade his auditors farewell, by giving them, instead of the usual "Vale," the apostolical benediction of "Peace be with you."

A change had passed over both: Lucia Claudia was "almost a Christian," while Cornelia was altogether one. Human passions, love and pride, were not dead in the heart of the young Roman lady; but the freedwoman embraced the hope set before her, with firmness and constancy. Lucia Claudia was enthusiastic and imaginative; she would have died rather than given up the faith whose mysteries Linus had just unfolded to her; but she was about to be exposed to a trial more difficult to withstand than death—the martyrdom of the affections. How would Adonijah receive the intelligence of her conversion to the doctrines he hated and despised?

^[9] That the sign of the cross was used in this manner is apparent from the works of Lucian, a heathen satirical writer; and from the Apology of Tertullian we likewise learn that it was introduced by Christians in their private devotions in the second century. In the earliest and purest era of the Church, however, there is no reason to believe that it was introduced in any other manner than as a private signal expressing the willingness of the party to suffer for Christ. The Church of England, in her baptism, appears to give its true use and explanation in the primitive sense. At the period of which I am writing, superstition had not mingled error with the simplicity of Christian worship.

CHAPTER XI.

"Child of dust, corruption's son,
By pride deceived, by pride undone;
Willing captive, yet be free,
Take my yoke and learn of me."

BOWDLER.

Where the Christian Church was at this period, was a question naturally occurring to the mind of the Gentile then, and the believer now. Rome anciently stood within the broken centre of a volcano,—an inference drawn by modern geologists from a careful survey of its strata. The city, as it extended, was gradually built over the old quarries from whence the volcanic substances, pozzolana and tufo, were obtained for the buildings of the city. These species of stone were very easily worked, and the spot where they were found was called Arenaria.^[10] As these labyrinths extended a considerable way underneath the city, they naturally became the refuge of the unfortunate. They had, therefore, been the hiding-place occasionally of runaway slaves in the time of the old republic; but when the persecution of Nero blazed against the Christians, these gloomy cells afforded a secure refuge to the infant Church of Christ. Here thousands of Christians lived, died, and were buried; here were their churches and their sepulchres; for they, "of whom the world was not worthy," dwelt in caves and dens, forsaking all things, so that they might but win Christ. The existence of these quarries or catacombs were known to the Roman people; but the intricacies of their winding passages had not been explored perhaps for centuries. With many villas and houses the entrances of the Arenaria communicated; for when the inhabitants professed the new faith, they were able to attend the services of the primitive Church without serious danger; these openings also enabled them to escape to their brethren when denounced to the heathen ruler of their people. In some cases these desolate asylums had not remained inviolate, for more than once the faithful pastor had been torn from his flock and hurried to the block, the fire, or the cross, according as his rank or station might be. The Roman citizen was generally beheaded, the slave was always crucified or burned alive. Accident or treason alone occasioned the fierce heathen to enter these hidden places of worship, but it was a time when brother rose against brother, to put them to death; besides, we must not be surprised at finding Judases among the primitive Church when there was one in the little fold of Christ.

It was to these depths that Linus had retired after his deliverance by Lucia Claudia; it was here he had offered up his prayers for the conversion of the heathen priestess, over whom he had watched with the tender compassion of a Christian and the vigilance of a shepherd seeking to save a wandering sheep. Among the slaves of Julius Claudius were many Christians, who belonged to his flock. From them he had learned that Lucia Claudia was influenced by different motives to those

ascribed to her by the world, that she spent her time in privacy and prayer, and that they suspected she had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith, since she was known to converse more frequently with the Hebrew slave Adonijah than it was customary for noble Roman ladies to do. The influence this captive Jew seemed to have acquired over Lucia Claudia was even superior to that he had held over the mind of her deceased brother, and certainly they thought might be adduced to the same cause. Linus rejoiced to find that religious motives alone had induced the vestal to leave her cloistered seclusion, and, being accurately informed of her movements, he had followed her to the gardens of Lucullus, and addressed her as we have seen. He hoped to bring Adonijah also within the fold of Christ, as the rich reward of his having won these noble Romans from the night of pagan darkness in which they had been involved, till this Israelite indeed brought them to worship the only true God in spirit and in truth.

Lucia Claudia was surprised to receive from the aged Fulvia, one of her brother's bondwomen, the sign which was to convey to her an intimation that she was the Christian to whom she and Cornelia were to intrust themselves. In that humble old woman she had not expected to find a Christian, but she returned the signal, upon which Fulvia, with great animation, embraced her, saying, "Lady Lucia, my prayers for thee are heard. Go, for God is with thee, and fear nothing. Yea, be strong and courageous in the Lord, trusting the brethren in the household, who will guide thee faithfully to the Church beneath, in the hope that the doctrines thou wilt hear there to-night will lead thee to the Church of the blessed one above."

"Thou art then a Christian," replied Lucia.

"Noble Lady, I am a deaconess of the Church, and many of this household, both male and female, are worshippers also of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Lucia looked at Cornelia in mute surprise, and then at Fulvia.

"Yes, Lady Lucia, even in Cæsar's household there are men who are ready to die for that faith the emperor persecutes. Already 'its sound has gone forth into all lands, and its words to the end of the earth,' and 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Dare you trust the slaves who have become the freed-men of the Lord, and have embraced Christianity at a time when its converts are assailed with fire and sword? If so, I will come to you in the dead hour of midnight as your guide."

"I dare," replied Lucia Claudia, and she looked at Cornelia. "Thou, too, wilt go with me, my nurse?"

"I follow thee, my foster-child, to death," was the answer of the humble but truly attached friend. Fulvia smiled benignantly upon the new converts and withdrew.

In the still hour of midnight Fulvia, veiled in the Christian fashion, entered the apartment where Lucia and Cornelia anxiously awaited her coming, enveloped also in their veils and palliums. Without uttering a syllable, Fulvia motioned them to follow her. Softly she glided along the corridor, till she gained the door that opened into the offices belonging to the house. Then she entered the court which was appropriated to the slaves, and, threading the mazes of a covered passage, struck sharply against the wall, when, to the surprise of her trembling companions, a large stone sliding back revealed a flight of steps, feebly illuminated by the light of a lamp, that glimmered in the distance like a faint star. Lucia did not perceive by what means the solid stone had receded from its place; to her it seemed the work of magic art, and she shuddered and clung to the arm of her nurse.

Cornelia, more self-possessed, had noticed that it was drawn up by two men, aided by some powerful machinery, and that it was cautiously and instantly replaced. With Fulvia for a guide, the new converts traversed many winding passages, sometimes turning to the right or left, till they overtook some persons with torches in their hands, who gave them the sign of brotherhood, and in whom they recognised a part of the household. These slaves greeted Lucia Claudia with more than usual respect, and, falling back, permitted her to pass them, with the exception of Glaucus, the freedman of Julius Claudius, who held a torch in his hand, and now preceded the sister of his lord. Perceiving that Lucia was not entirely without fear, he occasionally addressed her, explaining that she was in the Arenaria, and that many of the passages she crossed led under the principal streets and palaces of Rome, and that the converts of the new faith had pierced openings from their own houses, as the slaves in her brother's household had done. He bade her observe how curiously these vaults were supported without the aid of masonry, and that they were seemingly as firm as when hollowed many centuries before. Suddenly he ceased speaking, but, striking sharply with his staff against the wall, paused for an instant, when a groove was suddenly drawn back, and a stream of light flashed upon the eyes of Lucia and her nurse, and Linus, in his white stole, came forward and welcomed them to his church. Then the slaves who had followed Lucia Claudia arranged themselves on each side of the chapel, the women covered with their veils, the men uncovered. Each person hid their faces in their hands and said a short prayer. Linus stood before the altar awaiting the gathering together of his flock, who kept flowing in from the opposite entrance. The short delay permitted Lucia to examine the curious cavern that the Christians had dedicated to the worship of their God, which here was of width and length capable of holding several hundred persons; the roof was supported by its own strength, without the aid of pillars; it was rather low than lofty; the walls were pierced with niches, filled in with marble or tiles; the same emblems adorned these tablets as Fulvia had displayed that evening. From the inscriptions upon them Lucia discovered that they were the tombs of Christian martyrs, for the palm and the cross were the distinguishing marks of a Christian sepulchre in that day. The altar was the tomb of a martyr; thus even the dead in Christ seemed to appeal to the living, that they also might follow the example of their constancy.

The prayers, the hymns, the spiritual worship of the primitive Church, the eloquence of its oratory, found its way to the bosom of the new converts, and when they came forward at the termination of the service to offer themselves as candidates for baptism, they were greeted by the whole assembly with the utmost affection. The slaves of Julius's household shed tears of joy. Linus then addressed to them a short but impressive admonition. He told them that the times were perilous, and that those who embraced the faith of Jesus must first count the cost, since they warred not only with flesh and blood, and with spiritual wickedness in high places, but with the

whole powers of darkness. That they were bidden to take up the cross, not counting their lives dear unto them, but forsaking all to follow Christ.

Upon Lucia and her nurse declaring their readiness to do this, Linus accepted them as candidates for baptism, and at parting gave them the vellum rolls containing the Gospel of St. Luke; then, solemnly blessing the assembly, the congregation dispersed, Fulvia and the household slaves again taking charge of the new converts, and the whole party safely regained their abode before the dawn could betray their holy vigils. It was in this manner the primitive Church kept her sabbaths. The simplicity, the purity of the worship of the Christians had nothing in it to captivate the senses, but it had everything to touch the heart. The gorgeous ceremonial of pagan mythology might dazzle the imagination of its votaries; it could never regenerate the soul: and what was its doubtful future when contrasted with the paradise promised to those who lived and died in the Christian faith? Lucia Claudia, in her beautiful enthusiasm, would at that moment have given her body to be burned, or yielded her neck to the sword, rather than have given up her hope in Christ. Yes, she would have done all this; but would she have given up the idol of her soul, the beloved Adonijah? Ah, weak as a child with regard to the affections, she forgot that to some natures the fiery trial of martyrdom was easier than the call to give up the dearest object of the heart, if love of that object clashed with the profession of the Christian faith.

We know less of this portion of the first Christian century than any other, for the bitter persecution which had fallen upon the Roman Christians, and deprived them of their glorious Apostolic teachers St. Peter and St. Paul, had compelled them to conceal themselves from observation; therefore we have no exact account of the manner in which they worshipped God, for the history of the Church of Christ given in the Acts ended with the two years' sojourn of St. Paul in his own hired house. We must therefore draw on later authorities for the description of Christian ritual.

The age was still Apostolic, two of the companions of the Saviour yet survived in the persons of Symeon and John; therefore no liturgy, unless we admit that of St. James^[11] to be genuine, was in use, at least not in the Gentile Churches. In the early Apologies of Athenagoras, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, and in the letter of Pliny the Younger, the reader will find the primitive order in which the Sabbath services were celebrated. Afterwards the prayers of devout Christians were collected and arranged in the liturgical order in which we now have them. The manner in which the Psalms are read in the English Church was adopted by the early one of Alexandria, from the Jewish ritual.

The primitive service, according to our earliest account, that drawn from the lips of the deaconesses by Pliny, commenced with a hymn in honour of Christ, sung alternately, which was followed by the worshippers binding themselves to observe the moral law with scrupulous exactness; after which they separated, but met together in a general repast, partaken together, temperately and without disorder. But the Christian authors cited give a perfect view of divine worship in the second century, which consisted of singing, prayer, preaching, and the reception of the Lord's Supper, the substance being essentially the same as it is now,—the arrangement alone being different. The liturgy growing as it were out of the injunction of St. Paul, "Let everything be done with decency and order."

[10] Now called Satterrania, by the Romans, from Subterranea, the modern Latin name of these quarries.

[11] As the Jewish Church always had, and still has, a liturgical arrangement, the litany of St. James may have been used in the Christian Church of Jerusalem, but certainly without the additions at the end, which now disfigure it, as no invocations to saints were admitted into the worship of the primitive times. The prayer itself is very evangelical and beautiful.

CHAPTER XII.

"I am amazed—and can it be?—
—Oh mockery of heaven!"

SUCKLING.

Unconscious of her danger, because unconscious of the vast influence the Hebrew captive held over her mind and affections, Lucia Claudia, though aware of his hatred to Christianity, did not know that in communicating to him the fact that she was a catechumen (as those persons were called who had put themselves under a course of instruction previous to their Christian baptism) she would risk the loss of that faith which seemed then so precious to her soul.

Adonijah listened to her recital in gloomy silence; nothing but his intention of learning, through her, the secret places of meeting in which the Christians celebrated their Sabbath made him hear her story to the end. More than once he rent his clothes, and struck his forehead or smote upon his breast, while his countenance expressed grief, indignation, and mortification; but when she announced to him that she was a candidate for baptism, he fixed his eyes upon her face, and with a start of horror turned away; then looked at her again, at the same time uttering a cry that thrilled to the soul of Lucia Claudia. She stood trembling before him, not daring to contend with the emotion that shook the frame of her lover.

"The glory, the glory has departed from my head," cried Adonijah; "the daughter of the stranger who came to put her trust in the covenant, she who put her trust in Jehovah, has revolted from Him.

Ruth the Moabiteess clave to Him in spirit, but Lucia Claudia has apostatized from her God." Then Adonijah threw dust upon his head, and rent his garments in the vehemence of his sorrow.

"Hear me, Adonijah—dear Adonijah," continued Lucia Claudia, "for to thee also is this great salvation sent. Jesus Christ is the Messiah of thy people, the promised seed of the woman 'who should bruise the serpent's head.' He is the everlasting Son of the Father, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world."

"Blasphemy, blasphemy!" exclaimed Adonijah, and then—but who shall dare to utter the despiteful words that the blind Pharisee spake against the Hope of his fathers, the blessed Lamb of God? He seemed touched by the terror of Lucia, for, suddenly softening his voice from the tones of rage to those of deep tenderness, he threw himself at her feet, and taking her hand bathed it with his tears. "Wilt thou," said he, "wilt thou, my beloved, place an eternal bar between us? Wilt thou forsake me? I had lost all, but the Lord, in giving me thee, restored parents, brethren, and country. Oh, my dear proselyte, my own familiar friend, thou with whom I have taken sweet counsel, forsake me not. I love thee as no Hebrew ought to love the daughter of the stranger; and thou, thou lovest me, Lucia, and yet thou breakest my heart."

He wrapt his face in the folds of Lucia's mantle and wept. She, moved to the soul by his passionate eloquence, and still more passionate grief, leant fondly over him, "Be calm, be calm, my Adonijah," she whispered; "I cannot endure this warfare, it rends my soul."

"Defile not thyself with this baptism, bid me look up and live. The Nazarene is my abhorrence, and must I hate thee? Rather let me die. Lucia Claudia, raise me up with words of peace and comfort, or bid me depart from thee for ever."

"For ever?" murmured Claudia.

"Yes, for ever," was his reply. "To me the Christian, Lucia, must become a stranger, an accursed thing." Again he lifted up his voice and wept, for the anguish of his benighted soul was great.

Lucia wavered for an instant, then she raised her lover up, and fell upon his neck and wept; he drew her to his bosom, for he felt that he had conquered, and joy and hope lighted up his countenance as he hung over his beautiful, his recovered proselyte, who, ensnared by her affection for him, had forsaken the faith of Christ.

Did earthly passion blight all this heavenly promise in its first birth? How could Lucia Claudia meet sterner trials when a few passionate tears had power to move her thus? It was the weakness of the moment, for when alone she experienced deep remorse for a compliance wrung from her by the reproaches and entreaties of Adonijah. She felt her apostasy, but she knew not how to give up one dearer than the light of heaven to her eyes and heart. Cornelia saw the struggle of her soul, and her soothing words gained her confidence, her admonitions pointed out her danger.

Cornelia was no longer under the dominion of the passions. She had proved the vanity, the nothingness of all that the world could offer. The faith that presented to her view the glories of the world to come stood bright and alone. Temptation could not shake the heart which was given up to God. She warned Lucia of her danger; she reminded her that there could be no compromise here, that she must give up all for Christ, or return to doubt and darkness. "Thy affection has misled thee, my child; but thy love to Adonijah had been better shown in leading him to Christ than in revolting from the faith to pacify him. Pray for his conversion, but be stedfast thyself; return to Him from whom in thy weakness rather than in thy unbelief thou hast wandered."

Lucia feared that her contrition would not be accepted, but she threw herself upon her knees, humbly confessing her guilt, and imploring that mercy of which she almost despaired.

Cornelia soothed her foster-child, and upon her maternal bosom Lucia could find sympathy. The Greek then unrolled the vellum scrolls and commenced reading the wondrous history of a Saviour's love as recorded by St. Luke. If the beauty, the sublimity of those opening chapters awaken the intensest feeling in the bosom of the reader of our own day, to whom they have been familiar from infancy, what was their effect upon these Gentiles who for the first time perused them? Lucia Claudia no longer believed upon the word of Linus alone, she rested her faith upon the word of God.

Painfully aware of her own weakness, she wisely left to Cornelia the task of informing Adonijah of her stedfast determination to become a Christian. He heard this resolution with bitter indignation, but when the pious Greek besought him in Lucia's name, and for her dear sake, to listen to the preaching of Linus, he laughed scornfully and left her abruptly and in anger.

That night Lucia Claudia and the brethren in her household again attended the midnight worship of the Christians, and among them came Adonijah. Surprised, delighted, hoping that here his bitter hatred must expire, his heart must be softened, Lucia watched him as he stood half shadowed by a tomb, and sorrowed when he gave no sign of relenting; and thus he remained proudly apart for many successive nights, cold, obdurate, and dead to the beams of the gospel light as the stone upon which he leaned.

The Christians of Julius's household became alarmed respecting his object in frequenting the midnight assembly, and they hinted their fears to Lucia Claudia and her nurse. Neither entertained a doubt of Adonijah's integrity; they naturally concluded that the intense jealousy of a lover made him keep watch thus over his beloved. He disdained to hold the slightest communication with any part of the Christian flock of Linus when in private. To Lucia Claudia he showed the cold respect due to the sister of his lord, to Cornelia he never spoke at all.

Upon the morning preceding the night of her baptism, Lucia Claudia resolved to break this mysterious silence, for she had determined to leave clandestinely her brother's house that she might devote herself to the service of the Christian Church. Cornelia, her nurse, was to be the companion of her flight; her fortune she was about to bestow upon the Christian community, a measure commonly adopted by the wealthy converts of that day. She would thus be safe from the odious addresses of Nymphidius, who had daringly told her that she was fated to become his bride. She would also be secured from the dangerous influence Adonijah still held over her heart. She must leave him, but not without a parting gift, a parting blessing. What man could not accomplish, the word of God might yet effect, and the heart that would not bow before the mighty eloquence of

Linus would melt, perchance, over the record of the sacrifice and sufferings of the Son of God.

The household of Julius Claudius was suddenly at this time removed to Tivoli, and thither his sister was compelled to follow him. She had been too closely watched to effect her escape by the descent that led down to the catacombs, nor could she offer any pretence for remaining behind with those persons who kept the house. The freedman Glaucus was to convey the necessary information to the bishop, of the change in her plans, and to arrange that some of the brethren were to meet her at midnight near her brother's villa. In these days it is almost impossible to understand the powerful influence of a body so closely united as the Christians then were, extending on every side, and comprehending every order and degree in society; in which rich and poor, noble and slave, Jew and Gentile, the barbarian and the Roman citizen, formed one fellowship, and were knit together in the bonds formed by the constraining love of Christ. It was this beautiful union in the Primitive Church that first attracted the suspicions of the heathen ruler of the world. While others more virtuous could say, "See how these Christians love one another," Nero only saw conspiracies and plots against his government; for goodness and religion to him appeared only a flimsy veil to hide corruption and wickedness like his own. The Christian union was one of brotherly love, and Lucia Claudia knew that she was surrounded by a secret circle of friends to whom she could confide herself and her wealth, without an anxious thought. In leaving light and sunshine for gloom and darkness, Lucia Claudia only lamented Adonijah; for was not she about to embrace a faith that must separate them for ever, unless his stubborn soul submitted also to its easy yoke?

She found the Hebrew in that ruined fane, where her idolatry had formerly moved his indignation, and where he had betrayed his love. He was reclining at the base of a shattered column, tracing Hebrew characters upon the sand. His deep abstraction, his air of proud melancholy, harmonized with the desolation round him. It was Marius among the ruins of Carthage, or Nehemiah lamenting the prostration of Zion. The magnificence of the figure, the intellectual beauty of the countenance, awakened in Lucia's bosom a thousand fond regrets. She sighed deeply as she remembered that it was not as a lover but as a Christian she had sought this interview, and that it must be brief and passionless. That sigh recalled Adonijah from his abstraction, he looked up and recognised his once dear Lucia.

"Why are you here, destroyer of my peace?—do you come to weave your magic spells about my soul? Away, enchantress, away!" cried he impatiently.

"Bid me not depart, Adonijah, or at least not here, where gratitude reminds me of the mighty debt I owe you. It was here that you rebuked my blind idolatry, it was here you avowed your love. Yes, beloved Adonijah, you shook here my trust in the superstition to which I had been dedicated, and brought me from pagan darkness to the worship of the one true God. We are about to part—we who have prayed so often together—we who have vowed eternal love, hopeless though that love may be. Yes, we must part—but not unkindly, not in anger. Take these scrolls, my brother, and keep them in remembrance of me. They contain the evidences of that faith of which the ceremonial law of Moses was but the type and shadow. Read them, and compare them with the Scriptures, and see if it be not so. Then Adonijah the Christian may claim his Christian bride."

Lucia Claudia blushed deeply, and, extending the delicate hand that held the holy Gospel, timidly, yet beseechingly, regarded Adonijah. How beautiful was that tenderness, how frank and yet how chastened by modest dignity was that avowal! Adonijah was almost more than man to resist it.

"Tempt me not, Lucia," he replied, "to my undoing; the bribe is mighty, but I am strong in faith. Well is it for thee that thou art no daughter of my people, for then in obedience to a tremendous law my hand must be first upon thee to cast the murderous stone, though thou wert the wife of my own bosom, or the friend dearer than my own soul."

He repulsed the hand she proffered, and, snatching the vellum scrolls Lucia Claudia held towards him, trampled them scornfully beneath his feet.

"Cruel Adonijah, and is it thus we part? Oh, I had hoped that the preaching of the word would have melted away these proud and stubborn thoughts. Why have you frequented our midnight assemblies, why has your shadow haunted me, unless it were to pass between me and my God?"

Adonijah laughed bitterly; that scornful laugh thrilled painfully from the ears of Lucia to her heart. Could he betray her—could his stern integrity stoop to a measure so infinitely base and unworthy of him? Oh no! woman's trusting love forbade a thought so wild.

"Adonijah," said she, "you were kinder to the priestess of Vesta than to the worshipper of the true God."

"Oh that you were still the idolatress—the heathen priestess—or anything but an apostate from Jehovah! Go, leave me, guileful Gentile; leave me in solitude and misery to curse the day when first a true Israelite gazed on your fatal form, and, all-forgetful of his creed, madly doted upon the daughter of the stranger." With these words Adonijah quitted the presence of the distressed and weeping Lucia Claudia.

CHAPTER XIII.

"No place could be better calculated to answer all the purposes of the primitive and persecuted Christians, than the subterraneous caverns of the Arenaria."

The measure Lucia Claudia was compelled to adopt was one of necessity rather than choice. She would willingly have remained in her brother's house, if that house had been a safe abode for a virtuous woman. If she could have kept the retirement of her chamber inviolate, the Christian would not have considered it an imperative duty to quit the protection of her natural guardian.

While she still wore the vestal habit, no one dared utter a word to wound her pure and spotless

virtue but when the sacerdotal profession became inconsistent with her worship of the God of Abraham, and she abandoned the sacred robes, each sensual guest of Julius Claudius seemed to forget the deference he once had paid to the vestal sister of his friend, and openly congratulated her upon her change of life. Atheists and scoffers had hitherto been unable to disengage their minds from the chain superstition had woven round their earlier years. Now that restraint was gone, and, incapable of appreciating the motives that had influenced Lucia Claudia, even if they had known them, they daringly imputed them to guilt, and considered her as something more profane and lost to virtue than themselves. Nymphidius Sabinus alone still regarded Lucia Claudia as the purest of her sex. At first he had suspected that she had quitted her lofty position to espouse some favoured patrician, but he vainly watched for some confirmation of his suspicions. To him she appeared as icily chaste, as vestal-like, as inaccessible, as when she wore the consecrated robes of the dedicated virgin. The idea that she was a Christian suddenly entered his mind. He remembered that memorable day when she had claimed the privilege of her order to save a Christian pastor. It was clear to him that the woman he adored was a secret disciple of Linus, Bishop of Rome. It was strange that he had not discovered this before. His knowledge of her secret would render him the master of her destiny. For her creed he cared not, so that she were but his wife. He communicated his suspicions to Julius Claudius, who seemed convinced of their truth. It was then agreed between them that a removal to Tivoli would preclude Lucia Claudia from taking counsel with the sect whose tenets she had embraced. Nymphidius was to intimidate her into an acceptance of his suit, in which he was to be seconded by his friend. The fears of a timid young woman they considered would lead her to a marriage that she denied to his love. Ignorant of these devices against her peace, Lucia Claudia had listened in indignant silence, while on the way to Tivoli, to the artful hints thrown out from time to time by her brother Julius, who daringly insinuated that a marriage with the son of the bondswoman, Nymphidius, could alone restore her tarnished reputation. The feeble-minded Antonia, the wife of Julius, took that opportunity of repeating all the idle reports in circulation in Rome respecting Lucia Claudia's abandonment of her vestal life. Among other things she assured her that no one was more severe in her judgment upon her conduct than Cossutia, the Maxima, or Chief Vestal. Lucia knew this was true, and it pained her deeply, for Cossutia had loved her intensely, and had been the faithful guardian of her youth. She had vainly endeavoured to see this lady, that she might clear her fame by avowing the motives that had influenced her conduct. The Maxima had haughtily declined the interview, and her displeasure had planted another thorn in the bosom of her former pupil.

Forsaken by the wise and virtuous among the heathens, and obliged to associate with dissolute persons of both sexes, who frequented the house of her brother, exposed to the suit of Nymphidius, and deprived of the support a noble Roman matron ought to have afforded her, she felt that the roof of Julius was no suitable abode for her, and that to join the brethren had become her only choice.

She had indulged the benevolent wish of rearing the lovely scion of her house, the infant son of Julius and Antonia, in the principles of the Christian faith. The babe greatly resembled his lamented uncle Lucius, whose name he bore, and this likeness joined to the winning smiles of infancy had endeared him to his aunt.

She was compelled to give up this hope, but she left him with deep regret. Her parting interview with Adonijah greatly unnerved her; nor did the presence of Nymphidius Sabinus at all revive her spirits. Her languid appearance seemed to plead for rest, and her early retirement to her dormitory excited neither surprise nor suspicion.

In the privacy of her own chamber, Lucia Claudia mentally recalled the trials she had endured since she had abandoned the idolatrous worship of Vesta. Was not this the literal fulfilment of the command of Jesus, "Take up the cross and follow me," and should she repine?

At first her notions of the truth had been indistinct and shadowy. So dazzled had she been by the full blaze of Gospel day, that her perceptions resembled those of the blind from birth to whose eyes the light is first revealed. Cornelia in the beginning of her Christian course had been the most steadfast, for Lucia had almost shipwrecked her new-born faith against the precipice of earthly love. She had stumbled, not to fall, but to become more perfect. Her deep penitence had brought her to see more clearly that Divine love that had sent forth the Son from the bosom of the Father, to die for the sins of men, to redeem a ruined world. Her feelings were far more vivid than those of her nurse. She had not only been a heathen priestess, not only the blind worshipper of an element, thereby transferring the worship due to the Creator to the creature He had formed, but she had taught others to do the same. Her sin was ever before her eyes, but this consciousness only made her cleave more closely to the atonement as her refuge. Once the noble Roman lady had gloried in her spotless reputation and sacerdotal profession, but this glory had become her shame; for, meek and lowly in her own eyes, the Christian neophyte no longer minded earthly things. The Spirit was not given by measure to the Christians of that early day, when His miraculous gifts were poured out upon the primitive Church, whose suffering state required such mighty help; for the neophytes were often called from the waters of baptism to meet the fiery trial of martyrdom, and, relying upon the Power present with them, "endured the cross, despising the shame," like Him whose followers they professed to be. Comforted with the thoughts of spiritual support, Lucia Claudia and her faithful nurse quitted the villa of Julius in the dead of night, and took the road to Rome. They were met upon the way by the freedman Glaucus and several of the brethren, who safely conducted them to the subterranean abode of Linus.

In the morning the disappearance of the Lady Lucia Claudia and the freedwoman Cornelia excited great alarm, and an active search was instantly set on foot by Julius and Nymphidius. Towards noon these endeavours to trace the fugitives were suddenly discontinued, to the manifest surprise of the whole household, both pagan and Christian.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Whose is that sword, that voice and eye of flame,
That heart of unextinguishable ire?
Who bears the dungeon keys, and bonds, and fire?
Along his dark and withering path he came—
Death in his looks, and terror in his name."

ROSCOE.

Fresh from the waters of baptism, and united with the Church in the holy rite by which Christians commemorate the dying love of their Lord, a divine peace filled the hearts of Lucia and her nurse. Arrayed in spotless robes of white, emblematical of the new spiritual life upon which they had entered, they stood in the centre of that little flock, into whose society they had just been admitted, receiving the blessings and congratulations of their brethren. A holy light shone in the upraised eyes of Lucia, no longer gleaming with the wild enthusiasm of the heathen priestess, but full of calm, heavenly joy. No earthly thought, no earthly feeling, intruded on these hallowed moments. Even Adonijah was forgotten. Love divine filled and possessed her heart. This rapture seemed to absorb her being for a time, but when burst from that assembly of true worshippers the lofty hymn of thanksgiving, it found words and rose to heaven in a sweet song of praise. At the instant these triumphant hallelujahs echoed through that subterranean temple of the Lord, a band of armed men rushed in, headed by Julius Claudius, Nymphidius Sabinus, and Adonijah, and, advancing into the circle in which the neophytes stood, confronted them with menacing looks and threatening gestures.

For a moment the timid woman prevailed over the saint and heroine, and Lucia Claudia uttered a thrilling cry of agonized amazement as her eye fell on Adonijah. He had betrayed her—he for whom she would have died, for whom she would have given up all but her hope in Christ. A pang, intenser than that which separates soul and body, pierced the maiden's heart, as she slowly turned her eyes upon her lover with reproachful tenderness. From that glance of love and sorrow he shrank away, unable to sustain the cruel part he had chosen, or to look upon her whom he had betrayed.

Nymphidius laid his hand upon his victim's arm, but she shrank from his touch with a gesture indicative of so much horror, that he resigned her to her brother, of whose presence she till then was not aware. The sight of him inspired her with some confidence, and, throwing herself upon his neck, she uttered the most pathetic entreaties for the lives of those whom her rash confidence in Adonijah had put in such fearful jeopardy. He coldly replied "that he could only answer for her safety, the fate of those to whom she had united herself being in the hands of Nymphidius." She fixed her imploring eyes on the face of the Præfect, but no mercy could be traced on his stern, collected features. His only answer was a sign to the soldiers to put the Christians to the sword, who, gathering round their Bishop, silently awaited their doom. Breaking from the arm of Julius, Lucia threw herself at the feet of Nymphidius, and besought him "to have mercy on the little flock" with streaming eyes and passionate entreaties.

"Become my wife," said the Præfect, in a low but distinct voice, "and I will not slay these Christians." She started from her knees with aversion and loathing on her countenance. "Remember, Lucia Claudia, that the alternative is death. Even the friendship between me and your brother cannot save you from the penalty you have incurred. Young, beautiful, rich, noble, and beloved as you are, can you prefer death to espousing a man who adores you?"

"I can die," she replied—"it is not difficult for a Roman to die; but these Christians, whom I have been the means of betraying, must they die too?"

"My daughter," rejoined the venerable Linus, advancing towards her with dignity, "plead not for us; we are ready not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus."

"Father, I have brought these wolves upon you," cried Lucia, wringing her hands; "it is I who have unwittingly betrayed my brethren;" and again she renewed her supplications to the Præfect on her knees.

"I have named the conditions," was all the reply he deigned to return to her entreaties.

Lucia hesitated; the Bishop marked the struggle of her soul. "God can defend his own Church; yea, if it be His will, He also can deliver it out of this impending danger. Daughter, 'be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever.' We are all baptized into one faith, let us glorify God by dying together."

"In flames, in tortures!" exclaimed Nymphidius, elevating his voice till the vaulted roof re-echoed with its terrific tones. "I tell ye that the horrors of Nero's first persecution of this vile sect shall be forgotten in the tremendous vengeance of his second."^[12] Maiden, do you remember the illumination of the imperial gardens?" continued he, bending down to the suppliant, who still grasped his knees. He felt the shudder that thrilled through her frame at the ghastly recollections he had called up.

"We must abide it as best we may," murmured she. "My own sufferings I can endure with constancy, but how shall I see those my rashness has brought down on these?"

"I swear to thee, most fair and noble lady, that not a hair of their heads shall perish for this cause. Yes, Lucia Claudia, by thyself I swear not only to preserve, but to protect them. Nay more, thou shalt be free to follow this strange superstition, wild and mischievous though it be, so that you promise to become my wife."

"I promise," she faintly uttered, and sank in a swoon at his feet, a swoon so death-like, that when the Præfect raised her up, he feared that he held only an inanimate corpse in his arms.

In this state the affianced bride of Nymphidius Sabinus was borne into her brother's house. In this sad condition Adonijah beheld the unhappy victim of his bigotry—her to whom he had professed the most passionate love. As the females of the household removed her veil to give her air, her bright ringlets, those ringlets lately hidden beneath the head-dress of the vestal, fell round her face, giving to its paleness a more death-like character. Her whole figure, indeed, enveloped in the white

robe of the neophyte, resembled more a statue of Parian marble than living flesh. Convulsive starts and deep sighs alone betrayed that she still breathed and suffered. What a sight was this for a lover to behold! Adonijah stood contemplating his work for a moment, then rushed forth in an agony of remorse.

The familiar voices round her recalled the unfortunate lady to life; she opened her eyes, raised herself from the encircling arms of Nymphidius with an air of ineffable dignity, and, taking the arm of Cornelia, retired to her own apartment.

Here, to the surprise of her brother and Cornelia, she shook off the anguish that oppressed her soul. It was more than Roman fortitude she displayed, it was the courage and resolution of a Christian. Throughout that trying night she watched and prayed for strength to endure the living martyrdom before her, and when the morning came she was resigned and tearless. Julius fixed an early day for their return to Rome and her espousals; she did not oppose him, but meekly besought him to permit her to keep her own apartment, with Cornelia for her sole companion, till the hour when Nymphidius would come to claim her promise.

The fatal day arrived, and the nuptials of Lucia Claudia were celebrated with all the magnificence befitting her high rank, as well as with those heathen rites her Christian profession taught her to consider impious. Arrayed in saffron robes, and splendidly adorned with jewels, the bride, unveiled, sat, according to custom, in the centre of her own sitting-room to receive the farewell visits of her relations, and the congratulations of her friends. The slaves of both sexes were freely permitted to take their leave and pay their compliments on this occasion. Adonijah, unable to absent himself, came with them, resolving at first to avoid looking at the betrothed of Nymphidius, till a fatal curiosity attracted his attention to her. Surrounded by the great and gay, Lucia Claudia, among her maidens, looked pale and victim-like, till she saw Adonijah, when a burning blush flushed her cheeks, and tears rushed to her eyes; then, restraining her feelings, though with effort, she became tintless as before. She received the presents lavished upon her without any of that pleasure so naturally manifested by the bride about to be united to the object of her choice. This ceremony gone through, she sat still and motionless as a statue till the steps of the bridegroom and his train were heard approaching, then her heart beat audibly, and she turned one last, last look upon her lover; that look expressed all her love, regret, and despair. This lingering tenderness still clung to the bosom of the injured maid, notwithstanding her wrongs, and filled it with tenfold bitterness. Nymphidius approached to lead her to the temple of Juno Juga, whither all present followed the ill-matched pair.

Adonijah stood by during the ceremony that united Lucia Claudia to the object of her detestation. He saw her given, with abhorrent heathen rites, to another. He beheld her shudder while the priest placed the vervain garland and nuptial veil upon her brow, and the ring on her finger; for he knew and felt that she loved him alone, cruel and treacherous as he was, even while giving her hand to his rival.

Adorned with all the insignia of marriage, the bride sustained her firmness till the hour arrived when Nymphidius and Julius raised her in their arms, according to custom, to bear her to her future home. Then her constancy appeared to forsake her, for her struggles were real, and her cries expressed the genuine character of her despair. Far above the Epithalamium they were heard, and she was borne over the threshold with actual, not counterfeited, violence, so deep was the feeling of abhorrence with which she regarded the man to whom she had just given her hand.^[13]

The nuptials of Lucia Claudia with Nymphidius was the result of Adonijah's treachery, but such had not been his intention. To destroy the Christians, and prevent her from receiving baptism, was his motive in betraying her retreat to Julius. That discovery threw her into the arms of his rival. The thought was like fire to his proud heart, and a burning fever seized his brain, and before he recovered she had been many weeks a wife.

[12] See Appendix, [Note VI](#).

[13] The Roman bride was carried into her bridegroom's house with counterfeited violence, in remembrance of the manner in which the Sabine virgins had been forcibly wedded by her Roman ancestors.

CHAPTER XV.

"In my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."
MILTON.

If the death-pangs of hope prevailed over the haughty spirit and manly strength of the Hebrew, how did they rend the softer bosom of the newly wedded bride united to the cruel, licentious Præfect. Unequally yoked with an unbeliever, did Lucia Claudia betray by her manner to him in their domestic intercourse the greater horror and disgust with which the closer view of his character inspired her? No; the Christian wife of Nymphidius strove to correct his errors, and, though foiled in her attempt, concealed the crimes she could not soften. He loved her—if a passion so selfish, so madly jealous, was worthy of the name of love; but knowing that he never possessed her heart, he watched her closely and secluded her from every eye. This seclusion was grateful to his wife, who in the brightest bloom of beauty consented to remain a prisoner in the house of her husband, who feared that the charms that enamoured him might captivate some more favoured

suitor. A sense of degradation made Lucia shrink from the public gaze, but her retirement was not passed in vain regrets and useless complaints. She endeavoured to implant Christian principles throughout her heathen household; gathered together such of her slaves as were willing to profit by her instructions, and taught them the truth "as it is in Jesus." Incapable of virtue himself, the Præfect loved and venerated it in his wife, who vainly tried to win him to the Lord. Ambition, a mightier passion than that softer one he felt for her, ruled his soul. The belief that he drew his birth from Caligula, which had haunted him while a slave, still like an ignis fatuus urged him onwards. Freedom, fortune, rank, power, the unbounded favour of Nero, were gifts too mean to content his insatiable desires. The empire of the world, which he considered his birthright—for even the worst of men assign some plausible motive under which they seek to disguise their crimes from their own view—was the only thing that could satisfy his ambition. To compass this end he resolved during his consulship with Tigellinus to hurl his master from the throne, and then to destroy his tools, together with the aged man he pretended to call to rule over the Roman people. A sea of crime and blood in perspective appeared between him and the sceptre he resolved to seize; but what were crimes and blood to a man of his bold temper and aspiring mind? He had grown up in guilt, and every step he had taken to advance his fortune was a deeper step in iniquity. The wild scheme he planned was deeply locked up in his own breast, but there were times when he longed to impart it prematurely to some one. There was none but Lucia in whose faith he dared confide; but he did not venture to disclose a secret that he knew would excite her abhorrence and alienate her affections, if indeed he possessed them. The virtuous partner of his couch guessed but too well the guilty machinations of his heart from his troubled sleep; for sleep, that seals up the thoughts of innocence, unlocks the bosom ones of guilt. The conscience of the consul Nymphidius slumbered in the day to wake again at night. How often did the gentle voice of Lucia break upon his midnight dreams of agony, and soothe his tortured spirit into peace! How often did she pray him to repent and seek the Christian's creed, the Christian's hope! Her accents never failed to charm away those horrors of remorse, but with morning he recovered his natural energy of purpose, and planned again his dark ambitious schemes. Did no recollections of the bigoted but dearly loved Adonijah intrude upon the mind of Lucia? No; for from the hour she became a wife she never suffered his name to pass her lips. It was only in prayer she dared remember him, so deep was her sense of the impassable barrier existing between them. Once, and only once, since her marriage had she beheld him. The meeting was accidental, and both hastily averted their eyes; for even the Christian proselyte did not hold the nuptial vow more sacred than the Hebrew slave. To him she was now the wife of Nymphidius Sabinus, a beautiful woman whose happiness was destroyed by him, but on whose dear and beloved remembrance he must dwell no more, unless he would break those laws of Moses he imagined he had hitherto kept inviolate. Unrestrained in the exercise of her peculiar tenets, religion poured its holy balm into the bleeding breast of Lucia, who brought her daily sorrows to the foot of the cross. As she advanced in Christianity she learned to imitate her dear Redeemer, and prayed unceasingly for the conversion and pardon of her cruel brother and unbelieving spouse; and, in imparting the glad tidings of salvation to her heathen household, and in communion with her Christian brethren, [14] she enjoyed that peace of God that passeth understanding, and that even lightened the bonds that chained her to Nymphidius Sabinus.

During the brief period when Lucia Claudia engrossed his affections, the patriotism that formed so striking a feature in the character of Adonijah slept; but when all hope perished, when to think of her became a crime, when her very remembrance recalled the cruel fanaticism that had degraded his moral dignity, and abased him beneath the vilest, the fate of Judea again swallowed up in its absorbing vortex his whole being. The revolt of Vindex—the voice whose deep unearthly tones were heard calling Nero by name from the sepulchre of his ancestors, as if to summon him to share their repose—filled the Romans with awe and expectation, and the Hebrew with lively hope. The emperor, forsaken by his flatterers, found his vast palace a gloomy and insupportable solitude. Tigellinus, Helius, and Nymphidius, the guilty instruments of his crimes, abandoned him at this critical juncture. Galba, called upon by the army, the people, and by Julius Vindex, the virtuous Gaul, opposed the caution of age to the call of patriotism and the voice of ambition. A breathless pause intervened before the overflowing torrent of popular feeling found a channel, till a battle, founded on a fatal mistake, was fought between Virginius, the emperor's general, and Julius Vindex, in which the noble Gaul was defeated, who rashly threw himself upon his own sword, gave a turn to Nero's affairs, whose spirits rose from deep dejection to a pitch of extravagance, as seizing his harp he celebrated the triumph of his arms with more skill than good feeling. His favourites, his flatterers, returned, and sumptuous shows and splendid games obliterated the memory of his past danger. Poms and pageants, however prized by the vulgar in times of plenty, excite their utmost indignation in times of dearth. Rome was threatened with famine, and the ship expected to bring corn from Alexandria was laden with sand from the banks of the Nile to smooth the arena. The popular feeling blazed, and symptoms of a general revolt appeared in the gloomy countenances of the people. To save himself from the certain fall of Nero, and to ingratiate himself with a new emperor, induced Tigellinus, then with Nymphidius joint Præfect of the Prætorian camp, to seduce the soldiers he commanded to revolt from Nero. His colleague was actuated by a different motive, though outwardly avowing the same intentions. To him the name of the hoary Galba was but a phantom, a shadow to terrify and destroy the man who then occupied the throne of the Cæsars. He, the son of Caius Cæsar, would then assert his rights and assume the imperial purple. The machinations of this iniquitous pair succeeded with regard to Nero. The camp, the senate, the people, united in one act of justice, and he fled from the palace to fall by his own unwilling hand.

During the space that intervened between the revolt of Vindex and the death of the Emperor Nero, Julius had retreated to his villa at Tusculum, following the suggestions of his own timidity and selfish love of ease. Voluptuous, vain, ungrateful, and cruel, the luxurious favourite, who used to flatter the follies and vices of his lord while in prosperity, was the first to sneer, deride, and forsake

him in the hour of adversity. True, on his hearing the victory of Virginius Rufus he made preparations for his return, till, warned by a message from Nymphidius, he countermanded his orders and continued where he was. The death of Antonia his wife, whom he buried in a sumptuous manner, afforded a plausible pretext for keeping himself very private at this critical juncture, and he amused himself with embellishing his house and grounds, or in dictating verses to Adonijah, who filled the post of amanuensis to his master as well as preceptor to his only son, a beautiful boy of five years. This last employment was entirely gratuitous, for in the noble child the slave traced the features of his uncle Lucius, softened into the feminine beauty of his aunt. In the culture of the rapidly developing powers of the infant Lucius, and in the contemplation of those affairs that would most probably engross the whole energies of the Roman people and permit his own countrymen to shake off their yoke, Adonijah passed his time not unhappily in this agreeable retreat.

Rome in the mean while was plunged into fresh commotions. Nymphidius, in the name of Galba, seized the reins of government, and, excluding his colleague Tigellinus from the præfecture and consulship, resolved to reign either as the minister of Galba or in his own right. Finding through his spies that the new emperor had other ambitious favourites, he resolved to possess himself of the purple without a rival. He called upon his friends and confederates, who applauded his resolution, and agreed to accompany him that evening to the Prætorian camp. Claudius Celsus alone warned him that the Roman people, arrogant as in the days of their virtue, would never accept for Cæsar the son of the bondwoman Nymphidia. The son of that bondwoman was resolute, bold, and ambitious; his career had never been retarded by a fear, or deterred by a scruple, and everything had hitherto succeeded to his wish.

An unusual movement in the Prætorian camp brought his fate to a crisis; his intentions were already known there. The venal soldiers were prepared to receive him as their future emperor, when a tribune named Antonius Honoratus suddenly turned the tide flowing in the favour of Nymphidius against him, by a speech whose truth was only equalled by its eloquence.

The noise of the shouts those fickle soldiers gave reached the ears of the deceived Nymphidius, who suddenly resolved to throw himself among them without waiting for the presence of the other conspirators. At this important crisis his thoughts suddenly reverted to his wife: an undefined foreboding of coming evil entered his breast; he had never experienced the sensation before. He must see her, must bid her farewell; perhaps he might never return. He entered her apartment and found her seated beside a small table perusing some vellum scrolls, a silver lamp burning before her cast a sort of glory round her exquisitely moulded head and waving ringlets, a white robe fell round a form whose living beauty sculpture would vainly imitate. The holy peace, the deep repose of innocence and purity rested on her lovely features as she bent over the inspired writings with rapt attention, undisturbed even by the step of the ambitious aspirant of empire. He looked earnestly and intently upon his Christian wife, a momentary calm stole over his senses, he uttered her name, but the tones died away unheard. The distant shouts from the camp excited a fresh fever in his brain. "Lucia Claudia!" cried he, and his voice, no longer indistinct, sounded deep as from out of the earth. She started in surprise and terror as she rose to meet him. The muscles of his throat were swollen, a fearful energy sat on his brow, his eyes were fixed and glaring, but gradually softened as they encountered hers. Some terrible determination was struggling within his soul; she almost imagined he intended to do her harm. Suddenly Nymphidius caught her in his arms and passionately and repeatedly embraced her, then flung her from him, then caressed her again. She endured this without returning his caresses or resenting his violence. "You do not love me!" he exclaimed,—“you hate me, and yet I am risking my life to make you the greatest lady in Rome; but, mark me, Lucia Claudia, I will neither live nor die without you. The partner of my throne or of my grave, no power shall divide your fate from mine. If I fall, you shall never wed another man; for if I thought so, I would——” he laid his hand on his sword with a terrible look that gave full meaning to the unfinished sentence.

Lucia's countenance expressed apprehension, she trembled, she endeavoured to speak. He drew her to him, pressed a kiss on her brow, and disappeared; she heard him speaking to his freedman, and then his footsteps echoed on the marble pavement of the court beneath. He went alone to the camp, and perished there.

[14] See Appendix, [Note VII.](#)

CHAPTER XVI.

“When died she?”—BYRON.

“From the last hill that looks on thy once holy dome
I beheld thee, O Zion! when rendered to Rome:
’Twas thy last sun went down, and the flames of thy fall
Flashed back on the last glance I gave to thy wall.”

BYRON.

The report of Nymphidius' death reached Julius Claudius the following day. He became alarmed and apprehensive for his sister's safety, yet did not possess sufficient courage or brotherly love to go to her himself. To avoid the danger incidental to facing a popular tumult, and to afford Lucia Claudia the succour and support she needed, he resolved to send Adonijah to Rome to bring her to his home. Accordingly the Hebrew departed in company with several slaves and gladiators

belonging to the household. He found the metropolis of the world in a state of anarchy and confusion that defies description; he saw the dead body of Nymphidius dragged about the streets; it was covered with wounds, and the stern features bore the same expression of sullen pride and undaunted resolution that they had worn in life. The ferocity of the unclosed eye told that he had died sword in hand, contending with unequal numbers. "How mutable is fortune!" thought the Hebrew. "But yesterday, and this man was a consul and præfect of the Prætorian camp, and in the full lust of unbridled power was acting tragedies that made men regret the rule of Nero; now his cold remains are wantonly defaced by those very people who feared him yesterday, and paid him almost divine honours. O fickle, unbelieving crowd, when shall ye be swept away before the avenging breath of the Messiah?"

The house of Nymphidius was surrounded by soldiers, who refused admittance to Adonijah; the promise of a donative in the name of Julius Claudius, and a few coins thrown among them as an earnest, induced them to give the party admission. What a scene of desolation presented itself to his view! The valuable movables defaced and removed—torn raiment—pavements that were stained with the marks of recent debauchery and recent slaughter. In Lucia's apartment a scattered lock of sun-bright hair, and some vellum scrolls deeply stained with blood, told a tale of terrible import; a dagger still red with slaughter lay near. The victim was gone, but these evidences revealed her fate. He caught up the dagger, determined to sheathe it to the hilt in the bosom of the murderer of Lucia. Without a tear he gathered up the relic of the woman he had loved, enveloped it in the parchments, and put it in his bosom. Rushing forth he demanded in a fierce voice, "What had become of the wife of Nymphidius?" She had not been seen, she was doubtless dead; but all denied having been actors in that horrid deed. He showed the dagger, and it was recognised as having been worn by Marcus, the freedman of Nymphidius, who was dying of his wounds in an adjoining apartment. Thither Adonijah repaired to learn the fatal truth. The film of death had gathered over the eyes of the expiring man; the centurion thought he would never speak again. Regardless of the pain he was inflicting, Adonijah thundered out the name of "Lucia Claudia;" he would have demanded the particulars of her murder, but memory at this agitating instant failed him, and he relapsed into his native tongue, unable to form a sentence in the Latin language, familiar as it was now become. The centurion guessed what he would ask, and the dying man replied to his questions in the slow laboured accents of death: "When my master was quitting his house for the last time, he called me to him and said, 'Marcus, if no message comes from me in the course of an hour, slay my wife without delay,' I stared and thought he had lost his senses, but he sternly repeated his words, adding, 'If you neither hear from nor see me in that time, do as I bid you, or your life shall answer for your disobedience; remember, it is Nymphidius Sabinus who now governs Rome.' This I knew to be true; but I was sorry for the lady. I knew not his reasons then, but I know them now; he was determined that she of whom he was so infinitely fond should not survive him if he fell." The dying man gasped as if in mortal pain.

"Proceed, if you can, and briefly too," remarked the centurion.

"The time elapsed, the hour was long past, and still no message came from the camp. I went to the noble lady, I told her all, she pleaded for her life, I dared not listen." The narrator paused, his breath came and went, but he collected his fainting powers: "I seized her by her long hair, and aimed a blow at her throat; but——" here the strong pangs of death silenced the speaker, a livid shade came over his features, a torrent of blood issued from his mouth, and he died without concluding his story. Enough, however, was told to prove that the cruel jealousy of Nymphidius Sabinus had pursued his wife beyond the grave.

Adonijah listened to this recital with rigid and immovable features; the slaves who loved Lucia Claudia raised a loud lamentation. He was stunned, stupefied, and remained in the same attitude of intense attention. His companions, wishing to offer the last rites to the remains of the beautiful and unfortunate Lucia Claudia, instituted a rigorous search for her body, but in vain. Cornelia was found dead in her own chamber, but as no marks of violence were discovered on her person, they supposed she had died from fright. The populace had glutted their fury on the household of Nymphidius. The innocent and guilty died together, with the exception of some few individuals who happened to be absent at the moment of their entrance. The slaves of Julius supposed that Marcus had conveyed away the corpse of his victim, and loudly lamented that a daughter of the noble house of Claudii should pass unhonoured and unsepulchred to the grave in the flower of her youth and beauty. Adonijah, who remembered that she was a Christian, supposed that the remains of the murdered Roman lady had been consigned to the gloomy caverns of the Arenaria.

From that hour a deeper gloom darkened the features of the Hebrew slave. He considered himself as the cause of Lucia's miserable wedded life and death. Remorse, deep, vain remorse, filled his breast with thorns. Bigotry no longer made a base action appear heroic. Now he would rather have seen her a Christian than beheld the pale, bleeding phantom his conscience raised up. She, gentle, compassionate, and good, had been wedded to the cruel Nymphidius; and, still the victim of his barbarous love, had died by the hand of violence. He wished, he longed to die with her; but grief, that bows surely but slowly the fragile form of woman, vainly contends with the majestic strength and iron nerves of man.

Galba ascended the throne of the Cæsars, but his plainness and frugality disgusted a people inebriated with luxury. The severity of his punishments deservedly excited the popular indignation. Nor could his military virtues atone for his avarice; he fell after a short reign of a few months by the hands of the soldiers who had elevated him to the imperial dignity. The death of the new emperor Otho, and the victory of Vitellius, followed fast upon each other. The empire, torn with contending factions, seemed dividing asunder. The plains of Italy were deluged in blood, and the new master of the world, uniting in his own person all the vices without the dignity of the Cæsars, soon gave his fellow-citizens reason to repent the self-murder of Otho.

During all these revolutions and fierce contests for power, the Jewish war was still continued by Vespasian; but the expectations of the appearance of a deliverer grew stronger in the breasts of the

lost house of Israel, as their means of defence grew feebler. The prophecy, that the ruler of the world should arise out of the land of Judea, was prevalent throughout the empire. The Jews applied it to their expected Messiah; the Romans, soon tired of the tyranny of Vitellius, to Flavius Vespasian; the Christians alone understood it of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Adonijah hoped, expected, believed, that the hour was fast approaching when his countrymen, headed by the Messiah in person, should fulfil the ancient sacred oracles, and rule all nations. Meanwhile that dear unforgotten country was waging a fierce war with the Roman legions. Jerusalem, that holy city, still strove in vain to avert the awful doom pronounced against her by the lips of that crucified King, whose eyes had wept over her coming woes. Surrounded by a trench, and encompassed about with Gentile armies, "the abomination of desolation stood where it ought not to stand;" the noise of a host was around her sacred walls, while within their guarded circle her guilty children waged a frantic and more terrible war with each other. Famine, rapine, and murder were preying on the vitals of the city; the Gentiles warred without the gates. Adonijah feared that his countrymen were wasting in intestine broils the golden opportunity the civil wars of Rome presented; but he knew not that the Lord himself had sworn to destroy Jerusalem. The captive believed that the Lord Jehovah would yet arise and miraculously deliver the besieged city, as in the days of Hezekiah, and "with his own right hand and holy arm get Himself the victory."

For a time Julius Claudius figured at the court of the new emperor, sharing in his gluttonous feasts and sottish revelries; but rumour whispered ominous things of the instability of Vitellius' government, and the wary courtier retired in time to avoid the coming storm.

The strange fondness that makes us regard inanimate things with a species of idolatry that have even touched those we love, made Adonijah hoard with jealous care the last memorials of the dead Lucia—the fair ringlet torn from her beloved head, the cruel dagger, even the vellum scrolls containing the life of Him he deemed a false prophet, but whom the Christian wife of Nymphidius had worshipped as a God. Curiosity tempted him one day to unroll the sheets stained deeply with the life-blood of his only love. By chance his eyes fell upon the section containing the predicted woes of Jerusalem. To a candid and impartial reader the events of the present times were so clearly marked out, that nothing but the blindness of bigotry could have prevented him from acknowledging that the prophecy was about to be fulfilled. The fanatic zeal of Adonijah, and his detestation of the very name of Christianity, came between him and conviction; he crushed the ominous record of coming woe beneath his feet, and clung to the vain hope that Israel would yet conquer and prevail.

The revolution that hurled the monster Vitellius from the throne, filled Italy and Rome with slaughter; and the splendid military career of Antonius Primus called Vespasian home to reign. Then the expectations of Adonijah grew stronger, and, forgetting that the brave son filled the father's place, awaited the advent of the Messiah with enthusiastic and unshaken faith. The despatches of Titus to the emperor and senate spoke of the fall of Jerusalem as a certainty, but the Hebrew slave gathered hope even from circumstances where others would have despaired.

Julius Claudius was not very well received by Vespasian, who despised his effeminate habits and dissolute manners; nor was the Sybarite better pleased with the rough, plain dealing of the veteran warrior whom the army and people had elevated to the throne. He resolved to avoid the court till the return of Titus, who in his dissipated youth had been his intimate companion and friend.

The hues of autumn were beginning to embrown the woods of Italy, but the heat of summer still lingered as loth to quit the plains. The excessive warmth of the season induced the luxurious Julius to change the sultry atmosphere of Rome for Tivoli, whose vicinity to the metropolis made it a very desirable abode to a man who loved to hear all the gossip of the court. An attempt to assassinate him was made by Tigranes at this place while he was enjoying his afternoon repose. From this danger Adonijah, who heard his cries, delivered him, by attacking the assassin, wounding, and disarming him. Tigranes, who had loved Lucius Claudius, had determined to revenge his death; and, as he lay mortally wounded on the ground, boldly avowed his motive, reviling Adonijah for frustrating what appeared to him an act of justice.

Adonijah was startled at the accusation. The countenance of Julius confirmed, he thought, its truth. That tremor, that deadly paleness, that cowering eye, looked like guilt. Scarcely could he restrain his hand from plunging the dagger, yet reeking with the blood of Tigranes, into the breast of the fratricide he had just preserved from a violent death. From the promises, the profuse thanks of his master he turned away with disgust. Julius read his feelings in his expressive face, and hated him from that moment.

This incident gave Julius an aversion to Tivoli, and made him fix on Tusculum for his permanent abode. Nothing could be more beautiful than the situation of this villa; crowned by the dark woods of those mountains from whose heights Hannibal first descried the towers of Rome, adorned as it was by nature and art, and decorated by the effeminate but tasteful hand of a master whose quick talents were all lent to the service of luxury. The delicious coolness of this retreat restored the drooping frame of the little Lucius to health, who had long pined for the pure air of the country during his father's abode in Rome. The affection Adonijah felt for this charming child partook largely of the paternal character, and he loved to trace in his open brow and sweet pensive smile the looks of those who were then only ashes. He taught the babe to worship the great Being he adored, and to repeat many a sweet psalm and prayer in that tongue become as familiar to his infant lips as his own native Latin. Dearly he loved the boy, and dearly was his love returned by the lavish fondness of his pupil, who twined his feeble innocence about his strength, and would not leave him for a single moment. This fragile blossom, fair and evanescent as those sweet flowers that bloom at morn only to die at eve, required the utmost care to secure its frail existence. For some days the heats even approached these mountain solitudes, and paled the new-blown roses on the cheek of Lucius. The burning atmosphere of Rome seemed to breathe among these rocks and vales. Not a breeze stirred the trees; the dark woods above them, even the lighter foliage, drooped towards the earth, parched and motionless; the very birds forgot to wander through the air, or sing,

for nature herself seemed asleep and silent. The sun, sinking beneath clouds whose fantastic shapes rivalled the surrounding mountains, foretold a coming storm. Reclining on a marble couch covered with soft cushions, the voluptuous Julius Claudius in vain courted the approaches of sleep. A young Greek slave stood near him agitating the air with a plume of peacock's feathers, another youth was singing to a lute touched by no unskilful hand, to lull the Sybarite to repose, or at least to please his ear. At a little distance stood the Hebrew slave; the young son of Julius was sleeping on a cushion at his feet. But the eye of Adonijah rested not upon the boy's pale cheek, so lately the object of his dearest solicitude; he was watching the dense thundercloud that hung over the capital of the world, enveloping temple, column, and triumphal arch in a dark shadow resembling a funeral pall. What thought suddenly flushed the features of Adonijah, and flashed in his dark dilated orbs? To him the hour of vengeance appeared nigh; the long-expected, long-wished-for hour, destined to give destruction to the Romans and deliverance to the children of his people. Doubtless the Lord of hosts was about to overwhelm that proud seat of Gentile tyranny and sin, as anciently He overthrew the accursed cities of the plain, leaving the dead waveless sea to record the mighty miracle for ever. Suddenly the death-like repose of nature was broken by a rushing wind—a hollow sepulchral sound, as if from the bowels of the earth, that heaved and yawned as if ready to sink beneath their feet. The forest trees bent to the wild blast like saplings, the rocks rent; above and below the dreadful thunders uttered their voices, while the heavens appeared on fire. The affrighted slaves crowded about their master in fearful expectation. The only persons who manifested no terror were Adonijah and the young Lucius. The babe slept tranquilly, undisturbed by the din of the fierce elements; the Hebrew stood proud and exulting like an avenging spirit in the front of that alarmed assembly. He trembled not; his figure seemed to rise to more majestic height, his dark locks ruffled with the electric wind streamed back from his temples, giving a wild grandeur to his whole figure. No sound issued from his parted lips, but they moved as if his communings were with the awful Power he mysteriously worshipped. The menial crew surveyed him with mixed emotions of wonder and affright, almost imagining his spells had called up the storm. There was a momentary pause, a sudden hush of jarring sounds, an awful repose, and darkness that might be felt. At this instant a party of Julius Claudius' friends rushed into the villa, exclaiming—

"Shelter, Julius Claudius, and a hearty welcome! the news we bring deserves it. We were on our way from Rome to thee when the storm overtook us."

"'Tis an awful night," returned their host, "and ye are dearly welcome to me. My boy sleeps through it undisturbed and peacefully."

"Surely in such a night as this," cried Antonius, "Romulus became a star. Old surly Vespasian may stand a chance of sparkling in the sky, for the tempest hangs lowering over the palace of the Cæsars, as if it meant to heap the building on his head. But you ask not of our tidings."

"From Judea, I guess, and Titus is victorious."

"Jerusalem has fallen," continued Antonius, "and the temple of her God is laid in ashes."

A vivid blaze of lightning dispelled the darkness, and rendered every object distinctly visible. Adonijah still stood erect, but his features expressed amazement and despair. The flash was followed by a peal of thunder that seemed as it would rend the rocks, and pile them in heaps upon the shattering dwelling, as its long-reverberating echoes leapt from cliff to cliff; but far above all, mingling its tones with the dissonance of the warring elements, rose the cry that burst from the lips of the Hebrew slave, like the wail of the guardian spirit of his lost land.

The darkness, the tumult passed away, the moon broke forth in peaceful beauty, shining over the desolated scene. Each cowering head was raised, and then with superstitious awe every finger was pointed towards the prostrate form of Adonijah, whom they believed had fallen a victim to the avenging gods.

With terror in their looks the slaves raised the Hebrew from the ground; they found him unscathed, unscorched, breathing, but scarcely alive,—no victim to the infernal gods, though sinking beneath his own contending feelings.

His eyes had never marked the bolt of heaven, his ear had never heard the awful peal that blanched every cheek, unnerved every bosom; for the deep knell of his native land had thrilled to his brain, and closed his ear to all other sounds.

Gradually life resumed its functions, he arose and stood upon his feet; but his look was wild, his answers to the questions curiosity or compassion put to him unconnected and irrelevant, his reason appeared to have forsaken him. The little Lucius, awake and fractious, stretched out his arms towards his guardian friend from his father's knee. He seemed to remember the child; the only sign of consciousness or intelligence he gave, was a look of affection directed towards him.

From that dreary night many weeks rolled by, and still the brain of Adonijah was disturbed. He raved of his own land, but his accents no longer flowed in the southern tongue. He imagined himself to be that patriot seer who remained in Judea to wail and lament over the desolations of the captive land. Stretched on the lonely heights, or reclining beside the mountain-stream, the lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah were the only sounds he uttered. Memory supplied no other idea but this wild personification, the coinage of madness and misery.

As the mental malady of the unfortunate Hebrew was free from any attempts to injure himself or others, he was permitted to wander at will, unrestrained by bonds or watchful eyes; but, from the hour in which he was struck with this worst of all calamities, the little Lucius was separated from him. Sorely pined the bereaved child for his tutor, while his cheek grew pale and hollow, and his mournful wails resounded in every part of the villa.

One day, exhausted by his own ravings, Adonijah threw himself down by a fountain in the garden, and a kind of stupor more resembling death than sleep came over him, when by accident the infant Lucius perceived him, and, springing from his nurse, ran up to his unfortunate friend, flung his arms about his neck, and covered his face and hands with kisses, calling him by all those endearing epithets infancy lavishes upon the objects of its love. Those sweet silvery accents awoke an answering chord in the breast of Adonijah. He pressed the boy to his sad bosom again and again,

returned his caresses with passionate fondness, and bathed him with his burning tears. These tears were the first he had shed since he had learned the fate of his country. Sanity returned. Memory resumed her powers, and, though no beacon of hope arose to cheer the dismal future or illumine the dim darkness that overshadowed Israel, he looked upon the innocent creature before him, and felt that the love of Lucius to him was like the fountain in the desert to the fainting traveller.

From that day neither the father of the young Lucius nor his numerous attendants could prevent his becoming the companion of the Hebrew slave. Any attempt to debar him from the society of his dear preceptor occasioned such gusts of passion on the part of the child, followed by sickness and languor, that Julius was forced to acquiesce, lest he should lose the sole scion of his noble house.

How fond, how proud, looked the boy while leading his melancholy friend from place to place, guided by the dictates of his own playful caprice, now sitting on Adonijah's knee, twisting his ivory fingers in his jetty ringlets, or flinging his own golden curls against them, and then laughing at the contrast they presented as mirrored in the fountain at their feet. When the dark mood stole over the senses of Adonijah, when the spirit of melancholy madness threatened to return, the sweet face of his young guardian would reflect his sadness, and he would repeat after Adonijah those wailing Hebrew strains that fell ever and anon from his lips. The sound of his own sacred language would recall Adonijah to himself; he would wipe away the tears from the fair face of the child, while a torrent of grief and tenderness flowed from his eyes; those waters of affliction would ease the burning throbbing of his brain, and the mental delusion for a season would pass away.

These fits of delirium became less frequent, and the attenuated form of Adonijah gradually became rounded with health; he resumed his instructions to Lucius, and his pen was again employed in his master's service. Still he perceived a marked change in Julius' manner towards him,—a failing of that respect he had hitherto received from his household. He imputed it to the fallen state of his people; but his late aberration was, in fact, the only cause.

Julius Claudius was much occupied in preparing a gladiatorial show, to welcome Titus to Rome, where he, with many thousand captive Jews, was hourly expected. Unfortunately Tullus, his favourite gladiator, was attacked with a mortal malady, and died the day before that appointed for the triumphal entry of the conqueror of Judea, leaving him without a suitable successor. Suddenly he bethought himself of the courage and former prowess of Adonijah, whose form combined at once all the requisites of strength and beauty required to give distinction to the combatant. His malady might return, and render him useless for anything; on this occasion, at least, he would be invaluable to his master.

The summons of Julius brought Adonijah into his presence; the Roman hesitated an instant before he dared to issue forth commands so contrary to the last testament of his brother, so derogatory to his own honour.

"Hebrew," at length he said in a tone of haughty authority, "I lost last night Tullus, the most valiant of my gladiators, and I depute thee to take his place. Thy strength and former feats in arms will make thee more than a match for thy opponent, and, if thou conquer, freedom shall be the certain guerdon of the victory."

"Freedom!" retorted Adonijah with bitter scorn; "what is freedom now to me? Judea is become 'a waste howling wilderness,' and 'our holy, our beautiful house, where our forefathers worshipped, is burnt up with fire.' The sacred vessels and the book of the law have become the spoil of the Gentile conqueror, to whom the people of God have fallen into a second and more terrible captivity. What can freedom offer in exchange for the blood of a fellow-creature? Man, I will not do thy bidding: it is written in the law, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'"

"Slave," replied Julius Claudius haughtily, "thy limbs are mine, and unless thou obeyest my will, and fightest this battle with them, I will rend them piecemeal."

"Aye, do so—do anything, profligate, ungrateful wretch, but make Adonijah the murderer thou art. Violate thine oath to Lucius—to the virtuous, the valiant, and the wise, thy wicked arts destroyed. Reward the man who saved thee from the just steel Tigranes drew against thee, by slaying him in defiance of gratitude and honour."

"I did not kill him; he died in his own bed!" replied Julius, hesitating and confounded at the accusation. "Who said I poisoned him?"

"I demand the full performance of thy promise, and claim the freedom bequeathed me by the noble Lucius Claudius. I did not mean to ask it at thy hands, but now necessity compels me."

"Thou didst promise to be a faithful servant to me," continued the quailed and humbled master.

"Man, I have been more than faithful; I have stood between thee and death and hell. In services, but not in crimes, I will still yield obedience to thy will. Go, seek some other Cain to do thy bidding." With these words the Hebrew slave quitted the presence of his master, with an air of majesty that confounded the little-minded man who held the power of life and death over him, unrestrained by law or principle.

"Proud Jew, I will crush thee yet!" muttered Julius. "Thou shalt view the degradation of thy people, which to a soul like thine will be bitterer than death. Patiently he will not see it, and a word or look will do for him what I dare not do—will destroy him."

That evening Julius Claudius and his household returned to Rome, where magnificent preparations were making for the triumphant entry of Vespasian and his son.

All the slaves received new habits suitable to their servile station; Adonijah alone was given the costume of his own country; the magnificence of the material evidently referring to his former condition, rather than to his present circumstances. The malice of Julius desired to make it evident to all men from what country his slave derived his birth; a measure likely to draw down upon his person the cruel mockeries of a people at once effeminate and barbarous, flushed too with the success their armies had gained over the miserable remnant of Israel.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
How shall ye flee away and be at rest!
The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave!"

BYRON.

In obedience to the insnaring commands of his unfeeling master, Adonijah stood near the Porta Triumphalis,^[15] through which that father and son were to pass on their way to the Capitol, who had subdued the chosen people of the Lord, and led them to their long and woeful dispersion. The procession was headed by a band of chosen musicians, who tuned their instruments and voices to the praise of the victors. Next came the select youths who led the gilded and garlanded victims, and after them appeared the spoils of the vanquished nation and the long file of Hebrew captives splendidly arrayed as if in mockery to their misery. Then the sacred contents enshrined in the holy of holies were openly exposed to the view of the heathen multitude. The seven golden candlesticks, the book of the law, the magnificent vessels given by Solomon, the golden vine, and all the costly offerings that native Jew or foreign proselyte had consecrated to the service of the temple of the Lord. The heart of Adonijah burned with grief and indignation as he witnessed the desecration of these hallowed things; he felt that God had indeed utterly forsaken his people. Art was exhausted to make the spectacle imposing; the pageants represented with cruel fidelity every city, town, or fortress of his unhappy country, with the part they had taken in this disastrous war. The ensigns were adorned with paintings representing the land of Judea before the armies of the Gentile conquerors had defaced the Eden-like prospect, and on the reverse bore the pictured semblance of its present desolation. A horrible fascination riveted the eyes of Adonijah to these affecting images of national woe, but a sensation almost allied to joy thrilled through his frame as he gazed on the ruined towers of Jotapata, and remembered that all his kindred had perished there. They did not swell the train of wretched captives, who clanked their chains after the chariot of the victors; their ashes were mingled with the soil of the holy, the beloved Judea. A fiercer, sterner feeling agitated him as he looked upon the sullen face of Simon Gioras, the monster whose crimes he believed had drawn down the vengeance of Heaven upon Jerusalem, and who basely survived the ruin he had wrought. The assassin showed no generous pride, no constancy, no remorse; he meanly cowered from the doom awaiting him, and surviving the death of honour craved for life. The indignant Hebrew turned away sick with disgust and loathing from the traitor. Unconsciously he joined in the shout the people raised to greet the emperor and his son. The *Io Triumphe!* burst from his lips; he forgot he was uniting his voice to hail the approach of the conquerors of Judea, for reason was fast forsaking him, and the fire of insanity sparkled in his restless eyes as he turned them on the pageant representing the captivity of the holy city, when they suddenly encountered the glance of a female captive chosen for her surpassing beauty to typify the fallen genius of the land. She was sitting under a palm-tree (the emblematical symbol of Judah) in such an immovable attitude of disconsolate sorrow that the spectators doubted whether the graceful drooping form was a miracle of art, or a living, breathing image of despair. Her dark dishevelled ringlets descended to her feet, partially veiling her downcast face. Her eyes so black, so intensely bright, glanced wildly beneath the long jetty lashes that fringed them, and then expanded fearfully as they met the fixed look of Adonijah, who echoed back her cry of agonized recognition, smiting his breast vehemently, and exclaiming, "Tamar, miserable Tamar! woe is me, for thou hast brought me very low, my sister! Unhappy maid, why didst thou not perish with Jotapata? Oh that thou hadst died when the Roman steel was gleaming over thee! The Gentile chains are round thy hands, my sister. Awake, awake, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, thou captive daughter of Zion; thou that hast drunk of the cup of trembling, who art drunken with sorrow, but not with wine."

Tamar answered these unconnected ravings with a look of such intense misery, that it instantly recalled the wandering senses of her wretched brother, and united the severed chain of reason anew. In that single look might be read her whole dreadful story. It told of wrong, of shame, of bitter bondage, of unmerited scorn, of all the woes and outrages lovely helpless woman is doomed to suffer in captivity, but which her chaste lip can never utter.

Adonijah saw it all; he rushed forward, and with desperate strength drove back the thickening crowd, and, leaping on the car, caught her in his arms, exclaiming with a deep and bitter cry, "Tamar, my sister, we will never part!"

The poor broken-hearted captive bowed herself upon her brother's neck, murmured feebly his name, shrouded her face in his bosom, and died without a sigh or struggle.

The tumult, the roar of the furious multitude, the weapons that glittered round him, were unheard, unseen by Adonijah, who, holding his dead sister in his arms, was pouring over her remains a wailing lamentation in his own language, whose wild pathos, could its meaning have reached their ears, might have softened even the enraged populace then thirsting for his blood.

The cause of the uproar was quickly made known to Vespasian, whose voice interposed between the people and their intended victim. He commanded some soldiers of the Prætorian cohorts to seize the Jew who had interrupted the triumph, and convey him to the Mamertine prison. In a moment Adonijah was overpowered, fettered, and hurried from the scene where the last act of his country's tragedy was performing, to the depth of that dreadful dungeon.

The procession proceeded forward along the Via Sacra till it reached the Capitol, where, according to the barbarous ancient usage, Simon Gioras, the captive leader of the Jews, was to be put to death. A ferocious joy then sat on every face as the lictors flung the rope round the neck of the guilty wretch and dragged him to the edge of the Tarpæian rock, over which they hurled him trembling and shrinking from the death his crimes deserved. The imprecations the captive Jews heaped upon the mangled victim were mingled with the triumphant yells with which the Romans

greeted his fall and stifled his expiring cries. Thus died Simon the Assassin, whose end was as dastardly as his life was cruel.

The day of triumph drew near to its close, but the distant shouts of the mad multitude still at intervals met the throbbing ears of Adonijah as he lay fettered on the flinty floor of the dungeon, listening to every sound with the intense attention of one who expects every instant to receive the sentence of death. Between him and the fathomless gulf of eternity only a brief space apparently intervened. The harrowing excitement that had shaken his reason only a few hours ago subsided into a melancholy consciousness of the reality of those events that had jarred every fibre of his brain. He wished to lift the dim veil that overshadowed his own destiny and that of his outcast people. Where was that mighty arm that had “divided the waves of the Red Sea for His ransomed to pass through,” and then commanded the exulting billows to return to their appointed place, overwhelming the impious Pharaoh and his warlike host? Where was the promised Messiah, where the hope of Israel? Who now should recall the scattered tribes, and bind up the incurable wounds of the daughter of Zion? What hand could heal the broken-hearted captive of Judah, condemned to become a curse to the whole earth?

Then from contemplating his country’s woes his thoughts turned to her—so long numbered in his memory with the dead, so vainly found, only to die within his arms. How sadly seemed her image to rise before his mental vision, not fair and bright as in those happier days when the brother and sister were all the world to each other, when Tamar appeared a creature of happiness and smiles, full of song and sunshine!

Tamar, the dishonoured desolate captive, Tamar become the emblem of her nation’s humiliation and despair—alone met his view. Again he seemed to hear her thrilling cry of recognition; again her dark, troubled eye flashed across his sight; again he felt the last wild throb of her breaking heart beat against his bosom.

The shades of thick coming darkness could not exclude the cruel picture; he closed his burning eye-balls, but still her figure appeared to stand distinct and sad before his shrouded orbs. His spirit sank into the lowest depths of dejection, all the curses of the law seemed poured out upon his head during these lonely hours. “Why hast thou forsaken me?” cried he; “my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Suddenly the remembrance of those denunciations written in the Gospel, which he had trampled upon in his unbelieving indignation, came over his mind with the rapidity of lightning. All had been accomplished, all had been fulfilled. In darkness—fast bound in affliction and iron—a fear that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ entered the doubting soul of the Hebrew. He strove to harden his heart against conviction, but still conviction struggled mightily within him—till, exhausted with the mental warfare he sustained, he sank into a deep, death-like sleep, from which he did not awaken till the wandering sunbeams glimmering on his chains recalled him to consciousness and misery.

The morning brought a companion to share in his sorrows—an elderly man of his own tribe, one of the defenders of Jerusalem under Simon Gioras. Every particular of this memorable siege was related by Josadec with terrible minuteness—the divisions among the leaders, the sacrilege, the murder, the cruel famine, and that deed whose matchless horror had made Titus swear “that the sun should never shoot his beams into a city where such a barbarity had been committed.” Adonijah groaned; he writhed in agony, a cold dew bathed his trembling limbs, his hair stood up, but Josadec, like a person rendered insensible to feeling by the dreadful force of habit, continued his revolting relations with an apathy that disgusted his sensitive auditor. The signs and portents of the nation’s fall; the warning voice whose perpetual cry of “Woe, woe!” had never been mute till the Roman missile silenced it for ever; the blazing star hanging over the devoted city in the form of a sword; the mighty sound as of a host rushing forth from the holy of holies with the awful words, “Let us depart;”^[16] the temple laid in ashes, the foundations of the city ploughed up by Titus’ orders;—all convinced Adonijah that the Lord Himself had utterly forsaken the Jews. His arm had fought against them, and all the curses written in the book of the law were now fulfilled upon them. Again the awful prophecies concerning Jerusalem came into his mind. Jesus of Nazareth had foretold the coming miseries of Jerusalem.^[17] “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Was Adonijah to acknowledge Him as a prophet, or as the promised Messiah, set at nought and rejected by the Jews? He was confounded. Unresolved and terrified, feeling himself exposed to the wrath of God, yet hanging on the very verge of eternity, the Hebrew knew not what to think; he wished to pray, yet like the prophet could only say, “Thou hast covered thyself with a thick cloud so that our prayer cannot pass through.” His companion too derided him. “God has forsaken us for ever; we are now without a priest, and without a king, and without a sacrifice: all prayer is vain, from this second captivity there can be no return.”

Adonijah’s heart was softening from its hardness, and, pierced with a sense of his sins, he poured forth a flood of tears. Josadec, sullen and immovable as marble, turned contemptuously away, nor did he again address himself to his unfortunate companion.

That evening both received their sentence: Josadec was doomed to combat with wild beasts in the arena; Adonijah was condemned to fight with one of his own countrymen in the Circus Maximus. Josadec received the intelligence with sullen apathy; Adonijah, with indignation. Raising his hand towards heaven, he swore by the Almighty name of God to suffer the severest tortures rather than aim a hostile blow at a son of Israel. Dearer than life at that moment seemed the captive children of his people; dearer in their degradation and misery than when he was free and pursuing the flying legions of Cestius Galus, flushed with victory, and believing that he was fighting the battles of the Lord.

[15] See Appendix, [Note VIII.](#)

[16] See Appendix, [Note IX.](#)

CHAPTER XVIII.

“The dying Other from the gloom she drew,
Supported on his shorten’d arm he leans,
Prone agonizing; with incumbent fate,
Heavy declines his head; yet dark beneath
The suffering feature sullen vengeance lowers,
Shame, indignation, unaccomplish’d rage,
And still the cheated eye expects his fall.”

THOMSON.

The fatal morning dawned refulgently over the metropolis of the world, but the eyes of the Hebrew captives shrank from before its beams, loathing the light, and vainly wishing for its decline. A hundred days of festivity had been decreed by the emperor to the Roman people, in which the children of Israel were to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, or compelled to slay each other,^[18] to gratify the barbarous tastes of those who held them in chains. Adonijah and his opponent were included in the latter combats, as persons to whom no mercy would be shown. Both were still in the flower of youth, in the glory of their strength, who were thus brought forth to die.

The feelings of a warrior were not so entirely sunk in slavery as to permit Adonijah to assume the sword and buckler without experiencing a momentary elevation of soul. It was not till he found himself within the circle of the vast amphitheatre, and encountered the hostile glances of many thousand eyes, that he remembered that this was no battle-field, but the arena on which he was to be “butchered for a Roman spectacle.” Even in this bitter moment he confronted the spectators with unshrinking firmness, till among that living mass he distinguished the infant Lucius, and felt the tender emotions of his heart towards the child suffuse his eyes.

Titus sat in state to view the spectacle with the lovely Jewish queen by his side. She, endowed with Mariamne’s talents and fatal beauty, yet wanting her nobility of mind and virtue, was become the absolute ruler of him whose mighty arm had enslaved her people,—that people whose miseries were then exhibiting before her eyes. Julius Claudius was seated near the lovers, apparently enjoying familiar converse with them both. His little son, gaily attired as Cupid, listlessly reclined his fair young head against his father’s knee. Art had supplied to his pale cheek the roses that pining for Adonijah had banished, but the glaring hue ill accorded with the fair delicate cheek, whose pallid tints it could not overcome. All this was marked by the Hebrew with painful interest, even in the present awful hour, for the child was the only thing left upon earth that he could love. The craving feeling for sympathy that exists in every human bosom, however cold and unpromising its exterior may be, led him to salute the infant Lucius by name.

The boy raised his languid head and, recognising his unhappy friend, uttered a joyful cry, and, stretching forth his arms towards him, returned his greeting with delight, inviting him to join him by his lively and animated gestures.

Half-unmanned, the gladiator turned away his tearful eyes from the child to his opponent. The face of his countryman was averted from him, and for a moment he expected to behold the familiar features of a friend. They faced each other, and the hostile names of Adonijah and Ithamar were mutually uttered on one side in the tone of defiance, on the other with amazement.

Adonijah indeed, in recognising the war-wasted countenance of Ithamar, scarcely remembered that they had once been foes. Years of bondage and exile had nearly obliterated all traces of former hatred from his breast. No rival, but an old companion in arms appeared to stand before him—one who had fought for the same sacred cause, and was united with him in the same sad brotherhood of sorrow. He lowered the point of his weapon, saying as he did so, “Ithamar, in me you behold no hostile opponent; my hatred has perished with my country: I know no enemies but Romans.” He stretched forth his hand in token of amity, and anxiously awaited the answer of his foe.

Ithamar’s haggard features betrayed surprise, but expressed no generous feeling. Sullenly he repulsed the friendly pledge and assumed a posture of defence.

“Hear me, Ithamar, hear me, my countryman,” continued Adonijah; “I have sworn by the holy name of Jehovah not to raise a hostile weapon against the bosom of an Israelite. I only wait thy bidding to throw away these arms and tread them in the dust. Let an oath of peace be between us; let the unbelieving Gentiles cast us to beasts less savage than themselves, rather than force us to slay each other for their sport. Harken, my brother, to my words, and hallow with me the commandments of the Lord in the sight of this heathen people.”

Ithamar broke into a laugh so wild and horrid that it sounded rather like the yell of a demon than the expression of mirth. He cast upon his adversary a withering look, and all the hoarded malice of vanished years of rivalry spake in that glance of hatred and disdain. Without waiting for the usual signal, he rushed upon Adonijah, who was wounded before he had time to put himself in a posture of defence.

Enraged at this perfidious conduct, Adonijah forgot his vow, and, animated at once by the desire of revenge and the instinctive feeling of self-preservation, gave blow for blow and wound for wound.

Never were two combatants better matched in size or strength or skill, and the gratified spectators cheered and applauded every stroke, betting largely upon the heads of both, as caprice or interest suggested.

Julius Claudius, aware of the incipient malady lurking in the frame of his slave, ventured great sums upon Ithamar, who he supposed possessed more judgment to direct his courage than

Adonijah. In this he was mistaken, for the pressure of calamity, that had overwhelmed the sensitive nature of Adonijah for a time, was far less nearly allied to madness than the fanatic zeal of Ithamar.

Blind with rage, the Sadducee rushed upon his enemy, determined to crush him with one last decisive blow. Adonijah reeled beneath its deadly force, but collecting with a mighty effort his failing powers, plunged his sword into the bosom of Ithamar, who fell dead at his feet, yielding up his breath without a cry or struggle.

A long loud plaudit from sixty thousand spectators greeted the victor, who heeded it not, but bending sadly over his victim remembered his broken vow. A moment he contemplated the sullen features of Ithamar, another instant and the amphitheatre with its circling thousands swam before his sight; the next he slowly sank in that attitude immortalized by sculpture; then his dark locks swept the bloody floor of the arena and rested on the lifeless bosom of his fallen foe.

A second shout, more loud, more lengthened than that which lately hailed his victory, greeted now his fall. It thrilled through every nerve of Adonijah's frame, and yet he seemed only to hear Julius Claudius' single voice. He opened his heavy eyes, and turned upon his worthless master a look that told him that his soul was still unsubdued, for feebly raising his hand he appeared to defy him to the last. That indignant gesture exhausted the fallen gladiator's remaining strength; but the latest sound he heard was the wailing cry of the infant Lucius, then sight and sense forsook him, and he lay unconscious, yet still breathing, before that vast and eager multitude.

The spectators were divided in their feelings; but Titus, who in the intrepid gladiator had recognised the captive of Jotapata, was inclined to grant him mercy. This clement feeling was opposed by Julius Claudius, who declared "that, having disturbed the triumph, he ought to die," in which opinion he was seconded by all those who had ventured too much upon the vanquished Ithamar.

Berenice espoused the side of the fallen victor, and, incensed at the positive manner in which Julius Claudius dared to oppose her wishes, determined to make him feel her power. She pleaded warmly in behalf of Adonijah, and with Titus she could not plead in vain. He gave the signal of mercy, commanding the attendants of the circus to see the gladiator's wounds looked to, and to let nothing be wanting to promote his cure.

Not content with having gained her point, the fair Jewess exerted her influence to lessen Julius Claudius in the eyes of her lover, of whose regard she was jealous; and the proud Roman patrician had the mortification of discovering that a word or hint from this fascinating foreigner could shake the affection of his early friend.

Like most other Romans of the period, Julius despised strangers, and this he had suffered Berenice to perceive, and the beautiful Jewess was not of a temper to look over an affront. Unfeminine as she was, this princess possessed the womanly failing at least of seeking to humble those who contemned her power. She exerted her brilliant wit to make the effeminate Roman appear ridiculous, and succeeded so well that Titus, who like the Persian king of old smiled when his fair enslaver smiled, and frowned when she frowned, laughed outright at her sallies. Stung to the quick by this contemptuous treatment, Julius, no longer in the humour to play the courtier, made an unguarded rejoinder which drew tears from the eyes of the royal beauty, and looks of angry displeasure from her princely lover. Julius, deeply wounded, took his little son by the hand, and withdrew from the amphitheatre full of the mortifying reflection that a tear or smile from this highly gifted though guilty foreigner was more to Titus than the intimate companionship of years.

Julius Claudius had displayed the utmost political adroitness during the fearful contests that had made Italy a war-field and a grave. He had shown an acute judgment in abandoning the prince whom fortune was about to desert. He forsook Galba's adopted son Piso at a critical point of time. With Otho he remained till that emperor left Rome, for he had foreseen that the Prætorian army would not be able to compete with the German legions. The splendid but erratic course of one of his dissipated friends, Antonius Primus, a young Roman knight, whose participation in forging a will had caused his banishment, but to whom Galba gave a legion, had made Julius forsake the failing cause of Vitellius, though he had been one of his chief favourites. He had declared for Vespasian in time to save himself from confiscation, and when Licinius Mucianus, the friend of Titus, took upon himself the direction of public affairs, and Antonius Primus fell into disgrace, he abandoned him, and attached himself to the man who had reaped the blood-stained laurels of the general whose arm had placed Vespasian on the throne of Rome.

From Vespasian himself Julius Claudius had expected no marks of favour, but Titus had received his old friend with open arms; yet his star had declined before that of a woman whose years nearly doubled those of her youthful lover. But the charms of Berenice, like those of Cleopatra, defied the power of time, for her intellectual powers enabled her to retain her beauty beyond the usual period assigned for the possession of a gift so precious, rare, and fleeting. Her fascinating manners veiled her disposition, which once, and once only, had betrayed the softness of the woman and the feelings of a patriot. She had formerly stood a barefooted suppliant for her own people before the tribunal of a merciless Roman procurator,^[19] and had pleaded for the Jews, and vainly pleaded, for the man was avaricious, and the tears and abasement of a beautiful woman had offered no counter-charm to the greater influence of gold and the gratification of a barbarous revenge. History has recorded to her honour this solitary instance of compassion shown by the guilty sister of Agrippa.

She had persecuted her sister Drusilla, who was supposed to be the most beautiful woman in the world; but, though that unfortunate princess had been forgetful of the obligation of her first marriage vow, her fidelity to Felix, and the self-devotion that induced her to die with him, proved at least that she possessed a depth of tenderness of which Berenice was incapable.

Julius Claudius saw that he had exposed himself to the malice of an artful and revengeful woman, when the irritation of gambling and drunkenness had passed away, and he returned to his house, mortified, disappointed, and miserably anxious. But a heavier trial awaited Julius Claudius than the mere loss of Titus' favour;—an arrow keener than ridicule or mere worldly disappointment struck

him to the very heart. All his affections that were not centered upon self, rested upon his child. The beauty, the talents, the lovely disposition of Lucius had endeared him to the heart of the dissipated parent, who was proud that such a scion should be destined to carry the name of the Claudii down to posterity. Destined to prolong thy name and lineage, Julius Claudius? Oh no! a fairer inheritance is given to the young heir of thy honours, even one "that fadeth not away." That very night his hopeful young son was smitten with sore disease; in vain art was exhausted to stay its direful progress, in vain Julius promised half his wealth to save his child; now invoking deities whom he had despised, now seeking from the Chaldean sorcerer for some charm to cure a malady that defied the skill of the physician. The child, burning with fever and raving in delirium, turned away from his unhappy father as if he had forgotten him, while he called continually upon the name of Adonijah till his accents grew faint. Fainter and fainter, and yet more laboured, the suffering infant drew his fleeting breath, and Julius had no other child, and he loved the boy so much. He could not stay to see the end; but rushing from the chamber of death went forth he knew not whither—longing to die, but shrinking back in terror from plunging into an unknown futurity.

While the frantic father fled forth into the night, an aged freedwoman, an ancient servant of the house, entered the forsaken chamber, knelt by the couch of the dying boy, and holding his hand in hers, prayed fervently for him.

It was Fulvia the deaconess, who, perceiving that the soul was in the act of departing, took water and administered the rite of baptism to the expiring scion of her patron's lofty stem. He opened his eyes, seemed to recognise her familiar features, and smiled as he expired.

[18] See Appendix, [Note XI](#).

[19] Gessius Florus.

CHAPTER XIX.

—“The dead cannot grieve;
Not a sob, not a sigh, meets mine ear,
Which compassion itself could relieve;
Ah! sweetly they slumber, nor hope, love, or fear;
Peace, peace, is the watchword, the only one here.”

Julius Claudius found himself opposite the sepulchral monument that contained the ashes of his ancient house before he lost the wild impetus that had driven him from his home. He opened the gate which soon was to unclothe again to receive the last and dearest of his race. A light gleamed within, but, lost in bitter communion with himself, its presence created no surprise. His pride, his ambition, his glory, must all descend into this abode of death. The deep stillness of the midnight hour calmed for a few brief moments the feelings that urged him to fall upon his sword, and end at once his base career by suicide.

The sight of this last home of the Claudii made him pause in the midst of his dark thoughts to muse upon the nothingness of human things. The dead around him had tasted joy and sorrow, had been legislators, orators, and warriors, though now unconscious dust. The fame of their mighty deeds, and the inscriptions on the funeral urns that contained their ashes, alone revealed that they had once existed. Such as they were must he also become.

These reflections, so new to the man of pleasure, the votary of the world, gave birth to stranger still. As in a glass he saw himself as others saw him, and loathed the faithful picture. His whole life passed in review before him. His early excesses, his companionship with Nero, the murder of his brother, the forced marriage of his sister, the snare he had laid for Adonijah, for the man who had preserved him from the dagger of Tigranes, the death of his own child, of which he considered himself the cause,—all crowded upon his soul with the dreadful force of truth. Tears streamed from his eyes, tears the bitterest that ever wrung the heart of guilt. Suddenly the cries of wild revelry smote upon the ear of the conscience-stricken wretch, who hastily entered the mausoleum to screen himself from the observation of the midnight brawlers.

The sepulchral lamp burned dimly in the abode of death. The feeble ray glimmered upon urns surmounted by the effigies of those whose ashes were mouldering within the narrow receptacle of human passions and human pride, each effigy showing the gradual advance of art, from the rude moulded clay to the chiselled marble that wore the semblance of life.

The only surviving Claudius stood surrounded by the illustrious dead, feeling himself unworthy to be the last of such a mighty line. His crimes seemed to forbid him to approach a spot wherein reposed the relics of the great, the valiant, and the wise.

A strange fascination attracted him to look upon the effigy of his murdered brother, from which he could not withdraw his eyes. The skilful graver's hand had given to the marble the animated expression of life. The martial form of Lucius Claudius rose before the fratricide in the severe beauty of other years, and the guilty one half expected to hear from the half-closed lips of the statue the impetuous oratory that had characterized the noble Roman in life.

The affectation of piety that had led Julius to adorn the tomb of his brother with this masterpiece of art, did not compel him to view it when completed. The mortified sculptor received his gold, but not his commendations. In this hour, however, he gained in the thrill of agony that vibrated from the brain of Julius to every nerve and rigid muscle the reward due to the admirable fidelity of genius.

As he gazed upon the image of his brother, guilty years of retrospect rushed upon his memory,

till far and vista-like they blended with the happier ones of boyhood, when he was not this blot upon the face of nature, this loathsome compound of luxury and crime. Then he smote upon his breast, and called upon the stately roof to fall and crush him into the atom he wished to be, yet feared he was not. Upon his agony a voice intruded, a voice whose well-remembered tones increased his mental misery almost to madness. He turned round and saw his sister Lucia at his side. From the mild majestic shade he fled affrighted forth, rushing from street to street, still haunted by her voice, her look, her wrongs.

In midnight silence and darkness Julius Claudius pursued his way; he would have given wealth untold at that moment to hear human converse, to see human faces. Suddenly, to his great relief, he encountered on the Julian Way a number of persons, to whom, without being aware of the object for which they were gathering together, he joined himself, reckless of everything but the relief of finding himself among his fellow-men once more. He followed them to the cemetery of Ostorius, entering with them the house of death; whereupon a veiled female, rising from a tripod, admitted him with the rest into a spacious cavity, illuminated by many lamps. Then Julius Claudius comprehended that he was among a midnight assembly of Christians.

The females, closely veiled, ranged themselves on one side of the subterranean temple, the men on the other; but the bewildered intruder shrank behind what appeared to be a tomb, and concealing his features in his mantle remained a silent spectator of the worship of the primitive times.

The Christians' fervent prayers, their melodious and solemn hymns, at once soothed and awed the soul of the guilty man who had so strangely become a witness of their mysterious rites, and when their bishop rose to address the little flock he was almost "persuaded to become a Christian."

The venerable countenance of the preacher seemed not unknown to his new auditor; the august tones of his voice awakened some chord in his memory. The place, too, appeared familiar to his eyes. Suddenly the conviction that he was then present with those Christians from whom he had torn his sister, to compel her to become the wife of Nymphidius, passed through his mind with the rapidity of lightning, but he had then entered this oratory by a different route.

He looked about him fearfully, half expecting to see the victim of that ill-starred marriage appear again before his eyes. The eloquence of the preacher at length so completely fixed his attention, that he forgot his supernatural terrors while listening to his oration.

From the tenor of Linus' discourse it should seem that some young men belonging to his flock had been present at the games of the circus, which the Christians held in deep abhorrence, as may yet be seen in a pathetic passage in the first apology of Justin Martyr. Upon this transgression the second Roman bishop commented with great severity, dwelling upon the sin of murder and its awful consequences in the world to come, with impressive eloquence. "He spake of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," till not only his erring brethren trembled, but the fratricide whom accident had brought among his flock.

For the first time in his life Julius Claudius heard the gospel preached fully, faithfully, preached not only as a message of love, but of wrath to the disobedient and impenitent sinner. To the conscience-stricken Roman patrician the word of God was sharper than a two-edged sword, compelling him to disclose every secret of his guilty breast. With a cry that thrilled to every heart he rushed from his hiding-place, and, falling on his knees before the preacher, besought him to save him from "the wrath to come."

To Him who died, that fallen man might live, Linus directed the despairing criminal at his feet, bidding him "repent and believe in Jesus Christ, whose precious blood would cleanse him from all sin."

"Can guilt like mine find pardon?" cried Julius Claudius, at once unbosoming himself of the hoarded trespasses of years, pausing at each recital in expectation of hearing the preacher pronounce his case hopeless. The transgressions of this sinner, though black as night, were but of too frequent occurrence in Rome to excite the surprise of the holy man to whose ear they were repeated. Like St. Paul he could have said of many of his flock, "and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

He comforted the dejected Julius with the hope of mercy, revealing the salvation brought to sinners by the holy Jesus, exhorting him to repent and be baptized, leading henceforth a new life, even the life of faith through Him who loved "us and gave Himself as a ransom for our sins."

At these consoling words Julius Claudius raised his eyes from the ground, when they suddenly encountered those of his sister Lucia, who was bending over his kneeling form with looks of unutterable love. A second cry broke from his lips; sight and memory failed him, and he sank motionless at the feet of the supposed phantom.

CHAPTER XX.

“But Heaven had gifts for sinful men,
I little knew or thought of then;
And on my night of fear and sin
A ray of peace at last broke in:
A blessed, bright, benignant ray,
The herald of eternal day.

“I’ll bear it to the judgment-seat,
And cast it down at Jesus’ feet;
It there shall be my only plea,
For oh! it tells my Judge that He
Upon the cross vouchsafed to die,
To save from hell such fiends as I!”

Julius Claudius, recovered from the depths of sin and despair, remembered Adonijah, and, quitting the precious remains of his child and the society of his new-found sister, repaired to the place where Adonijah was confined, to make inquiries respecting his state. He learned that the wounds of the victorious gladiator were severe, and that he had neither taken nourishment nor spoken since he had been brought hither from the circus. Julius Claudius heard this account with feelings, oh! how unlike those that had actuated him to clamour for his death in the circus. The comfortless state of the Hebrew was not likely, his repentant master thought, to contribute to his recovery, and he felt that if Adonijah perished, remorse would haunt his bosom to the latest hour of his life.

With this impression on his mind Julius Claudius, forgetting the mortification he had lately experienced through the scornful wit of Berenice, hastened to the house of the all-powerful Licinius Mucianus to entreat his good offices with Titus for the pardon and restoration of Adonijah.

Mucianus, a dissipated man of letters, liked Julius Claudius, and was willing to solicit this boon for him. He was sorry for the bereavement Julius had sustained, and in making his request known to Titus took care to inform him of his disgraced favourite’s irreparable loss. Titus went in person to console Julius Claudius, to whom he spoke with kindness and even affection, and signed the necessary order, which admitted Julius into the Mamertine prison where Adonijah was confined.

The gladiator’s wounds had been dressed and bound up with some skill, but so little after-care had been taken of the despised and expatriated Jew, that he had been left to contend with increasing delirium alone.

Sadly and remorsefully the Roman patrician contemplated the languid form before him: could this feeble frame indeed enshrine the haughty and unsubdued spirit of Adonijah? At this moment the Hebrew opened his heavy eyes, and recognised his master regarding him with a piteous expression that pierced him to the heart. How unlike was this helpless look to that contemptuous one the gladiator had turned upon him as he fell, when his indignant glance flashed back defiance and disdain! His lost child, his lamented Lucius, had loved him too, had died invoking the Hebrew’s name, and the tears of the bereaved parent fell fast upon the burning brow of the slave.

Adonijah perceived his master’s emotion, but could not comprehend the cause of this change of feeling towards him. A sort of stupor came over his senses, and before he recovered from its effects he was on the way to Tivoli in a covered litter, supported in the arms of a confidential slave belonging to Julius’ household.

Leaving the unconscious Adonijah to the tender care of Lucia and her attendants, Julius Claudius remained at Rome to consign the remains of his child to their native dust. No costly funeral rites, no games, no pompous oration, no gathering of the ashes into the sumptuous urn, graced the obsequies of the young Lucius. Pious Christians consecrated with prayer the last sleep of the child, and laid him not with his heathen forefathers to rest, but in the subterranean chambers of the catacombs, as the heir of a better hope, to wait the dawn of everlasting day.

Religion brought balm to the torn heart of the father, who baptized into the faith of Christ resigned himself without another murmur to the Divine will, looking forward with humble confidence to a final reunion with his child in heaven.

Julius Claudius was indeed another man; his habits, thoughts, feelings, all were changed. To deep self-abhorrence and agonizing despair, true penitence, holy hope, and steadfast faith had succeeded. He had become a Christian, to him “old things had passed away and all things had become new.” To the vain deriding world his change of life and creed became a subject of surprise and derision. It was madness, folly, eccentricity; but to his Christian brethren it was a theme of wonder and adoring praise. They viewed him as a brand plucked out of the burning, a sinner redeemed and justified by the blood of the Lamb. To himself Julius Claudius was a greater wonder still, for the deep recesses of that polluted heart had been searched out by the Spirit, its secret iniquities revealed, and the remedy applied by the same Almighty power. To devote his life to make known the great truths of the Gospel to those who like him had sat in darkness and the shadow of death, following the dictates of a sinful and perverted nature, and to show them the new and living way, was suddenly become the end and aim of the young Roman patrician’s being.

“—Woman all exceeds
In ardent sanctitude and pious deeds:
And chief in woman charities prevail
That soothe when sorrows or disease assail.
As dropping balm medicinal instils
Health when we pine, her tears alleviate ills;
And the moist emblems of her pity flow
As heaven relented with the watery bow.”

BARRET.

For many weary days did Lucia watch with fond fidelity the sick couch of her lover, breathing faithful and earnest prayers for his conversion and recovery. Though unconscious of her presence, her step and voice haunted him like a vision—as something known and loved in other days. Reason at length returned, the light was suffered once more to cheer his eyes, and looking up he beheld its beams shining upon the kneeling form of Lucia Claudia.

Her lover uttered her name, and that but once; words could not express his feelings; to him she seemed alive from the dead; his thought could it have found a voice had said, “God, thou art merciful to me a sinner.”

He gazed long and intensely upon his living, his beloved Lucia; a slight scar upon her throat, half hidden among the glittering tresses of sun-bright hair that shaded her lovely face and bosom, recalled her peril to his mind. How had she escaped the jealous fury of her husband? to what strange intervention of Providence did she owe her preservation? He looked from her to her brother, as if to ask him to narrate the particulars of her escape. Lucia guessed his meaning, and seating herself beside him commenced her tale.

“Adonijah, thou wouldest know the history of my wonderful preservation; listen and adore the mercy that saved me from the consequences of my unhappy husband’s posthumous jealousy. His strange behaviour during our brief interview—his passionate farewell, his abrupt departure, and the terrible import of his last words, filled me with apprehension. Some dark ambitious scheme was working in his brain, while the sounds of distant commotion in the camp denoted that Rome was again about to be plunged into a new revolution.

“There was no one within the house of whom I could ask counsel, for my faithful Cornelia was absent, engaged in her office of deaconess, and if present what arm short of Omnipotence could save me from the cruel love, or rather fierce jealousy, of Nymphidius Sabinus. I resumed my devotions and, in the words of the Psalmist of Israel, ‘gave myself unto prayer.’

“I was yet kneeling when Marcus abruptly entered the chamber with consternation and horror depicted on every stern feature. His looks, his bold intrusion on the privacy of a noble Roman lady, told at once his errand. He came, I knew, to slay me.

“Assuming courage I did not at that moment feel, I demanded the occasion of his coming; he briefly communicated the commands of his lord, and putting a dagger into my hand bade me fall by my own hand rather than by a less noble one.

“I put back the deadly weapon which Christianity and ‘the coming in of a better hope’ forbade me to use, and then, actuated by the feeling of self-preservation inherent in human nature, pleaded earnestly for my life.

“I thought I saw signs of relenting in his eye, but his dread of Nymphidius prevailed over his inclination to save me. He caught me by the hair and raised the dagger to slay me. In humble imitation of my Saviour, I prayed Him to forgive my murderers; this unnerved the assassin’s arm, the blow was given, but the wound was slight. Marcus fell at my feet, and flinging the dagger from him buried his convulsed features in my garments and wept like an infant.

“I passed this interval in silent prayer. At length the freedman raised his head, and, telling me ‘that he would report me as dead to his master,’ stanching the wound in my throat, from which the blood was flowing profusely, and demanded ‘whither he should convey me.’

“I resolved to enter the Arenaria, my husband’s attempt to destroy me justifying the step I was about to take. I told him I would leave the house privately that night. He wrapped me in my veil and pallium, kissed my hand, and left me. I found no difficulty in gaining the asylum I had chosen, as an opening existed leading from the sumptuous palace which had formed my miserable home. The Consul Nymphidius perished that night. He lost the object of his ambitious hopes, and I the grievous chain of my unhappy wedlock. Words would fail me to describe its horrors, or the guilt of that ambitious, licentious man. But from the lion’s mouth the Lord delivered me, leading me forth into green pastures beside the waters of comfort. During the stormy revolutions that have convulsed my native city I have dwelt in peace among the brethren, apart from the vain world and its vainer things. A strong desire to see the effigy of my beloved brother Lucius conducted me to the mausoleum of my ancestors, to which an entrance had been pierced from the Arenaria, where I was found by Julius, who, supposing me to be a spirit, fled from me in horror. He took refuge among the brethren, and was by them persuaded ‘to forsake the unfruitful works of darkness, to serve the living God.’ While listening to the consoling words of Linus, he again caught sight of me, and, still deeming me an inhabitant of the shades below, swooned away.”

“Yes, sweet sister,” rejoined Julius, “it was not till I felt thy warm breath on my cheek, and heard thy dear familiar voice speaking comfort to my guilty soul, that I knew I held my living Lucia in my arms.” He paused, and then turning to Adonijah said, “I, too, have a tale to tell; a sad one over which thy heart will bleed.” The bereaved father then related the death of the young Lucius and his own remorse and despair, beseeching Adonijah, as he concluded his touching narrative, “to forgive the sins of a repentant enemy, and contrite man.”

Adonijah was astonished beyond measure at this change in Julius Claudius. “Could this be the vain, selfish, cruel, licentious Roman who owned no law but his own will, whose guileful features, notwithstanding their feminine beauty, lately expressed nothing but deceit and perfidy?” His very countenance seemed altered, showing humility and deep contrition, as if it were the transcript of

his new heart. "Could Christianity be false that brought forth fruits like these?"

Lucia Claudia, wiping the tears from her soft eyes, invited her brother to join her in an act of devout thanksgiving to Him whose mercy had been manifested to Jew and Gentile in their persons; and Adonijah united in the Christian's prayer with deep fervour, and yet they offered it up in the name and through the mediation of the crucified Jesus!

CHAPTER XXII.

"Thou living wonder of Jehovah's word!
Thou, that without a priest or sacrifice,
Ephod or temple, lone 'mid human kind,
Cleav'st to thy statutes with unswerving mind,
As though enthroned upon His mercy-seat,
The spreading of the cherubim between,
Jehovah yet were seen!
Hebrew, come forth! dread not the light of day,
Dread not the insulter's cry;
The arch that rose o'er thy captivity
No more shall turn thee from thy destined way."

SOTHEBY.

In the dear society of Lucia the hours of pain and languor glided gently away. It was her beloved hand that wiped away the tears Adonijah shed for the young Lucius, the sweet blossom that had entwined itself about his desolate heart. It was her voice that soothed his remorse, her soft eyes that told him she forgave his former perfidy. She mourned with him over the calamities of his captive people, while her faith bade him look beyond ages of bondage in anticipation of that glorious hour when the Lord who scattered the tribes abroad shall gather them again.

In her face the Hebrew still traced the love that had formerly gilded his chains, and made his bondage sweet. All indeed that a pious Christian could feel for one of differing faith, Lucia felt for Adonijah. He had first won her from idolatry and darkness to worship Jehovah, and, though no human passion could beguile her heart from Him, its tender affections were still placed upon the captive Jew. For his conversion she prayed unceasingly, and every conversation she held with him had the same noble object in view.

A deep sense of his own unworthiness, a sensibility to sin never experienced before, was felt by the half-convinced Pharisee. He reviewed his past life, and internally owned that he had come short of that perfection demanded by a holy God.

He was ready to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet, as "a teacher sent from God," for had not his prophetic words respecting Jerusalem been fulfilled in his own day? This was much for a Jew to acknowledge, but it is and has been acknowledged by many who have died like their forefathers, strangers to the salvation wrought by Christ.

"Search the Scriptures," said our Lord to the Jews of His day, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." "Search thou the Scriptures, who art an heir of the promises made to Abraham," said Linus to the doubting Hebrew, "and thou wilt see that we have not followed 'cunningly devised fables.'"

Adonijah examined those sacred records daily and perseveringly, praying the Lord Jehovah to enlighten his mind respecting Him whom the Christians affirmed to be the Messiah of the Jews. He found every type and shadow complete, every prophecy fulfilled in that wondrous Person whom the Jews had rejected and slain. His heart was softened, nay, it was pierced through with a view of his sins and his sinless Saviour's sufferings.

At first the Divinity of Jesus Christ was to him, as to the Jews of this day, "a stumbling-block and rock of offence;" but the New Testament, which declares Him "to be the Son of God with power," only confirms the previous testimony borne by the Old. The evidence of both is in perfect and beautiful harmony with each other. Adonijah compared them together, and found the chain complete, till like Thomas he said of Jesus, "My Lord and my God."

The life and doctrines of Jesus alone would declare his Divinity, even if it had not been confirmed by miracles or foreshown by prophecy. Human nature fallen and degenerate could never have produced fruits like these. Compare his brightest saints with the Son of God, and they only shine with beams reflected from his surpassing glory.

Deeply mourning over Him whom his sins had pierced, Adonijah found pardon and peace with the Great Shepherd of Israel, at whose cross he for ever laid down his pharisaic pride and self-idolatry, receiving the Son of David not only as his Prophet, Priest, and King, but as his atoning sacrifice, his righteousness, the Lord his God, the long-promised Messiah of his people.

Julius Claudius, that brand plucked from the burning, was destined to become a light in the Church, and to preach the faith he once laboured to destroy. He intended to devote himself to the ministry of the word as soon as he had been admitted into the Christian fold by baptism. He wished to repair the wrongs of Adonijah by uniting him to his sister, upon whom he bestowed an ample portion, but the residue of his fortune he gave to the Church, for the support of the Christian community, that still required from the wealthy those gifts which we find recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The dowry of Lucia Claudia was already destined by her to aid the funds of the impoverished Jewish Church, which then held the pre-eminence over every other, as having been planted by the Lord himself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“See how these Christians love one another.”

TERTULLIAN.

The manumission of Adonijah preceded his baptism. His dark clustering locks were closely shaven, and the cap of liberty was placed upon his head with the usual ceremonies. He was no longer a slave, but he was a freeman without a country. No civic privileges were connected with, or conferred by the gift of liberty. The manumitted slave could not serve in the Roman army, nor hold any office in the state, unless the emperor chose to exercise his despotic authority in his favour. He might enrol his name on the list of *Ærarians* and become a member of a guild, and follow a trade, or he might remain in the household of his patron; but he could not become a citizen of Rome without influence or gold: both were exerted in his favour.

The conversion of Julius and Adonijah were interesting events to the Roman Christians, and the sponsari of the catechumeni were selected from the most distinguished members of the Church by its pious bishop. In the primitive times the sponsors answered for the good faith of those persons who desired to be instructed in the Christian religion. It is from this custom that the sponsors in our own Church are derived; for when infant baptism became general, the sponsari answered for Christian babes as they formerly had done for the adult heathen whom they presented as catechumeni^[20] or candidates for that sacrament.

The sponsari of Julius Claudius and his Hebrew freedman were not men of rank, but experienced Christians. Indeed, one was an aged slave; but the Church numbered many such among her brightest jewels. Her internal order, though marked by distinctive and fixed degrees of rank, did not rest upon those external ones upon which worldly societies depend; the beautiful and harmonious bond of love alone united all the members of the universal or Catholic Church together in the first ages of Christianity.

The admission of Julius Claudius and Adonijah was followed by the marriage of Lucia and her lover. If the existence of the nobly descended Roman lady had been known beyond the pale of the Church, some impediment might yet have divided her from Adonijah. Nor would it have been safe for the vestal who had broken her vow to have re-appeared in the heathen metropolis. So she was married to Adonijah in the privacy of the *Sotterrania*,^[21] and Julius finally, through the purchased influence of Cenis, the mistress of the emperor Vespasian, got the name of Adonijah enrolled in one of the civic tribes.

The new-made citizen of Rome did not intend to remain in the metropolis of the world. He wished to revisit his native land, for to him the desolation of Judea was dearer than the magnificence of imperial Rome.

The Church of Jerusalem, with its bishop Simeon, had returned to Judea. No molestation was offered by the Gentile conquerors to those Jews who had never taken up arms against them, and the converted Israelites, of which the Church then holding the supremacy over every other was composed, had an apostle for their head of the lineage of David, being the kinsman of the Lord,^[22] as well as his disciple. By this Church Adonijah and Lucia were received with affectionate greeting and hospitality. The travellers had indeed found a welcome from the brethren in every place, for the tenets of Christianity were widely promulgated throughout Asia; for the dispersion of Israel had caused many Gentiles to enter the Church, nor, as we have seen, did all the Jews remain in the blindness of error; for ecclesiastical records assure us that numbers about this time repented and received the faith they had blasphemed and persecuted, being convinced by the ruin of their city and destruction of their temple that the crucified Jesus was their promised Saviour.

In passing through his native land Adonijah soften paused to weep and pray. He lamented the woes of his country, while he acknowledged the justice of the sentence that had gone forth against her. He visited the ruins of Nazareth and Bethlehem, he wept at Mount Calvary, he mourned over the destruction of the temple; but he saw the traces made in the living rock by the earthquake, and the sepulchre that could not hold in its keeping the risen Son of God, and was comforted. One was by his side who shared his sorrows and his joys, who wept with him for the sins of his people, and rejoiced in that atonement by which they might yet be forgiven and restored to their own land.^[23] It was natural that a converted Jew, long exiled from his native land, should seek the memorable spots rendered holy by the birth, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and that his Gentile wife should share his feelings, and accompany him in his pilgrimage; yet pilgrimages were not common in the first ages of the Church. No allusion to such visits can be found in any part of the New Testament, to afford either example or encouragement to a practice that afterwards became so general. The faith of the early Christians needed not such excitement; they felt the presence of their Lord in heaven, and did not seek to trace his footsteps upon earth.

Lucia Claudia had not quitted Rome without regret; she was a member of that glorious Church to which the noblest of St. Paul's Epistles had been addressed while he was yet personally unknown to his Roman brethren. She was the pastoral daughter of Linus, the friend of Pomponia Græcina and of the fair British convert Claudia, celebrated by Martial for her beautiful complexion, but whom the Church numbered among its precious jewels; Clement, too, and many other persons whose names were written in the Book of Life, regarded Lucia Claudia as a sister. No human society was ever so closely united in friendship as the primitive Christians, who obeyed from the heart the new commandment enjoined by their Lord, “Love one another.”

Lucia Claudia, however, found the same tender affection, the same perfect union, existing among the Christians of Palestine as at Rome. Some were then living who had seen the Lord, and had listened to those divine precepts which had made the Gentile officers sent to apprehend him return to their dissatisfied employers with the remarkable reply, “Never man spake like this man,” and she no longer regretted Rome. To Adonijah, the Hebrew Christian Church planted by the High Priest of

the order of Melchisedec, so long-promised to Israel and rejected when He came, was a lively representation of heaven upon earth. He recognised the Lord's Prayer as a Jewish one,^[24] to which one petition alone had been added by the great Head of the Christian Church, who then gave it the perfection "which came down from the Fountain of Goodness and Father of Light." The Psalms of David, too, sung in his own dear loved land, were full of that light which was spreading then over the whole earth to enlighten the dark and idolatrous Gentiles Jerusalem and the cities of Judea might lie in the dust of desolation for ages, but Christ had been the glory of the land; and the heart of the Jew clave to his ruined country, as if no curse lay upon its hills and valleys, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen there with healing on his wings, and Adonijah acknowledged the Son of David as his Lord and his God, and he loved best to worship where the steps of his Saviour had been.

[20] Infant baptism was general in the second Century—a fact proved by the works of Cyprian, and there is reason to believe that the infant children of Christian parents were usually baptized, though the practice fell into disuse in the third and fourth centuries.

[21] Whether the early Christians used the present ritual we are not able to determine. The ring placed upon the finger of the bride was an ancient heathen custom, nor can we find a different origin for the bride-cake, which in the middle ages was decorated with ribbons and placed upon the altar. It is probable that the Church retained such rites as were not inconsistent with a Christian profession.

[22] Simeon, the brother of Jude, the son or grandson of Cleopas, is supposed by some to have been the nephew of Joseph, by others the offspring of the Virgin's sister, who was also named Mary. It is possible that both these statements may be correct. He succeeded St. James the Less in the Bishopric of Jerusalem, and was crucified in the reign of Trajan, in his 120th year.

[23] See Appendix, [Note XII](#).

[24] The Lord's Prayer is from the Mishna of the Jews; to this beautiful compilation our Saviour added a characteristic petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," for he approved the beautiful formula then in use, and gave it all it wanted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Yet dread me from my living tomb,
Ye bigot slaves of haughty Rome."
SCOTT.

Adonijah and Lucia Claudia remained in the environs of Jerusalem with the Church and its apostolic bishop, Simeon, for many years. They were the parents of a lovely family, who were growing up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, when the Roman brethren, being desirous of sending gifts to the Hebrew Christians, wished Adonijah to come to Rome to receive their bounty for those impoverished children of Abraham who had received the faith of Jesus. The fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the dispersion of the Jews had probably occasioned that conversion among the Israelites spoken of by Hegesippus, the earliest historian of the Church. There is reason to believe that these persons retained their ancient customs as far as a people could retain them who were under the Gentile yoke of bondage, though they received Christ as their High Priest, Redeemer, and Divine Ruler. Attachment to the customs of their forefathers, and the example of Christ, "a minister of the circumcision," made the Hebrew Christians still cling to their ancestral ritual. This adherence would in time have created a bar between them and their Gentile brethren, if it had been suffered to continue; but the revolts of the unbelieving Jews in the reigns of Trajan and Adrian caused this separation to cease. No Israelite after those wars was suffered to remain in Palestine, so that when Jerusalem was rebuilt under the heathen name of Ælia, the Christian Church established there was no longer composed of converted Jews. After a time the dispersed and scattered tribes of Israel might purchase from the Roman soldiers once a year the mournful privilege of weeping over the solitary foundation-stone of the temple, but poverty and slavery left few to avail themselves of the opportunity in that age. The custom has never ceased; it has been transmitted from generation to generation, and the nineteenth century still witnesses the affecting commemorative visit of the Jew to the desecrated shrine where his forefathers once worshipped Jehovah. He still looks forward to the promises, and fondly hopes to see the temple crown once more the holy mount; and he will not be deceived, for the builders will have then received the chief Corner-stone they rejected, and will bear his seal on their foreheads, his name on their hearts.

Nearly two thousand years of woe and degradation then lay in dark and direful perspective between the children of the dispersion and the dawn of those better things—those political privileges which the Christian legislature of our own land has accorded to them. Selfish hearts would churlishly deny to the Jew his newly granted civic rights, but they might as well shut out the light of heaven, or forbid the wind to blow, as withhold the blessings God has promised to his long-suffering people, whose restoration and final conversion is clearly decreed, and foretold by Isaiah and all the Jewish prophets.

The converted Hebrews, always working with their hands, possessed none of the commercial

privileges of their unconverted brethren. These poor saints when thrust out of the synagogues were subjected to much persecution in every place, and the collection made for their relief in the metropolis of the world would provide them the means of paying the heavy tribute imposed upon them by the Roman governors. The Church of Jerusalem was too poor to aid them; the descendants of some of the apostles were tillers of the soil, who literally earned their bread in the sweat of their brows.

Many years had elapsed since Adonijah and his wife had quitted imperial Rome. The magnificent Coliseum, planned by a Christian architect martyred by Vespasian, and built by captive Jews destined to die at its dedication, shone brilliantly in the mid-day sun in its youthful magnificence; not, as now, hoary with centuries of age, save where the mantling ivy covers its ruined grandeur with a veil of beauty. A solitary subterranean epitaph records that Gaudentius, whose genius raised this mightiest monument of heathen power and heathen cruelty, died Christ's soldier and servant, but leaves his history untold, the question how a Christian became the architect of such a structure undecided. Perhaps he was condemned like the Jewish masons to build his own arena of death and martyrdom—the first, not the last, Christian who suffered on that spot, in the mystic Babylon, for the witness of Jesus.^[25] Adonijah regarded with mournful interest on the beautiful arch of Titus, and the emblems of the conqueror's devastating victory and the desolation of Judea and Jerusalem. Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since the erection of a monument, beneath which no Jew's foot has ever been known to tread, but which stands fair, glistening, and fresh in our own age as it did then, when his eyes first looked upon it. He saw in the Temple of Peace the seven-branched candlestick, the golden vine, and the splendid vessels formerly used in the temple service, and sighed over the degradation of the fallen Jewish Church. He looked upwards, nevertheless, and through the dim and shadowy future beheld the mystic dawning of that day when the dispersed of Israel would look upon Him with sorrow and contrition whom they pierced, and should be restored again to their own glorious land. He turned to Lucia Claudia as he quitted the temple, and said, "Why should I mourn, my wife, for these things, since the types and shadows of the Mosaic dispensation have been accomplished and fulfilled in Christ, and like Symeon, having seen his salvation, I am ready to depart in peace?"

The meeting between Julius the Presbyter and his sister was extremely moving. He had indeed become a vigilant and faithful minister of Christ to whom the Greek name of Theodatus had been given by the brethren as a mark of their general estimation of his piety. From him Lucia heard with painful interest of the arraignment of the Vestal College, and the danger that impended over Cornelia Cossi, the Maxima, or chief vestal priestess. No one knew why Domitian in his quality of Pontifex Maximus (head priest of Jupiter) chose to institute a prosecution which darkened the fame and endangered the lives of these unfortunate priestesses. This year he had opened his public career of crime by condemning the Consul Glabrio to combat with a lion in the arena; that valiant magistrate had however redeemed his life by slaying his brute assailant, and was banished; but Cornelia Maxima and her sister vestals found in Domitian a more incensed and formidable foe than Glabrio. Lucia obtained permission to visit the Chief Priestess in the prison to which the injustice of a heathen tyrant had condemned a pure and lofty-minded Roman lady. Time had not deprived Cornelia Maxima of her majesty of form and stature; what she had lost in youthful charms she had gained in dignity, and when she rose from her recumbent posture on the hard pavement of the Tullianum, and cast an indignant glance upon her uninvited visitor, Lucia Claudia beheld in the condemned prisoner the very Cornelia of Nero's reign who had urged her sovereign to arraign and punish the lapsed vestal, the wife of his guilty favourite. She remembered this, but not with anger, as she approached the unhappy Cornelia, and throwing her arms about her neck assured her that Lucia Claudia still loved her, and believed her innocent. Cornelia attempted to disengage herself from the embrace, but she yielded at last to the sweet influence of those womanly tears and caresses, and wept long and passionately on Lucia's friendly bosom. She had never shed a tear during the course of the prosecution, and when once she became calm she wept no more; no, not when she descended into her living grave in the sight of the awe-struck Roman people.

After some minutes she answered the sympathizing inquiries of her long-lost friend with placid dignity. "Lucia Claudia, I was formerly tried on this false charge and acquitted,^[26] why the accusation has been repeated I do not know, but Cæsar has condemned me untried and unheard."

"No one believes the charge, dear Maxima," replied Lucia Claudia, "and it is said that the emperor would pardon you, if you would justify his cruelty by calumniating yourself."

"The two Ocelli and poor Veronilla, dreading their living grave, confessed themselves guilty of a crime they loathed, and never committed: they were permitted to choose a milder death. But I am a Roman virgin of loftier lineage and nobler spirit; I can die, but will not justify my persecutor. Celer cleared himself and me by an heroic death; but Valerius Licinianus has purchased life and shame at my expense. His eloquence might have saved us both: he falsely avowed himself a guilty wretch. 'Licinianus has justified me,' was Cæsar's own remark; and he is pardoned, while I am doomed and slandered."

"He is again imprisoned for concealing your freedwoman at one of his farms."

"Ah! by Vesta, a light breaks in upon me. She was fair and young. He loved her then, doubtless; those stolen visits to the temple were really made; yes, and to her. Frail girl! and base calumnious man! O Celer, Celer! and thou didst vainly endure the torturing scourge for both;" and the miserable priestess threw herself upon the ground, and fell into an agony that had no tears, found no relief in sighs and groans. The noble-minded Roman knight's fate, indeed, had merited and won the admiration of the spectators, and in after years the degraded Licinianus—the poor Sicilian schoolmaster whose Prætorian rank excited such scornful pity—might have envied Celer's ignominious punishment and heroic death.

Cornelia gradually overcame her bitter agony; she looked up once more, and a smile passed over her wan countenance.

"We two, Lucia Claudia, were esteemed the pride of the vestal order; and I am condemned for incest,^[27] and thou art the widow of a bondwoman's son, and the wife of a Hebrew freedman."

Lucia Claudia blushed; she felt the sarcasm, but answered it with meek forbearance. "I quitted the college a believer in the God of Israel. How could a Jewish convert minister in the temple of a heathen deity? After this I became a Christian, and sought to bring in him who had made me a worshipper of the true God. He betrayed the brethren, in the blind darkness of his bigoted self-righteousness, and I gave my hand to Nymphidius to save my fellow-Christians. It was feminine weakness: I should have trusted the Church to Him whose faith I had embraced, for not a hair could be torn from a Christian's head without divine permission. Of that unholy marriage I will not speak, which linked together the believing wife and unbelieving husband in an unequal and abhorred yoke. Listen, Cornelia, while I tell thee how it was severed, and recognise His hand who saved one and destroyed the other;" and Lucia Claudia related her own history, and that of Adonijah. She then unfolded the Christian mission to the condemned Maxima, and implored her "to repent and be baptized."

The Maxima shook her haughty head, and turned contemptuously away. "No, Lucia; I am no believer in strange gods. My austere and holy life leaves no room for repentance; it is my pride and glory to have been a chaste votary of Vesta. Nor would I change my fate with one who has forsaken the custody of the sacred flame, on the existence of which that of Rome depends, to contract second nuptials, and bear children to a Jew."

"Ah, Maxima, I think I could share even thy living grave, could I but know that thou didst carry with thee the faith, the hope, the love of a Christian."

"Lucia Claudia, thou shalt see me suffer. Yes, I pray thee, follow my bier, watch me descending into my living grave, and bear witness to my constancy, I loved thee once, and I love thee still. Thou wilt be near me, thou wilt not deny me my last request?" and Lucia promised, wept, and departed.

Domitian, who was exceedingly anxious that his victim should submit to his sentence, had offered Cornelia a full pardon if she would asperse her own character, but in vain. He had pronounced judgment upon her at his Alban villa, while the poor prisoner remained at Rome, deprived of the means of defending herself, or engaging the talents of some eminent pleader in her defence. The measure was unpopular, and the emperor's manner of exercising the office of supreme pontiff unprecedented even in that age of crime. Nobody believed the charges against the unfortunate Maxima, and when the covered litter that contained the condemned vestal priestess was seen proceeding along the silent streets, the ominous procession excited general commiseration. No reproachful word reached the ears of the victim, no malediction was heaped upon her devoted head, no injurious epithet added insult to injury, for the sympathies of a mighty people were with the calumniated Maxima. Two centuries had elapsed since such a dismal tragedy had been acted at Rome, and the advance of learning and knowledge had rendered the Romans less superstitious, though not more virtuous, and the immolation excited disgust and indignation against its actors. Wrapped in her pallium and closely veiled, Lucia Claudia clung trembling to the arm of her husband, and with faltering steps followed the procession from the prison through the thronged Forum to the Collina Gate, where the sepulchral cavern had been re-opened to enclose the living form of Cornelia Cossi. The bed, the lamp, the loaf, the bread-mill, the pitcher of water, and cruze of oil, had been already provided; the emperor in his character of supreme pontiff, wearing his sacerdotal robes, with his priestly attendants, stood by the dark yawning chasm to receive the victim; the litter was then unclosed, the unfortunate priestess was unbound, and faced Domitian, who extended his hands to utter the customary prayers in order to avert the consequences of the vestal's imputed guilt from the heads of the Roman people.

The unfortunate Maxima turned her magnificent countenance from him to the vast assembly as she invoked Vesta and every deity of earth and heaven to attest her innocence; but her voice was distinct, clear, and even melodious. She was interrupted by the emperor, who charged her with the crime for which she was about to suffer, and urged her repeatedly to confess her guilt. To his severe remarks Cornelia calmly replied, "Cæsar believes me guilty of incest, who performed the sacred rites when he conquered and triumphed." She had repeatedly uttered these mysterious words on her way to the Collina Gate. No one but herself and Domitian comprehended their meaning. Pliny the Younger, who was present, could not discover whether this speech was intended as a satirical allusion to the ill-success of the emperor's Dacian campaigns, for which he had nevertheless triumphed, or whether the unfortunate vestal wished to conciliate her judge, and attest her own purity by this reply; the enigma was never solved by Cornelia. Then the imperial pontiff made his impious prayers, and after consigning the condemned vestal to her executioners departed with his priestly attendants. At this moment Lucia Claudia raised her veil, and turned her tearful eyes upon the unhappy Maxima, who returned her sympathising recognition with a glance of intelligent gratitude, and even smiled. No trace of the strong agony that had convulsed her noble figure on the pavement of the Tullianum remained on her dignified and placid countenance. She looked towards the temple of which she had been the presiding priestess, she gazed upon the Roman people, and cast a farewell look upon the bright blue heavens that canopied old Rome, and then resolutely advanced towards the chasm. As she placed her firm unshrinking foot upon the steps, the executioner put forth his hand to disengage her robe, but the vestal haughtily repulsed him, as if his touch were profanation to her purity. She was observed to gather her flowing drapery closely round her magnificent person as she descended into her living grave,^[28] and this simple and intuitive trait of feminine modesty redeemed for ever the aspersed character of Cornelia Cossi Maxima, in the eyes of the vast assembly who witnessed it, from defamation; and that dark sepulchral vault was closed never to be re-opened to enclose another victim. The conviction that Cornelia had been unjustly immolated made a lasting impression upon the Roman people, and the mound that marked the awful spot was never again disturbed by the votaries of a cruel superstition. The extension of Christianity banished cruel heathen rites.

Adonijah drew the folds of her ample veil over the convulsed features of his fainting wife, and, wrapping her in her pallium, bore her inanimate form to the house of a Christian brother; but some time elapsed before she showed signs of life. When she recovered from her swoon, she wept long and prayed much; yet, in her deep commiseration for the unfortunate Maxima, the feeling that she had died a heathen, uncheered by the hope of a better life, was still surpassingly bitter—the bitterest drop indeed in a bitter cup. These thoughts and reflections were naturally succeeded by others of a less painful character. Her conversion to Christianity had not only been the means of bringing her out of idolatry and darkness into the bright refulgence of the Gospel day, but it had saved her from the suicidal despair of the vestals Ocelli and Veroilla, and the living interment of the calumniated Maxima Cornelia Cossi.

The Latin Church considered even the temporary residence of Lucia Claudia in Rome and Italy unsafe at such a period, and the converted vestal priestess quitted the metropolis of the world for ever. She returned with Adonijah to the Church at Jerusalem, and passed many tranquil years in the bosom of her Christian family, till the revolt of the Jews in the reign of Trajan, which was also a war with the Hebrew converts to Christianity, when, Adonijah being slain by his own countrymen, the widowed Lucia Claudia became a deaconess of the Church. She exercised this office at the time when Simeon the apostle was martyred, who, at one hundred and twenty years, excited by his patient fortitude the admiration of Atticus, the governor of Syria during the third persecution of the Christians in the reign of Trajan. She quitted Jerusalem before it was besieged by Adrian, and retired with the Hebrew Christian Church to Pella beyond Jordan, but never to return; for she fell asleep at an advanced age, in the full assurance of Christian hope.

The Hebrew Christian Church lost its distinctive character when it could no longer maintain its succession of Jewish bishops, nor retain its see; for the rescripts of Adrian, which forbade the Jews to dwell in Palestine, virtually put an end to the hierarchy.^[29] for the second Church of Christ founded at Ælia—the name of the heathen city built by Adrian—was not composed of converted Jews, but of Gentiles who had forsaken idolatry to follow the Lord Jesus. In our own days another Hebrew Christian Church has been founded at Jerusalem, to which “kings have become nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers,” in fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, “that Jerusalem shall evermore become the joy of the whole earth.”

“Thou living wonder of Jehovah’s word!
Thou, that without a priest or sacrifice,
Ephod or temple, lone ’mid human-kind,
Cleavest to thy statutes with unswerving mind,
As though enthroned upon His mercy-seat,
The spreading of the cherubim between,
Jehovah still were seen!
Hebrew, come forth! dread not the light of day,
Dread not the insulter’s cry;
The arch^[30] that rose o’er thy captivity
No more shall turn thee from thy destined way.”
——“It comes—the appointed hour;
Hebrew, beneath the arch of Titus pause!
And in the closing scene of Rome’s last power,
Thy prophet’s roll unfold.

Lift up thy voice!—the day-spring from on high
Warns that the hour draws nigh:
The far seas and the multitude of isles,
All in their tongues have heard,
Each lisps the living word;
Hebrew, on thee redemption’s angel smiles.
The stone cut out without a hand
Now spreads its shade o’er earth,
And shall to heaven expand.
Tell the dispersed; kings with their fleets shall come
To bear the wanderers home,
Their queens shall fold thy nurselings on their breast,
A light o’er earth shall flow,
From Zion’s hallowed brow,
And there the Lord thy God, enthroned in glory, rest.”^[31]

[25] In the Sotterania a monument, purporting to be that of Gaudentius, the architect of the Coliseum, has been discovered. It appears from the inscription that he was beheaded by Vespasian for being a Christian. The name of this martyr is the only one connected with the martyrology of the period; but as Vespasian put to death many of the descendants of David, some of these may have been Christians.

[26] Neither the charge nor the time of the former trial are known.

[27] Unchastity in the vestal was called incest.

[28] See Appendix, [Note XIII.](#)

[29] See Appendix, [Note XIV.](#)

[30] The Jews never pass under the arch of Titus; to this day they go out of their direct

way to avoid it.

[31] Sotheby.

APPENDIX.

NOTE I.

“Nero arrived at Corinth, and was there surprised to see by what a narrow isthmus the two seas were separated. The project of piercing through the land, and forming a navigable canal to connect the two seas, (the Ionian and Ægean,) and render it unnecessary for mariners to sail round the Peloponnesus, struck his fancy, and fired him with ideas of immortal fame. The Greeks opposed the design, and endeavoured to dissuade him from undertaking it. The language of superstition was, that to attempt to join what had been severed for ages would be an impious violation of the laws of nature.

“Nero was not to be deterred from his purpose. He knew besides that the attempt had been made by Demetrius Poliorcetes, an Eastern king, by Julius Cæsar, and Caligula; and to accomplish an arduous work which those three princes had undertaken without effect, appeared to him the height of human glory. He resolved therefore to begin the work without delay. Having harangued the Prætorian soldiers, he provided himself with a golden pickaxe, and advancing on the shore sang in melodious strains a hymn to Neptune, Amphitrite, and all the marine deities who allay or heave the waters of the deep. After this ceremony he struck the first stroke into the ground, and with a basket of sand on his shoulder marched away in triumph, proud of his Herculean labour. The natives of the country saw the frantic enterprise with mixed emotions of astonishment and religious horror. They observed to Nero, that of the three princes who had conceived the same design not one had died a natural death. They told him further, that in some places as soon as the axe pierced the ground a stream of blood gushed from the wound, hollow groans were heard from subterraneous caverns, and various spectres emitting a feeble murmur were seen to glide along the coast. These remonstrances made no impression.” (*Annals of Tacitus*, Book XVI.)

These supernatural appearances were doubtless produced by perfectly natural causes. The Corinthians contrived those impostures to prevent Nero from carrying on his work. He was not deceived by them, for he pursued his design unawed by these ill omens, which he would hardly have done if he had believed them real.

NOTE II.

“Jotapata was the strongest place in Galilee. Josephus the historian, and the governor of the province, undertook its defence. The siege lasted seven and forty days. The inhabitants refusing to capitulate, the signal was given for a general assault. Except the women and children and about twelve hundred prisoners, all who were found in the town died in one general carnage. Josephus was afterwards found in a cave. Vespasian gave him his life.”

NOTE III.

“Vespasian, in compliance with Nero’s letters, sent six thousand prisoners to work at the isthmus of Corinth.”

NOTE IV.

“Being at length determined to execute the bloody purpose he had for some time harboured in secret, Nero wrote to Corbulo in terms of great esteem and kindness, calling him his friend and benefactor, and expressing his ardent wish to have an interview with a general who had rendered such signal services to the empire. Corbulo fell into the snare. A mind like his, impregnated with honour and heroic fortitude, could admit no suspicion of intended treachery. He embarked without any retinue, and landed at Cenchreæ, a Corinthian harbour in the Ægean Sea. Nero was then dressed in his pantomime garb, and ready to mount the stage, when the arrival of his general officer was announced. He felt the indecency of giving an audience in his comedian’s dress to a man whom he respected while he hated him. To free himself from all embarrassment he took the shortest way, and sent a death warrant. Corbulo saw too late that honesty is too often the dupe of an ignoble mind. ‘I have deserved this,’ he said, and fell upon his sword.” (*Annals of Tacitus*.)

NOTE V.

The sacerdotal order of the Vestals was a very ancient institution, supposed to have been derived from Greece. It was introduced by Numa, the second Roman king.

It is a remarkable fact that in most ancient heathen countries we find an order of women dedicated to celibacy, whose chastity was considered essential to the well-being of the state; thus we find virgins of the sun in Persia, an order of recluses in Syria, described by Pliny, and the vestal priestesses of Italy, afterwards revived by Numa, who limited their number to four, to which two were added by Servius Tullus. It is difficult to define the principles of this mysterious religion, of which fire was the only visible emblem; but the orbicular form of the temple, and the absence of any image, have led to the idea that the earth was the object of this occult worship, and that the fire was intended to convey the idea of Providence, the divine mind, or soul of the universe, which

enlightens and cherishes animated nature by the means of heat. Upon the preservation of the sacred fire the existence of the state was supposed to depend; it was continually watched by the priestesses upon whose care the public welfare was supposed to depend. The secret, whatever it might be, was supposed to be contained in two little tuns, treasured in a private part of the temple, which no person was suffered to approach. The order existed till the time of the emperor Honorius, but its dissolution left its mysteries unrevealed. Our Saxon ancestors worshipped a deity called Hertha, served by virgin priestesses, who appears to have been the German Vesta. The earth was undoubtedly worshipped under the name of Hertha, and we may therefore conclude that the German and Latin superstitions have had the same common origin. The vestals commenced their vocation at six years, and were vowed to thirty years of celibacy, the least infringement of which state exposed them to the doom of a living grave. The great privileges granted to these virgins might console the proud or ambitious for the loss of domestic ties. A lictor always preceded their chariots, which were drawn by white horses; every man, whatever his rank might be, made way for them; even the consuls stopped and lowered their fasces reverently before them. To insult them was to provoke instant death. They were assigned a distinguished place at the theatre or circus, and could determine any cause submitted to their arbitration.

They were allowed the privilege of saving any criminal whom they might meet on the way to execution, provided they would declare the rencontre to have been purely accidental. They possessed a political importance which they frequently exercised on momentous occasions. Thus the life of Julius Cæsar was preserved by the appeal of those priestesses to Sylla, that tyrant sparing his intended victim at their request.

The wills of eminent persons were usually lodged in their hands, and they took charge of considerable sums of money, which the owners considered would be safer in their keeping than in their own. Even in death the vestal possessed a peculiar privilege; she was buried within the walls—intramural interment being the highest mark of distinction that ancient Rome could confer on her citizens.

The dress of the vestals consisted of a white stole bordered with purple, they wore no veil, their head was covered by a sort of coif, from which hung long streamers of ribbon. This head-dress probably resembled the modern cap. As the long hair of the young vestal was cut off upon her admission into the college, and suspended from a tree which had never borne fruit, this ornament, if it were suffered to grow again, was always closely concealed under the coif, which fitted the head very closely, a white fillet encircled the forehead. As great perfection of form and features were essential requisites in the candidate, the vestals, though taken from either order, were always beautiful. They were maintained by the state in affluence, and the funds of their college were continually augmented by legacies bequeathed by the pious, or donatives bestowed upon them by those persons desirous of obtaining their good offices. The state gave these priestesses the privilege of willing their property,—a right at that time allowed to no other Roman lady. At the end of thirty years the vestals might return to the world and marry, but no priestess of this order was ever known to do so, for she would have lost those rights which made her an object of interest and veneration to the Romans and the world they governed.

These proud privileges might be lost, however, by a lapse from virtue, or a false accusation. If any public calamity befell the Romans it was imputed to the secret guilt of these priestesses, and they were buried alive, unless some advocate succeeded in snatching them from such a fearful fate. Cicero delivered by his eloquence one of these ladies from a charge involving her life and honour; but in the reign of Domitian three vestals were convicted of unchastity and put to death. Plutarch, in his Life of Numa, has been very particular in describing the dismal ceremonial of the interment of the unchaste vestal. The condemnation of the Vestal College had been so recent that he doubtless described the scene from those who had witnessed its horrors.

Several festivals were celebrated in ancient Rome in honour of Vesta. That on the calends of March, when the vestals rekindled the sacred fire, and the laurels were renewed that encircled the consular fasces, must have been very interesting. The solar rays were used for this purpose,—a custom found also among the Druids, only that they commenced the year from the 1st of January, while the Virgin College adhered to the defective old calendar of the early regal times.

On the ides of May the vestals, accompanied by the Pontifical College, threw from the bridge Sublicius thirty figures instead of human beings, which had once been offered to Saturn from that place,—a barbarous custom abolished, tradition declared, by Hercules. But the Vestalia held on the ninth of June was the great festival which gave the Roman ladies the most pleasure, because it afforded them an opportunity of displaying their gayest apparel and ornaments in the procession from the temple of Vesta to the Capitol.

The month of December was dedicated to Vesta. The temple of this deity stood on Mount Palatine, it was circular in form and unadorned, the altar on which the sacred fire continually was burning stood in the middle of the fane. Men were permitted free access to this temple during the day, but were denied admittance at night. The sanctuary, however, might not be approached by masculine feet.

The sacred fire was kept burning for centuries, and was only extinguished with the sacerdotal order that had so long maintained its mysterious flame.

NOTE VI.

The Christians were punished as the incendiaries of Rome. Nero was at once their accuser and their judge. It must be remembered that Tacitus, though deeply prejudiced against the Christians, bears an honourable testimony to their innocence. "Nothing," he says, "could efface from the minds of men the prevailing opinion that Rome was set on fire by Nero's own orders. The infamy of that horrible transaction still adhered to him. In order, if possible, to remove the imputation, he determined to transfer the guilt to others. For this purpose he punished with exquisite tortures a race of men detested for their evil practices, by vulgar appellation called Christians. The name was

derived from Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius suffered under Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea. By that event the sect of which he was the founder received a blow which for a time checked the growth of a dangerous superstition, but it revived soon after, and spread with recruited vigour, not only in Judea, the soil that gave it birth, but even in the city of Rome, the common sink into which everything infamous and abominable flows like a torrent from all quarters of the world. Nero proceeded with his usual artifice. He found a set of profligate abandoned wretches who were induced to confess themselves guilty, and on the evidence of such men a number of Christians were convicted, not indeed upon clear evidence of their having set the city on fire, but rather on account of their sullen hatred to the whole human race. They were put to death with exquisite cruelty, and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and left to be devoured by dogs, others were nailed to the cross, and many covered over with inflammable matter were lighted up when the day declined, to serve as torches during the night.

"For the convenience of seeing this tragic spectacle the emperor lent his own gardens. He added the sports of the circus, and assisted in person, sometimes driving a curricle, and occasionally mixing with the rabble in his coachman's dress. At length the cruelty of these proceedings filled every breast with compassion. Humanity relented in favour of the Christians. The manners of that people were, no doubt, of a pernicious tendency, and their crimes called for the hand of justice, but it was evident that they fell a sacrifice, not for the public good, but to glut the rage and cruelty of one man only." (*Tacitus.*)

No Christian can read this account without feelings of resentment against the historian who has recorded the sufferings of the followers of Jesus, and their innocence of the crime for which they suffered. Unhappy prejudice alone prevented Tacitus from doing justice to their holiness, fortitude, and brotherly love. He ought not upon common report thus to have "condemned the guiltless." Murphy has a fine note on these remarkable passages in Tacitus, a part of which I shall insert, as it does much honour to his heart and head.

"This was the first persecution of the Christians. Nero, the declared enemy of human kind, waged war against a religion which has since diffused the light of truth, and humanized the savages of Europe. Nero appears to be the first that attacked them as the professors of a new religion; and when such a man as Tacitus calls it 'a dangerous superstition,' it must be allowed that indirectly an apology is made for Nero. But for Tacitus, who had opportunities for a fair inquiry, what excuse is to be made? The vices of the Jews were imputed to the Christians without discrimination, and Tacitus suffers himself to be hurried away by the torrent of popular prejudice."

NOTE VII.

Pliny, the friend of Tacitus, bears the following honourable testimony to the morals of the Christians of his day, then under sharp persecution. "The real Christians were not to be forced by any means whatever to renounce the articles of their belief." He proceeds to the sum total of their guilt, which he found to be as follows: "They met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed themselves in a prayer or hymn to Christ, as to a god, binding themselves by a solemn oath (not for any wicked purpose) never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust reposed in them; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to eat their meal together in a manner perfectly harmless and inoffensive."

Tertullian, in a strain of exultation, declares that the Christians "for their innocence, their probity, justice, truth, and for the living God, were burnt alive. The cruelty, ye persecutors, is all your own, the glory is ours."

Such were the Christians of the primitive times, of whom the world was not worthy.

NOTE VIII.

The Triumph of Vespasian and Titus, from Josephus' Wars of the Jews.

"As soon as it was day Vespasian and Titus came out of the Temple of Isis, crowned with laurel, and clothed with those ancient purple habits which were proper to their family, and then went as far as Octavius' Walks, for there it was that the senate and the principal rulers, and them that had been recorded as of the equestrian order, waited for them. Now a tribunal had been erected before the cloisters, and ivory chairs had been set upon it. Whereupon the soldiery made an acclamation of joy to them immediately, and all gave them attestations of their valour, while they were themselves without their arms, and only in their silken garments and crowned with laurel. Then Vespasian accepted of these shouts of theirs, but while they were still disposed to go on in such acclamations he gave them a signal of silence. And when everybody entirely held their peace, he stood up and, covering the greatest part of his head with his cloak, he put up the accustomed solemn prayer: the like prayers did Titus put up also: after which prayers Vespasian made a short speech to all the people, and then sent away the soldiers to a dinner prepared for them by the emperors. Then did he retire to that gate which was called the Gate of the Pomp, because pompous shows do always go through that gate: there it was that they tasted some food; and when they had put on their triumphal garments, and had offered sacrifices to the gods that were placed at that gate, they sent the triumph forward, and marched through the theatres, that they might be the more easily seen by the multitude. Now it is impossible to describe the multitude of the shows as they deserve, and the magnificence of them all, such, indeed, as a man could not easily think of as performed, either by the labour of workmen, or the variety of riches, or the rarities of nature; for almost all such curiosities as the most happy men ever get by piecemeal were here one heaped on another, and those both admirable and costly in their nature, and all brought together on that day, demonstrated the vastness of the dominions of the Romans; for there was here to be seen a mighty quantity of silver and gold and ivory, contrived into all sorts of things, and did not appear as carried along in pompous show only, but, as a man may say, running along like a river. Some parts were composed of the rarest purple hangings, and so carried along, and others accurately represented to the life what was embroidered by the arts of the Babylonians. There were also precious stones that were

transparent, some set in crowns of gold, and some in other arches as the workmen pleased, and of these such a vast number were brought that we could not but learn how vainly we imagined any of them to be rarities. The images of the gods were also carried, being as well wonderful for their largeness as made very artificially and with great skill of the workmen: nor were any of these images of any other than very costly materials; and many species of animals were brought, every one in their own natural ornament. The men, also, who brought every one of these shows were great multitudes, and adorned with purple garments all over, interwoven with gold; those that were chosen for carrying these pompous shows having also about them such magnificent ornaments as were both magnificent and surprising. Besides these one might see that even the great number of the captives were not unadorned, while the variety that was in their garments and their fine texture concealed from the sight the deformity of their bodies. But what afforded the greatest surprise of all was the structure of the pageants that were borne along, for, indeed, he that met them could not but be afraid that the bearers would not be able to support them, such was their magnitude, for many of them were so made that they were on three or even four stories one above another. The magnificence, also, of their structure afforded one both pleasure and surprise, for upon many of them were laid carpets of gold. There was also wrought gold and ivory fastened about them all, and many resemblances of the war, and these in several ways and variety of contrivances, affording a most lively portraiture of itself. For there was to be seen a happy country laid waste, and entire squadrons of enemies slain, while some of them ran away, and some were carried into captivity: with walls of great altitude and magnitude overthrown, and ruined by machines; with the strongest fortifications taken, and the walls of most populous cities upon the tops of hills seized upon, and an army pouring itself within the walls; as also every place full of slaughter, and supplications of the enemies, when they were no longer able to lift up their hands in way of opposition. Fire, also, sent upon temples was here represented, and houses overthrown, and falling upon their owners: rivers, also, after they came out of a large and melancholy desert, ran down, not into a land cultivated, nor as drink for man or for cattle, but through a land still on fire upon every side; for the Jews related that such a thing they had undergone during the war. Now the workmanship of these representations was so magnificent and lively in the construction of the things, that it exhibited what had been done to such as did not see it, as if they had been really there present. On the top of every one of these pageants was placed the commander of the city that was taken, and the manner in which he was taken. Moreover, there followed these pageants a great number of ships; and for the other spoils they were carried in great plenty. But for those that were taken in the temple of Jerusalem they made the greatest figure of all; that is, the golden table of the weight of many talents; the candlestick, also, that was made of gold, though its construction was now changed from that which we made use of; for its middle shaft was fixed upon a basis, and the small branches were produced out of it to a great length, having the likeness of a trident in their position, and had every one a socket made of brass for a lamp at the tops of them. These lamps were seven in number, and represented the dignity of the number seven among the Jews; and the last of all the spoils was carried the law of the Jews. After these spoils passed by a great many men, carrying the images of victory, whose structure was entirely of ivory and gold. After which Vespasian marched in the first place, and Titus followed him; Domitian also rode along with them, and made a glorious appearance, and rode on a horse worthy of admiration.

“Now the last part of this pompous show was at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, whither when they were come, they stood still; for it was the Romans’ ancient custom to stay till somebody brought the news that the general of the enemy was slain. This general was Simon, the son of Gioras, who had then been led in this triumph among the captives; a rope had also been put upon his head, and he had withal been tormented by those who drew him along; and the law of the Romans required that malefactors condemned to die should be slain there. Accordingly, when it was related that there was an end of him, and all the people had set up a great shout of joy, they then began to offer those sacrifices which they had consecrated, in the prayers used in such solemnities, which when they had finished, they went away to the palace. And as for some of the spectators, the emperors entertained them at their own feast, and for all the rest of them there were noble preparations made for their feasting at home; for this was a festival-day to the city of Rome, as celebrated for the victory obtained by their army over their enemies, for the end that was now put to their civil miseries, and for the commencement of their hopes of future prosperity and happiness. After these things Vespasian built the Temple of Peace, which he finished in a very short time, and in which he placed the spoil taken in the Jewish war out of the temple at Jerusalem.”

There certainly is in this account from the pen of the Jewish historian a servile spirit that cannot fail to disgust every reader. His apathetic description of the last act of his country’s woeful tragedy is shocking to humanity. That he rightly considered his people as rejected and forsaken by God, and therefore is not to be blamed for advising them to submit, is certainly true. Jeremiah did the same; but how different are the patriotic feelings of the bard, who sat alone on the drear waste to weep his people’s woes, from the cold-hearted Josephus, the Jew who applied the prophecy respecting the Messiah to Vespasian, to whose idolatrous hand he ascribes the miraculous gift of healing the sick. Valuable as his history really is, we blush at the servile profanity that bestows the attributes of divinity upon the Gentile conqueror of his guilty and miserable people.

NOTE IX.

Tacitus, in the commencement of the fifth Book of his History, gives this interesting description of the national religion of the Jews. “With regard to the Deity,” he says, “the Jews acknowledge one God only, and him they see in the mind’s eye, and him they adore in contemplation, condemning as impious idolaters all who with perishable materials wrought into the human form, attempt to give a representation of the Deity. The God of the Jews is the great governing mind that directs and guides the whole frame of nature, eternal, infinite, and neither capable of change nor subject to decay.

“In consequence of this opinion no such thing as a statue was to be seen in their city, much less

in their temple. Flattery had not learned to pay that homage to their own kings, nor were they willing to admit the statues of Cæsar."

The signal punishment of the Jews was the more remarkable because the people, according to Tacitus' own words, "though harassed by various acts of oppression, continued to give proofs of a patient spirit," till the exactions of Gessius Florus excited them into rebellion. The total defeat of Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, encouraged them to continue the revolt, and for a time they were uniformly successful, till the appointment of Vespasian and his son Titus to the chief command in Judea. The commotions that shook the Roman empire did not affect the Jewish war; the revolutions that left it sometimes without a head did not cause a cessation of arms. Vespasian (unconsciously fulfilling the Divine decree) warred on till every city in Judea and Galilee was taken; and even when called to assume the imperial purple, he left Titus to complete the destruction of the Jews by laying siege to the guilty Jerusalem. Warned by the prophetic voice of their Lord, the Christians understood that his words were about to be accomplished; they retired to Pella, beyond Jordan, and thus escaped the general destruction. Famine, faction, and bigotry within the city fought against the unhappy Jews. "They had three armies, and as many generals; the three parties quarrelled among themselves. Battles were fought within the city, and a conflagration destroyed many parts, consuming a large quantity of grain. A horrible war indeed was waged within and without the walls, nor were signs and portents wanting to testify that God himself was against the Jews."

"Portents and prodigies," says Tacitus, "announced the ruin of the city. Swords were seen glittering in the air, embattled armies appeared, and the temple was illuminated by a stream of light that issued from the heavens. The portal flew open, and a voice more than human announced the immediate departure of the gods.^[32] There was heard at the same time a tumultuous and terrific sound as if superior beings were actually rushing forth. The impression made by these wonders fell upon a few only; the multitude relied upon an ancient prophecy contained, as they believed, in books kept by the priests, by which it was foretold that in this very juncture the power of the East would prevail over the nations, and a race of men would go forth from Judea to extend their dominion over the rest of the world. But the Jewish mind was not to be enlightened. With the usual propensity to believe what they wish, the populace assumed to themselves the scene of grandeur that the fates were preparing to bring forward. Calamity itself could not open their eyes. If doomed to quit their country, life they declared was more terrible than death itself."

It must be remembered that in the prophetic books Christ is sometimes called the East in the original tongue. Our translation says, perhaps for the sake of perspicuity, "The righteous man from the East." This prophecy, misapplied by Tacitus and Josephus to Vespasian, related to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. At this day the Christian nations hold the pre-eminence, and their conquests over idolatrous nations are gradually preparing the way for the preaching of the gospel.

NOTE X.

In the siege of Jerusalem eleven hundred thousand Jews are said to have perished. The dreadful calamities that befell this nation are to be found at large in Josephus' "Wars of the Jews." On examining and comparing them with the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, we shall find the prophecies therein contained perfectly accomplished, and agree with Titus, who declared, after viewing the stupendous fortifications of Jerusalem, "that man could have done nothing against such, but that the God of the Jews himself fought against them." For more than eighteen hundred years the Jewish people have remained a living monument to attest to the Gentile nations the truth of revealed religion, "for these things happened to them for our example, that we might not be high-minded, but fear, and that of our mercy these may receive mercy through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

NOTE XI.

The gladiatorial combats were of Etrurian origin, and were at first only exhibited as funeral games. Afterwards the curule ediles, upon entering their office, gave to their fellow-citizens a spectacle calculated to please a warlike people. After the spectators were seated a great gate was thrown open, from whence a number of young men, remarkable for strength and agility, appeared upon the arena, round which they marched two by two. The combats were of several kinds; at first the combatants fenced with wooden swords, which were changed at the sound of the trumpet to blades of sharp steel. The sight of blood and wounds seemed to give pleasure even to the female part of the audience, and the men betted largely upon the combatants, just as in our days they do upon favourite race-horses. The gladiators usually fought till one fell. If the defeated implored the mercy of the spectators, and they were disposed to grant it, they raised their hands with the thumb bent, whereupon the attendants of the theatre removed the wounded man and conveyed him to a place where his wounds were dressed and his health restored. But if they resolved upon his death, they displayed their right hand with the thumb advanced, which was followed by the *coup de grâce* which terminated his miserable existence.

These cruel combats did not cease till the reign of the emperor Honorius, A. D. 404. The Roman people, deeply attached to these barbarous spectacles, would not give them up. Christianity had eloquently pleaded the cause of the unhappy victims annually slaughtered at Rome. Theodosius had enacted laws for their protection, but the magistrates were not careful to have them enforced. It was a Christian monk who claims the honour of putting an end to these barbarities throughout the empire. Telemachus interposed his feeble arm, but noble courage, to separate the combatants. He descended alone into the arena to prevent the unholy warfare. The spectators, enraged at this interruption to their sports, assailed the Christian with a shower of stones. He died under their hands, but the gladiatorial combats ceased for ever; for the people lamented their victim, and, respecting the philanthropy of Telemachus, "submitted to the laws of Honorius" which abolished entirely the human sacrifices of the amphitheatre. Nor was the abolition of this abhorrent custom

one of the least triumphs ascribed to Christianity.

NOTE XII.

The final restoration of the Jews to their own land after their conversion to Christianity is foretold in many parts of Scripture, particularly in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses of the eleventh chapter of the prophet Isaiah. Indeed throughout his prophecy the return of his people is declared. Some pious persons, I am aware, conclude from these passages that the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and their becoming inheritors of the spiritual Jerusalem is alone to be inferred. The words, however, appear to bear a plain and positive meaning. This last stupendous prophecy still remains to be accomplished, but a general feeling throughout the Christian world in favour of the ancient people of the Lord, excites a hope that the time is not far distant when they shall be gathered together from the lands whither they are scattered, and become "one fold under one Shepherd," in their own pleasant land.

NOTE XIII.

The tragedy in the Vestal College, of which the Emperor Domitian in his character of Supreme Pontiff was the author, originated in causes unknown to the historians who have recorded it. Suetonius seems to consider the victims guilty; but Pliny the Younger was an eye-witness of the living interment of the Maxima (chief priestess) Cornelia Cossi, and recorded it in his bitter speeches on the illegality of the proceedings against her, the heroism of the Roman knight, Celer, and the cowardice of Valerius Licinianus, who purchased his life by slandering himself and the unfortunate priestess. He relates in another letter the poverty and degradation of this prætor. Pliny describes the conduct of Cornelia as dignified and courageous, notices the manner in which she repulsed the executioner, and her delicacy in arranging her drapery while descending into the cavern, but concludes his account with these words—for his epistle was written at the time when the tragedy occurred, and he did not forget that he was writing in Domitian's reign,—“Whether she were innocent or guilty I know not, but she was treated as a criminal.” It is from this last immolation that Plutarch has doubtless described the lugubrious ceremony so exactly in his *Life of Numa*, for it appears to have been performed according to the ancient heathen ritual.

NOTE XIV.

The particulars respecting the church of Jerusalem are gathered from the fragments of Hegesippus, the oldest historian of the church, quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He states that Hegesippus travelled from place to place to collect the materials of his history, and that he talked with men who had known and conversed with the apostles. He describes the martyrdom of Simeon the brother of Jude, which took place in the reign of Trajan, when the apostle, who was second bishop of Jerusalem, was one hundred and twenty years old. The manner in which the church of Jerusalem was preserved from the miseries of the first siege of Jerusalem is better known than its second retreat, when the city was besieged again by the emperor Adrian. As the Christians composing it were converted Jews, who still adhered to the Mosaic ritual, a separation would have grown up between them and the Gentile churches. The rescript of Adrian, which compelled the Jews to leave Palestine, put an end to this order of things, but not till fifteen Jewish bishops had successively governed this church for 150 years. The second church of Jerusalem was composed of converted Gentiles or their descendants.

[32] In these words, "Let us depart," according to the testimony of Josephus.

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected.
Inconsistencies in punctuation have been maintained.

[The end of *Adonijah, A Tale of the Jewish Dispersion.*, by Jane Margaret Strickland.]

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