

seize him, and prevent his retreat, when lo! the door, which he had shut behind him, flies open, and, to Irad's unspeakable astonishment, two of the three faces he had seen at Mamre look forth upon the multitude, their hands plucked in Lot within the door, and it closes with a sound like thunder. That one fierce, flashing look sends instant blindness upon the foremost of the rioters, and terror upon all. There is silence for a moment, but it is speedily broken by loud cries of fear and fury from the blinded, as they stagger and stumble over each other, in vain efforts to reach the door. The torches drop from the palsied hands of those that bear them; but, as if to supply a new and awful light for the reeling street, the great Serpent, Irad had seen on the way to Zoar, flashes out once more in the midnight heaven, and shows to him the countenance of Caphtorim, pale as death, who from his window, seems to perceive Irad, and dart on him a look of significance and recognition.

CHAPTER V.

The sight of the Serpent, following the look of the faces, completed the dispersion of the Sodomites. All, save those who were blinded, saw it, and all rushed to hide themselves from its eyes. In vain did Caphtorim cry on them to return and force the door. In vain did Caphtorim, driven desperate, curse them by his gods as cowards and traitors. They melted away like snow; and Irad, too, leaves the spot, and walks slowly through the Serpent-lighted streets. An hour or two passes, and all in the city becomes silent, except the step of the unhappy youth, in whose heart love to Tirzah, fear for her father, darkness and uncertainty are tumultuously contending. What shall he do? Now he resolves to rush homewards, and now deep love and intense curiosity as to the fate of the city retard his steps. The words of the angel, "Back to Sodom, and there await thy time," ring in his ears. Often, too, he stops short in his walk to look up to the meteor, which still shines above, shedding an infernal day over the deserted streets, and making the smallest crumb of earth distinctly visible. At length it disappears, and is succeeded by utter darkness, as if it had swallowed up, in its departure, all the stars!

Wearied and worn, Irad is about to lie down and sleep till dawn, when suddenly three men, who had approached noiselessly, and favoured by the darkness, leap upon him, and carry him away. He asks them whether they are bearing him; but they give him no reply. He knows, however, but too well that he is in the power of Caphtorim, and feels that his doom is near. After passing through some of the streets, they pause before the door of a stately building, and Irad is led into the chamber where he had been on his first journey to the cities of the plain. In it, as he expected, there sat his old enemy; but his appearance was strangely changed. He seemed convulsed by some secret terror, which he sought in vain to conceal and gnaw down. He now rose, and now sat, and now walked to and fro through the apartment. Goblets of wine stood on the table, from which he drank ever and anon large draughts. His hands were stained with spots of blood. He looked at Irad, but for a season spoke not. At last drawing a deep breath, compressing his lips, and clenching

his hands, he said, "Irad the hour is come when Sodom is to be destroyed." And then he told him that he now knew it was all over for ever with the cities of the plain. It was not merely that there had been divers earthquakes, nor that once and again had the sign of the Serpent appeared over the city, but it was that he had seen those fearful faces at the door of Lot, which he knew were not of earth, and which told him that all was lost. "Yes," he shrieked out, as he pointed to the street, "Jehovah the avenger is in the city. But the time presses, and you must flee with me and with Tirzah to the dwelling of Melchisedec, and he peradventure will have power to save me. Caphtorim is not my name, nor is Melchisedec his. He is my brother Shem, and I am Ham, who laughed at the nakedness of my father Noah, and have found my punishment greater than I can bear."

While he said this, the old man cast down his face to the ground, as if afraid of the countenance of the youth, and then hurried out of the apartment.

Irad is amazed at the tidings. This then is Ham, the giant, the magician, the enemy of God, reputed to have murdered his son Misraim, and to have perished by his own hand in Africa. But how is he connected with Tirzah, and whence his bitter hatred at Melchisedec and Irad? And why has he changed his name, and come to the cities of the plain?

While perplexing himself with such questions, the door opens, and, beautiful, in tears, but troubled as the moon in halo, Tirzah enters the chamber. She cried out to Irad, "The morning cometh, and also the night. Within a few hours, Sodom is to be destroyed, and we must now flee for our lives. Ere morning we, and you with us, must leave this dwelling to return no more. But thou Irad, art yet in darkness. Sit thee down for a little season, and I will tell thee my story, and thine also, and that of him who has been to me a father, but to thee a bitter foe." And she smiled on him through her tears, and he sat down; and, as he gazed and listened, her words seemed sweeter than honey, even the honey which drippeth from the comb.

And yet the tale she told was grievous and strange. She said that in Africa, where Ham and Misraim his son had repaired after the dispersion of the human race at Babel, and where they founded a kingdom, two sons were born unto Misraim—Caphtorim and Ludim. A deadly enmity arose between Ham and his son, whom he loved at last less than even Canaan, who had long before left him, and founded a kingdom in Palestine. In this strife, Ludim took the part of his father Misraim, while Caphtorim befriended his grandfather Ham. A battle was fought, in which both Ludim and Caphtorim were left for dead, and Ham fled, carrying off, through the treachery of a servant, the only son of Ludim—a child, whose name was Irad—as well as the infant daughter of Caphtorim, named Tirzah. His object in seizing upon Irad was to prevent him succeeding to the throne of his father Misraim, as well as to grieve that father's spirit, who indeed, died shortly after. But Tirzah he loved for the sake of Caphtorim, his favorite grandson, and became to her as a father. Repairing to the neighbourhood of Sodom he employed the female slave who had stolen away