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## THE MAID OF JUDAH.

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### CHAPTER I.

"Can I any, any longer doubt? can I any longer doubt? No, no. Unbelief! thy reign of darkness is over. I will cast off thy chains and be free. He must be the Messiah. Who but He is the deliverer whose coming was first announced by Jehovah himself amid the bowers of Eden? Who but He is the glorious object on which the hopes of patriarchs were fixed and the expectations of a world have so long been placed? Who but He is endowed with that unearthly grandeur—that divine excellence which the prophets of Israel have ever thrown around the person and character of the promised Messiah? Who, finally, but He answers the description which the masterly hand of Isaiah sketched? Expiring one! I see in Thee the "end of the law"—the substance of which all our types were but the shadow. "Thou art the Son of Israel—the Son of God!"

Such were the words of Mariamme, the daughter of a noble Rabbi, as she left the crowd that surrounded the cross of Christ. Impelled by an idle curiosity, she had, but a short time before, joined the eager throng who were pressing out to Calvary. She had witnessed the unparalleled scene of the crucifixion—the darkest record in the volume of time. She had seen the sun blush at the impious exhibition and draw around him a cloudy mantle. She had seen all nature divest herself of the garments of joy and clothe herself in the drapery of mourning. From every part of creation's frame she had heard the mutterings of righteous indignation, and listened to the united voices of heaven and earth proving his purity and establishing his innocence. And could she withstand so forcible, so unexpected an appeal? Could she close her eyes against a truth which seemed to be every where written, or shut her ears against a fact that even the dead had risen to proclaim, and that the eternal silence of nature had been disturbed to publish? Reared up in the bosom of the Jewish church, all her prejudices in its favor, and all her feelings opposed to its destruction, Mariamme had ever manifested a settled hostility to the principles of the new sect. Neither the sanctity of the Saviour's life, nor the sublimity of his precepts, nor the character of his miracles could incline her to view them with the least degree of approbation. What they, however, failed to do, the last tragic scene of the Redeemer's life accomplished. She looked upon the sufferer for whom no tears flowed and no sympathy was felt. She gazed upon the convulsions of nature, and as her eye saw, enmity retired from her bosom—prejudices, implanted within her in childhood and rendered firmer by age, surrendered their strong holds, and from the throne of judgment went forth the voice: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Slow was the homeward step of Mariamme. The bustle of the dispersing crowd disturbed her not—her senses forgot to perform their offices, and all her soul was engrossed with the scene of which she had just been a spectator. Through the most unfrequented parts of the city she hastened home, endeavoring to prepare herself for the reception with which she most assuredly would meet. Knowing the extreme hatred of her father to the doctrines and advocates of the new religion, and remembering the bitter declarations which he so often had made, she almost trembled for her fate. The triumph of fortitude, however, succeeded her temporary alarm, and she laid her cares and anxieties on the promises of Him who has said—"I will never leave thee."

Having reached her dwelling she immediately, unnoticed by the family, retired to her chamber. Amid the stillness that there surrounded her, Mariamme prayed long and

ferently to her God. Those heartfelt petitions were heard and answered. Among the first to plead a Saviour's death, she was among the first to realize its virtue. That voice which tranquilized the irritated sea, said to her—"Be still," and there was "a great calm." Communion with God! Oh! this can quiet perturbation when all other means have been successful. The oil may fail to still the raging waves, and the strongest "sedatives" may not always calm the agitated nerves; but intercourse with heaven, when did it ever fail? What disturbance can it not quell? what fears can it not subdue?

### CHAPTER II.

Seated beside an opened casement, Mariamme held in her hand a letter, on whose contents she was apparently reflecting. Mildness and resignation sat on every feature. No shade of trouble was on her brow, and no expression of inward uneasiness marked her countenance. She had been at prayer, and from the other world had caught the smiles that played around her. An observation of her, at that moment, would have kindled the fire of genius. Admiration would have warmed and glowed at her appearance, and poetry seized her harp and touched its most musical strings to her praise. Oh! there enveloped her a glory such as that which surrounded Moses when he descended from the mount, dazzling the eye by its brightness, and reminding one of that still more surpassing lustre which, flowing from an uncreated fountain, illumines every planet, shines throughout the wide universe, and bathes eternity in its living splendours.

Absorbed in deep meditation, Mariamme continued in one position until the setting of the sun, when she was interrupted by the entrance of her mother.

"I come, my child, to learn your determinations. I have waited thus long to give you sufficient time to examine the matter well. Let me hear your reply to your father's letter," said the mother.

"The letter, mother, has not altered my mind. Fixed still is my resolution to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Whatever may be the consequences I cannot—I dare not change."

"And is it possible! Has it come to this, my daughter, that you have no respect for the superior judgment of your father; no regard for the accumulated stores of his experience, and no wishes for his gratification? Can you dishonor his noble name, and stain the reputation of our family by a connection with the odious band who follow a Deceiver? Why not recant?"

"Recant! mother, name it not. I have put my hand to the plough—can I look back! I have laid the foundation, and the building must be finished. How can I renounce a system so pure in its principles, so just in its precepts, so elevating in its transports, and so divine in its rewards? I am wedded to it for life. Mother, hear it—for life."

"Can nothing move you?"

"Nothing! I have counted the cost."

"You have not thought of the serious consequences of your conduct. You have surely been hasty. Disgrace, imprisonment, and death awaits you. Will you endure these things for such a religion? Folly—aye, it is madness!"

"Mother the folly of obeying God! the madness of hearkening to the voice of conscience!"

"Oh, my child, why persevere? Why risk so much for nothing?"

"For nothing, mother! Are peace, pardon, sanctification nothing? Grace now and glory forever—are they nothing? Rather say contempt and misfortune are nothing. Rather say stripes, persecution, and martyrdom are nothing. I am now delivered from the "yoke which

neither you nor your fathers could bear," and I can never again return to it. No never."

"Is there no hope for me, my daughter? Must I carry these painful tidings back to your father? By the memory of my past kindness and the promise of future good, do, my dearest, change your conduct!"

The daughter's utterance was choked. Tear after tear stole down her flushed cheek, and sigh after sigh came from her bosom. At last she regained some composure and merely said, I am unmoved."

"Be it so, then," replied the mother. "Mariamme, I have done. My entreaties have failed. Listen to my last words: When you experience the miseries that will certainly be your portion, remember what the kindness of a mother did to prevent you from the pursuance of this course. In the bitterness of thy spirit, then remember my expostulations and prayers. You authorize me to tell your father that you will never forsake the system which you have espoused?"

"I do! I do!"

"Sad task for me!"

Clasping her mother at that instant, Mariamme burst into a flood of tears and passionately exclaimed, "Oh, mother! tell father that I know the clearness of his judgment and the acuteness of his discrimination. Tell him every motion of this heart is for him, and every wish I have is for his happiness. Tell him I am yet his devoted daughter; but tell him, too, that I believe in Jesus and never can renounce my faith.

Let him try me, mother, and I will show the truth of religion to him in all my life. All my words and actions shall bespeak the highness of its original and the holiness of its ends."

"Alas, poor child" said the mother as she loosed herself from her embrace, "alas, my daughter! would to God thy reason had departed from thee ere it led thee into so fatal an error! Would to God that thou hadst died whilst thy faith was unshaken in Judaism. Then, methinks, thy last pillow would have been all roses and no thorns. Then thy home would have been with angels and God. Alas! thy credulity! Thou art undone! thy ruin is sure!"

The distressed mother narrated the above conversation to her husband. As might have been expected, he was inflamed with rage. Anger pervaded his entire heart, and he thought and spoke of nought else, save her punishment. "Cursed be the hour," said he, "that gave birth to the impostor who has interrupted the harmony of so many families, and torn from our religion so many of her bright ornaments. Deluded girl! What demon possesses her? I'll see if she be past recovery. I'll break asunder the bands that unite us together. I'll crush all natural feelings, and thus will I bring her to herself. She will yet be reclaimed."

### CHAPTER III.

What two venerable personages are those walking in the porch of the temple? We recognize in one the father of Mariamme, and in the other a prominent member of the Sanhedrim. They manifest great excitement, and their conversation is on a topic fraught with interest to them.

"This report will do us serious injury. It will overthrow all that we have effected, and communicate a fresh impulse to the abominable cause of the deceiver. Who will believe what we have said when it is every where declared that Christ is risen?"

"And believed, too, by many."

"Yes, believed by all those who are ever ready to credit impossibilities and seize upon every thing that will advance their views."

"For it is unfortunate for us."