

would be less dreary If only you were with me all the time, dear Leona; but I am going to test even your friendship—will you not tell me what you have kept from me thus far? Ah, you cannot deceive me; that frank, open countenance of yours is incapable of covering a deception. We have never had a secret from each other, but you have one now.”

As Esther finished speaking, she arose as did her companion, but Leona met her gaze unflinchingly now, and Esther saw something in the eyes of her friend which awed her into silence. After embracing Esther, Leona drew her to a seat beside herself, and after what seemed to be a struggle with her feelings, she spoke :

“Yes, my dear Esther, I have a secret from you, and perhaps I ought to have written you about it ere I came, but it was not easy to express the feelings of my heart in writing, and I hoped, yes, and I prayed that you might have the same secret and be waiting to tell me, Esther,—I am a Christian.”

Had a voice been heard speaking from heaven no more surprise could have been shown by Esther as, springing to her feet and clasping her hands she gazed with parted lips upon her friend. The latter gazed lovingly upon her and, reaching out her arms, she said : “Dear Esther, is it so terrible to you?”

Without answering, Esther turned and walked to the opposite railing, and clinching her hands tightly, looked off into the night. How long she stood she knew not, but long, indeed, it seemed to Leona. At length, turning, she slowly retraced her steps and stood in silence by the side of her friend. It was the turn of Leona to look surprised. Esther's face was not only deathly pale, but haggard in its expression. But Leona spoke not; she felt she had said enough until she should receive an answer. Esther spoke slowly, and with a tone Leona had never heard from her before.

“The Christians are lower than the brute beasts; they worship a dead malefactor, they have deserted the true worship and the God of their fathers——” “Nay, stop!” cried Leona, “you know not what you say. Jesus Christ was no malefactor but the Son of the one living God, whom I learned to worship with you when we were almost infants together, but, I confess it now, I never truly loved Him until I learned what a loving Father He was as manifested to the world through His Son, and, indeed Esther, the Jewish prophets all foretold Him. He is your Messiah and—” “Hold!” said Esther, in a low, stern voice, “our prophets, indeed, foretold the Messiah, but when he comes, think you, he will be crucified; nay, he will restore our nation to more than its former glory; he will put the Romans under his feet; we shall no longer be ruled by barbarians. Oh, may he come quickly!” Very handsome looked Esther in her earnestness, and Leona looked at her with love, and yearning as she answered. “Oh, Esther, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. The prophecies were fulfilled in Him as they could never have been in an earthly king. I have with me a precious manuscript, an account of His life, death and resurrection; it is my most precious treasure, and I brought it with me for you, that you might compare it with the words of the prophets and know the truth” As she spoke she drew from her bosom a scroll, but with a gesture of disdain Esther said to her, “Keep your precious story, I want it not; think you I shall desert the true God for an impostor.” “Oh, Esther,” He was the Son of the true God.” “Hush! I will hear no more; I fear we have been overheard already, and my father has been lately appointed to hunt up this cursed sect and punish them as they deserve.” “Oh,” cried Leona, “I will not wait for morning for my brother to call for me; I will seek him