

KATE.

From the Atlanta Constitution.
God save us all, the Yankees come,
A grim and cruel wrong,
Like spectre shadows through the night
They wind their way along;
Troop after troop, corps after corps,
Full twenty hundred strong.

BEN HUR; OR, THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH. BOOK FIFTH.

CHAPTER III.—CONTINUED.

As he listened, Ben-Hur was carried back to the night when, in the summer-house in Jerusalem, his mother, in such the same poetry of patriotism, declaimed the departed glories of Israel.

KAPILA.

"Kapila, Kapila, so young and true,
I yearn for a glory like thine,
And had I but the power to ask anew,
Can ever thy Valour be mine?"

"Kapila sat on his charger dun,
A hero never so grave,
Who lovin' all the world with love of none,
This love that maketh his brave,
A woman gave me her first one day;
The soul of my soul she was to me,
Thence came my Valour to me,
Go try it—try it—and see."

Ben-Hur had not time to express his thanks for the song before the keel of the boat grazed upon the underlying sand, and next moment, the bow ran upon the shore.

"A quick voyage, O Egypt!" he cried.
"And a briefer stay!" she replied, as with a strong push, the black sent them shooting into the open water again.

"Oh no," said she, laughing, "To you, the chariot; to me, the boat. We are merely at the lake's end, and the lesson is that I must not sing any more. Having been to Egypt, let us now to the Grove of Daphne."

"Without a song on the way!" he said in deprecation.
"Tell me something of the Roman from whom you saved us to day," she asked.

"The request struck Ben-Hur unpleasantly.
"I wish this were the Nile," he said evasively. "The kings and queens, having slept so long, might come down from their tombs, and sail with me."

"They were of the coldest, and would sink our boat. The pygmies would be preferable. But tell me of the Roman. He is very wicked, is he not?"

"I cannot say."
"Is he of noble family, and rich?"
"I cannot speak of his riches."

"How beautiful his horses were! and the bed of his chariot was gold, and the wheels ivory. And his audacity! The bystanders laughed as he rode away; they who were so nearly under his wheels!"

She laughed at the recollection.
"Who were they?" said Ben-Hur bitterly.

"He must be one of the monsters who are said to be growing up in Rome—Apollon ravenous as Cerberus. Does he reside in Antioch?"

"He is of the East somewhere."
"Egypt would suit him better than Syria."

"Hardly," Ben-Hur replied. "Cleopatra is dead."
That instant the lamps burning before the door of the tent came into view.

"The dowry!" he cried.
"Ah, then, we have not been to Egypt. I have not seen Karnak or Philæ or Abydos. This is not the Nile. I have but heard a song of India, and been boasting in a dream."

cannot sing"—she laughed—"because I have said I would not, yet I can tell you stories of Egypt."
And with conversation and stories, they whiled the hours away. As they stepped ashore, she said:
"Tomorrow we go to the city."
"Who will be at the games?" he asked.
"O, yes."
"Will you send my colours?"
"Who will be at the games?" he asked.

CHAPTER IV. THE LETTER INTERCEPTED.

Ilderim returned to the dower next day about the third hour. As he dismounted, a man whom he recognized as of his own tribe came to him and said, "O sheik, I was bidden give thee this package, with request that thou read it at once. If there be answer, I was to wait thy pleasure."

Ilderim gave the package immediate attention. The seal was already broken. The address ran, To Valerius Gratius at Caesarea.

"Abaddon take him!" growled the sheik at discovering a letter in Latin.
Had the misive been in Greek or Arabic, he could have read it; as it was, the utmost he could make out of the signature in bold Roman letters—Messaia—whereat his eyes twinkled.

"Where is the young Jew?" he asked.
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The sheik replaced the papyrus in its envelope, and tucking the package under his girdle, remounted the horse. That moment a stranger made his appearance, coming, apparently, from the city.

"I am looking for Sheik Ilderim, surname the Generous," the stranger said. His language and attire bespoke him a Roman.

What he could not read, he yet could speak; so the old Arab answered with dignity, "I am Sheik Ilderim."

"The man's eyes fell; he raised them again, and said with forced composure, 'I heard you had need of a driver for the games.'"

Ilderim's lip under the white moustache curled contemptuously.
"Go thy way," he said. "I have a driver."

"He turned to ride away, but the man, lingering, spoke again:
'Sheik, I am a lover of horses, and they say you have the most beautiful in the world.'"

The old man was touched; he drew rein, as if on the point of yielding to the flattery, but he finally replied, "Not to-day, not to-day; some other time I will show them to you. I am too busy just now."

He rode to the field, while the stranger betook himself to town again with a smiling countenance. He had accomplished his mission.

And every day thereafter, down to the great day of the games, a man—sometimes two or three—came to the sheik at the Orchard, pretending to seek an engagement as driver.

In such manner Messaia kept watch over Ben-Hur.

CHAPTER V. BEN-HUR READS THE LETTER.

The sheik waited, well satisfied, until Ben-Hur drew his horses off the field for the forenoon—all satisfied, for he had seen them, after being put through all the other paces, run full speed in such manner that it did not seem there were one the slowest and another the fastest—run, in other words, as the four were one.

"This afternoon, O sheik, I will give Sirius back to you," Ben-Hur patted the neck of the old horse as he spoke. "I will give him back, and take to the chariot."

"So soon?" Ilderim asked.
"With such as these, good sheik, one day suffices. They are not afraid; they have a man's intelligence, and they love the exercise. This one," he shook a rein over the back of the youngest of the four.

"You called him Aldebaran, I believe—the swiftest, in one round a stadium he would lead the others thrice his length."

Ilderim pulled his beard, and said with twinkling eyes, "Aldebaran is the swiftest; but what of the slowest?"

"This is he," Ben-Hur shook the rein over Antares. "This is he; but he will win for you, look you, sheik, he will run his utmost day—all day; and, as the sun goes down, he will reach his swiftest."

"Right again," said Ilderim.
"I have but one fear, O sheik."
The sheik became doubly serious.

"In his greed of triumph, a Roman cannot keep honour pure. In the games—all of them, mark you—their tricks are infinite; in chariot-racing they knavery extends to everything—from horse to driver, from driver to master. Wherefore, good sheik, look well to our lot; from this till the trial is over, let no stranger so much as see the horses. Would you be perfectly safe, do more—keep watch over them with armed hand as well as sleepless eye; then I will have no fear of the end."

At the door of the tent they dismounted.
"Who you say shall be attended to. By the splendor of God, no hand shall come near them except it belong to one of the faithful. To-night I will set watches. But, son of Arrius—Ilderim drew forth the package, and opened it slowly, while they walked to the divan and seated themselves—"son of Arrius, see thou here, and help me with thy Latin."

He passed the despatch to Ben-Hur. "There; read—and read aloud, rendering what thou findest into the tongue of thy fathers. Latin is an abomination," Ben-Hur was in good spirits, and began the reading carelessly. "Messaia to Gratius Messa; he will reach his swiftest."

The paragraphs in the beginning were remarkable only as proof that the writer had not outgrown his habit of mockery, when they were passed, and the reader came to the parts intended to refresh the memory of Gratius, his voice trembled, and twice he stopped to regain his self-control. By a strong effort he continued. "I recall further," he read,

"that thou didst make disposition of the family of Hur"—there the reader again paused and drew a long breath—"both of us at the time supposing the plan hit upon to be the most effective possible for the purposes in view, which were silence and delivery over to inevitable but natural death."

Here Ben-Hur broke down utterly. The paper fell from his hands, and he covered his face.
"Who are dead—dead. I alone am left."

The sheik had been a silent, but not unsympathetic, witness of the young man's suffering; now he arose and said, "Son of Arrius, it is for me to beg thy pardon. Read the paper by thyself. When thou art strong enough to give the rest of it to me, send word, and I will return."

He went out of the tent, and nothing in all his life became him better. Ben-Hur flung himself on the divan and gave way to his feelings. When somewhat recovered, he reflected that a portion of the letter remained unread, and, taking it up, he resumed the reading.

"Thou wilt remember," the misive ran, "what thou didst with the mother and sister of the malefactor; yet, it now yields to a desire to learn if they be living or dead."—Ben-Hur started, and read again, and then again, and at last broke into exclamation. He does not know the sheik's hesitations; but, rallying, he answered, "I know you; yet I am not free to tell you more."

"Some one holds you in restraint?"
The sheik closed his mouth, and walked away; but, observing Ben-Hur's discomfiture, he came back, and said, "Let us say no more about the matter now. I will go to town; when I return I may talk to you fully. Give me the letter."

Ilderim rolled the papyrus carefully, restored it to its envelope, and became once more all energy.

"What sayest thou?" he asked while waiting for his horse and retinue. "I told what I would do, were I thou, and thou hast made no answer."

"I intended to answer, sheik, and I will," Ben-Hur's countenance and voice changed with the feeling invoked. "All thou hast said, I will do—all at least in the power of a man. I devoted myself to vengeance long ago. Every hour of the five years passed, I have lived with no other thought. I have taken no respite. I have had no pleasures of youth."

The banishment of Rome were not for me. I wanted her to educate me for revenge. I resorted to her most famous masters and professors—not those of rhetoric or philosophy; alas! I had no time for them. The arts essential to a fighting man were my desire. I associated with gladiators, and with winners of prizes in the circus; and they were my teachers.

The dull masters in the great camp accepted me as a scholar, and were proud of my attainments in their line. O sheik, I am a soldier, but the things of which I dream require me to be a captain.

With that thought I have taken part in the campaign against the Parthians; when it is over, then, if the Lord spare my life and strength—then, I shall raise my clashed hands, and speak vehemently—"then I will be an enemy Roman-taught in all things; then Rome shall account to me in Roman lives for her ill. You have my answer, sheik."

Ilderim put an arm over his shoulder, and kissed him, saying passionately, "If thy God favor thee, son of Hur, it is because He is dead: Take thou this from me now, to if so thy preference run; thou shalt have my hands, and their fulfilment—men, horses, camel, and the desert for preparation. I swear it! For the present, however, Thou shalt see or hear from me before night."

Turning abruptly off, the sheik was speedily on the road to the city.

CHAPTER VI. ASSUMPTIONS.

The intercepted letter was conclusive upon a number of points of great interest to Ben-Hur. It had all the effect of confession that the writer was a party to the putting away of the family with murderian intent; that he had sanctioned the plan adopted for the purpose; that he had received a portion of the proceeds of the confiscation, and was yet in enjoyment of his part; that he dreaded the unexpected appearance of his father, and was pleased to call the chief malefactor, and accepted it as a menace; that he contemplated such further action as would secure him in the future, and was ready to do whatever his accomplice in Caesarea might advise.

And now that the letter had reached the hand of him really its subject, it was a notice of danger to come, as well as a confession of guilt. So, when Ilderim left the tent, Ben-Hur had much to think about, requiring immediate action. His enemies were as adroit and powerful as any in the East. If they were afraid of him, he had greater reason to be afraid of them. He strove earnestly to reflect upon the situation, but could not; his feelings constantly overwhelmed him. There was a certain qualified pleasure in the assurance that his mother and sister were alive; and it mattered little that the foundation of the assurance was a mere inference. That there was one person who could tell him where they were seemed to his hope so long deferred as if discovery were now close at hand. These were mere causes of feeling; underlying them, it must be confessed, was a superstitious fancy that God was about to make ordination in his behalf, in which event faith whispered him to stand still.

Occasionally, referring to the words of Ilderim, he wondered whence the Arab derived his information about him; not from Malloch certainly; nor from Simonides, whose interests, all adverse, would hold him dumb. Could Messaia have been the informant? No, no; disclosure might be dangerous in that quarter. Conjecture was vain; at the same time, often as Ben-Hur was beaten back from the solution, he was consoled with the thought that whoever the person with the knowledge might be, he was a friend, and would help him, and would reveal himself in good time. A little more waiting—a little more patience. Possibly the errand of the sheik, drouth, heat, cold, and all the nameless poisons they let loose in air, all the thousand things of which men die on sea and land. Oh, I could not sleep. I—

The sheik stopped for want of breath, pausing, wringing his hands. And, sooth to say, of all the passionate burst Ben-Hur retained but a vague impression wrought by fiery eyes, a pleading voice, and a rage too intense for coherent expression.

For the first time in years, the desolate youth heard himself addressed by his proper name. One man at least knew him, and acknowledged it without demand of identity; and he an Arab fresh from the desert!

How came the man by his knowledge? The letter? No. It told the crucifix from which his family had suffered; it told the story of his own misfortunes; but it did not say he was the very victim whose escape from doom was the theme of the heartless narrative. That was the point of explanation he had notified the sheik would follow the reading of the letter. He was pleased, and thrilled with hope restored, yet kept an air of calmness.

"Good sheik, tell me how you came by this letter."

"My people keep the roads between cities," Ilderim answered bluntly. "They took it from a courier."

"Are they known to be thy people?"

"No. To the world they are robbers, whom it is mine to catch and slay."

"Again, sheik. You call me son of Hur—my father's name. I did not think myself known to a person on earth. How came you by the knowledge?"

Ilderim hesitated; but, rallying, he answered, "I know you; yet I am not free to tell you more."

"Some one holds you in restraint?"

The sheik closed his mouth, and walked away; but, observing Ben-Hur's discomfiture, he came back, and said, "Let us say no more about the matter now. I will go to town; when I return I may talk to you fully. Give me the letter."

part strong as his; if, in other words, conscience had not stung him with accusations respecting them, and the dome daily tinted with violent mica.

With a few steps, Ben-Hur stopped. Three persons were present, looking at him—Simonides, Ilderim, and Esther. He glanced hurriedly from one to another, as if to find answer to the question half formed in his mind, what business could these have with me? He became calm, with every sense on the alert, for the question was succeeded by another. Are they friends or enemies?

At length his eyes rested upon Esther. The men returned his look kindly; in her face there was something more than kindness—something too spiritual for definition, which yet went to his inner consciousness without definition.

Should it be said, good reader! Back of his gaze there was comparison in which the Egyptian arose and set herself against the gentle Jewess; but it lived an instant, and, as the habit of such comparisons, passed away without a conclusion.

"Son of Hur?"

The guest turned to the speaker. "Son of Hur," said Simonides, repeating the address slowly and with distinct emphasis, as if to impress all its meaning upon him most interested in understanding it, "take thou the peace of the Lord God of our fathers—take it from me." He paused, then added, "From me and mine."

The speaker sat in his chair; there were the royal head, the bloodless face, the masterful air, under the influence of which visitors forgot the broken limbs and distorted body of the man! The full light eyes gazed out under the white brows steadily, but not sternly. A moment thus, then he crossed his hands upon his breast.

The action, taken with the salutation, could not be misunderstood, and was not mored, with holy peace, your tender is accepted. As son to father, I return it to you. Only let there be perfect understanding between us."

Thus delicately he sought to put aside the submission of the merchant, and, in place of the relation of master and servant, substitute one higher and holier.

Simonides let fall his hands, and, turning to Esther, said, "A seat for the master, daughter."

She hastened, and brought a stool, with sufficed face, looking from one to the other—from Ben-Hur to Simonides, from Simonides to Ben-Hur; and they waited, each declining the superiority direction would imply. When at length the pause began to be embarrassing, Ben-Hur advanced, and gently took the stool from her, and, going to the chair, placed it at the merchant's feet.

"I will sit here," he said. His eyes met hers—an instant only; but both were better of the look. He recognized her gratitude, she his generosity and forbearance.

Simonides bowed his acknowledgment. "Esther, child, bring me the paper," he said with a breath of the Arab, as if he were a man of the East.

She went to a panel in the wall, opened it, took out a roll of papyrus, and brought and gave it to him.

"Thou saidst well, son of Hur," Simonides began while unrolling the sheets. "Let us understand each other. In anticipation of the demand—which I would have made hadst thou waived it—I have here a statement covering everything necessary to the understanding required. I could see but two points involved—the property first, and then our relation. The statement is explicit as to both. Will it please thee to read it now?"

Ben-Hur received the papers, but glanced at Ilderim.

"Nay," said Simonides, "the sheik shall not deter thee from reading. The account—such thou wilt find it—is of a nature requiring a witness. In the attending place at the end thou wilt find, when thou comest to it, the name Ilderim. He knows all. He is thy friend. All he has been to me, that will be to thee also."

Simonides looked at the Arab, nodding pleasantly, and the latter gravely returned the nod, saying, "Thou hast said."

Ben-Hur replied, "I know already the excellence of thy friendship, and have yet to prove myself worthy of it." Immediately he continued, "Later, O Simonides, I will read the papers carefully; for the present, do thou take them, and if thou be not too weary, give me their substance."

Simonides took back the roll, and said, "Here, Esther, stand by me and receive the sheets, lest they fall into confusion."

She took place by his chair, letting her right arm fall lightly across his shoulder; so, when he spoke, the account seemed to have rendition from both of them jointly.

"This," said Simonides, drawing out the first leaf, "shows the money I had of thy father's, being the amount saved from the Romans; and the money not properly saved, only money, and that the robbers would have secured but for our Jewish custom of bills of exchange. The amount saved, being sum I drew from Rome, Alexandria, Damascus, Carthage, Valencia, and elsewhere within the circle of trade, was one hundred and twenty talents Jewish money."

He gave the sheet to Esther, and took the next one.

"With that amount—one hundred and twenty talents—I charged myself. Here now my credits. I use the word, as thou wilt see, with reference rather to the proceeds gained from the use of the money."

From separate sheets he then read footings, which, fractions omitted, were as follows:—

By ships. 60 talents.
" goods in store. 110 "
" cargoes in transit. 75 "
" camels, horses, etc., 20 "
" warehouses, 20 "
" oil, 84 "
" money in hand and subject to draft, 221 "

Total. 553 talents.

"To these now, to the five hundred and fifty-three talents gained, add the original capital I had from thy father, and thou hast 553 talents and 553 talents—making thee, O son of Hur, the richest subject in the world."

He took the papyrus from Esther, and, reserving one, rolled them and offered them to Ben-Hur. The pride perceptible in his manner was not offensive; it might have been from a sense of duty well done; it might have been from Ben-Hur's without reference to himself.

light was clear, bringing into view the panels on the walls, the cornice with its row of gilded balls, and the dome daily tinted with violent mica.

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"And there is nothing," he added, "nothing now thou mayest not do."

The moment was one of absorbing interest to all present. Simonides' eyes shone upon his breast again; he was anxious; Ilderim nervous. A never so on trial as in the moment of decisive good-fortune.

Taking the roll, Ben-Hur arose, glancing at Esther.

"All this is to me as a light from heaven sent to drive away a night which has so long I feared it would never end; so dark I had lost the hope of seeing said with a hunky voice. 'I give thanks to the Lord, who has not abandoned me, and my next to thee, O Simonides, and redemptor our human race. There is nothing I cannot do; I shall any man in this my hour of mighty privilege be more generous to I! Serve me as a witness now, Ilderim. Hear thou my words as I speak them—hear and remember; thou, Esther, good angel of this good hour thou also.'"

He stretched his hand with the Simonides.

"The things these papers talk account—all of them: ships, houses, camels, horses, money; the least as the greatest—give I back to thee, and, making them all thine, and these to thee and thine for ever."

Esther smiled through her tears; pulled his beard with rapid motion; his eyes glistening like beads of jet. Simonides alone was calm.

"Sealing them to thee and thine for ever," Ben-Hur continued with better composure, "with one exception, an one condition."

"The breath of the listeners waited for his words.

"The hundred and twenty talents were my father's; thou shalt retain them."

Ilderim's countenance brightened. "And thou shalt join me in seeking mother and sister, holding a key to the secret to the expense of discovery, which will hold mine."

Simonides was much affected. "I give you my hand, he said, 'I see that thou art his son, and I am grateful to thee that he hath sent thee to me such a gift. If I served well thy father, and his memory as well as mine, I shall be glad to see thee; yet must I say, a ception cannot stand.'"

Exhibiting, then, the reserved countenance, he said, "Thou hast not all the account; this and read—read aloud."

Ben-Hur took the supplement, and read:

"Statement of the servants of Esther, daughter of Simonides, steward of the King in Jerusalem. 1. Amrah, Egyptian, keeping the keys. 2. Simonides, the steward, in Alexandria. 3. Esther, daughter of Simonides."

Now, in all his thoughts of Simonides, not once had it entered Ben-Hur's mind that, by the law, a daughter's parents' condition. In all his thoughts of the rival of the Egyptian,