

## Choice Literature.

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### A KING OF TYRE.

A TALE OF THE TIMES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

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#### CHAPTER XXXV.

The spacious residence of Ioiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, was ordinarily a rendezvous for the aristocratic circles of Jerusalem. The fashion of the city seized the occasion of the home-bringing of his daughter-in-law, the bride of Manasseh, and the feastings that celebrated it, to throng his court and chambers with such gaiety as had not been seen since the return from the land of the captivity.

The repute of Nicaso's beauty, the romance of such an alliance between a priestly house of the Jews and the family of Sanballat, their ancient enemy, set the tongues of all classes going. The multitude hailed the event. They were wearied with the exclusiveness they had been forced to maintain as respected their intercourse with neighbouring people. Shopkeepers were delighted, for, in the train of Sanballat's daughter, came men and women from all surrounding tribes, and Jerusalem seemed about to become again an emporium of trade, as in the days before the Exile.

Marduk was solicited to open a bazaar in the chief street of the city with the assurance of doing a thriving business in foreign stuffs, for which the good people of Jerusalem had taken a sudden and violent fancy. But for reasons best known to himself, the Phœnician merchant chose to pitch his tents without the walls. Yet here he apparently did a lively trade; for scarcely a day passed that did not bring a camel or two down from the north, or a horseman up from Joppa on the coast. Marduk himself seemed to catch the spirit of enterprise, and attended in person to the details of business, which he had formerly left entirely to Eliezar. Many of the traders, especially those from Phœnicia, and who were presumably the agents of his business, he took to his own private tent or walked with them apart. It was rumoured that he was about to open new trade routes with Egypt and the East, which would centre in Jerusalem. That Manasseh was so frequently with him gave plausibility to the report that a great mercantile combination had been agreed upon in which much Jewish wealth should be represented by the house of Ioiada, the treasury of Sanballat by his son-in-law, Manasseh, and the heaviest merchants of Tyre by Marduk, whose exhaustless genius and money-bags were the inspiration of the enterprise.

But far different movements were beneath the surface of things. The religious sentiment of Jerusalem had been shocked by the alliance of the priestly house with that of the hated Samaritan. By many Nicaso was called Jezebel, and Manasseh denounced as a traitor who aimed at playing the part of a second Ahab. The venerable scribe, Ezra, seemed broken-hearted over the defection of his favourite pupil. His lectures upon the law became lamentations.

One day the three most notable men in all Jewry were together in the hall of the high priest. There was the venerable pontiff, Eliashib, a man whose broad and bland countenance was well in keeping with his elegant attire. His whole bearing showed that he fully appreciated the secular dignity of his position, if he did not feel the religious solemnities of his sacerdotal office. He strode up and down the apartment while he talked. Ezra, presuming upon the privilege of more advanced years and feebleness, sat in his chair, scarcely raising his eyes from the floor, except as now and then they shot the light of intense conviction after some sage saying he had uttered. But the most impressive figure was that of the Tirshatha, Nehemiah. He stood rigid as the statue of some god; only turning his head to follow the movement of Eliashib, whom he seemed to regard with mingled rage and scorn. Had he drawn the short sword that hung at his side he would not have been more the impersonation of wrathful determination. The dispute of the men had already been long, and without persuasion on either side.

"I shall submit to no such dictation in the affairs of my family," said Eliashib, throwing wide his arms, as if to stretch to the utmost his priestly robe, and the aristocratic authority that rustled in every fold of it, and thus awe his opponents. "Be content with what you have done: that I have allowed Tobiah, Prince of Ammon, to be driven from his chambers at the temple. But know, haughty governor, that I move not another step at your bidding."

"Alas!" cried Ezra, "that I should have lived to see the law of the Lord openly broken with the countenance of the high priest, who should be its most zealous guardian!"

"The law of the Lord!" retorted Eliashib. "Ay, as the light that comes through yonder yellow curtain is the light of heaven; for so is the law of the Lord stained by the interpretation of Ezra the Scribe. Did not Moses marry the daughter of the priest of Midian, and Boaz marry the Moabitish Ruth? Is Jehovah become a god of cruelty to drive out the helpless women and children, because their blood is not like thine?"

Then fire seemed to flash from the figure of Nehemiah. He boldly advanced, and, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the priest, glared into his face as he said:—

"The time for debate is past. Know you what I have done this very day? On my way hither I came upon a band of these renegade Jews who have married themselves to the women of Ashdod, Ammon and of Moab, whose children cannot even speak straight the language of our nation; and I cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair; and made them swear by God they would put away this spiritual harlotry. And mark you, Eliashib, so will I chase from the gates the apostate Manasseh, though he be of the blood of one who has debauched the high priest's office."

Eliashib was furious, and hissed through his clenched teeth: "Not until you have first become priest and sacrificed the high priest upon the altar of your bigotry and madness. Pure blood! Nicaso's is as pure as Nehemiah's, which has been tainted by the Persian's wine, as you were

so long cup-bearer to the crowned heathen. Go back to Susa and lord it over the pages, but you shall not lord it over me. Stand guard, if you will, at the harem curtains of Artaxerxes, but you shall not stand before the curtains of Eliashib's household."

The audacity of the high priest checked for a moment the headlong rush of the governor's passion. Or perhaps it was the training of the diplomat that led Nehemiah to reply with more deliberation:—

"My decision cannot be revoked. As the Lord lives! I will purge Jerusalem; or, failing that, I return to Susa, and give back into the hands of the Great King the commission as Tirshatha. Then what? O blinded priest! Let Jerusalem perish again rather than become a harlot city!"

"The Lord prevent!" cried Ezra, rising. The high priest dropped upon a seat and sat a long time in silent musing. At length he rose, and spoke, more to himself than to the listeners:—

"Alas! that the keeping of Israel is in the hands of such men as we. Our words are but wind, the hot wind of the desert, without the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. I would think and pray. Leave me, friends, before we further sin in our ignorant wrath"—and, gathering his robes about him, Eliashib left the apartment.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

Late that night the light shone in the house of Ioiada. A more stormy scene was there than even the one we have described. At first Ioiada and his son Manasseh were unyielding, but finally it was agreed that it would be discreet for Manasseh temporarily to withdraw from the city with his bride.

Though he yielded to necessity, the spirit of the young Jew was not curbed.

"I go," said he, "but I swear never to return until Nicaso and her children, if the Lord so bless our union, can come again without taunt or lessening. The Tirshatha is not God, nor the servant of God. Let him not cross my path beyond the gates, or he is a son of death!"

Great was the excitement the day following when the triumph of the governor became known. Groups of young men gathered in the street near to Ioiada's house. Fiery speeches were made, denouncing the tyranny of Nehemiah, and deriding the senile bigotry of Ezra. Even the high priest was not spared in the oratorical bravery that swayed the crowd.

In the midst of their noisy declamation Nehemiah appeared, accompanied by a delegation from the elders of the city. The multitude turned their backs when he attempted to address them. As he retired some shouted after him:—

"Put on your Persian armour and show how true a Jew you are!"

"What is the price of wine in Susa?"

"But here comes Malachi. Let's hear what he has to say. Ezra says he will make a prophet. Why not? Balaam's ass was one."

Malachi did not stop to parley with them, but turned in at the door of Ioiada.

"If he will side with us we will drive out the governor," said one.

"Or dip him in Hezekiah's pool," said another.

An hour later Malachi reappeared, and with him Manasseh. The young mob went wild with enthusiasm at the prospective alliance. But Malachi parted with Manasseh at the door.

To the surprise of the crowd the latter addressed them, thanking them for their show of personal friendship, but counselling peace.

"We shall be wiser to-morrow than we are to-day. The interests of young Israel need cooler heads than ours are now. The bigotry of the governor's party cannot last. The tide is strong at the moment—too strong for us to beat back—but it will turn speedily. Then we will be strong with it. One shout for young Israel, then let's go home and wait!"

The shout was given with a will. "Nicaso salutes you, and invites you all to the palace of Samaria," cried Manasseh, as he disappeared through the doorway.

Cheer after cheer rent the air. Just as the shouting was beginning to subside it burst out anew, for upon the parapet of the house Nicaso appeared. Her black hair and flushed cheeks made a superb contrast with her white mantle and the jewels that flashed about her brow and neck. The apparition lasted but for a moment, yet long enough to make many a swain declare that he too would leave Jerusalem if he could have so fair an attendant, and so comfortable a residence in exile as the palace of Sanballat among the hills of Samaria.

During the day the house of Ioiada was thronged with friends who came to utter within its walls such imprecations against the governor as they would not have dared to express more openly, and to pledge their personal loyalty to Manasseh during his absence. Among the visitors was the Phœnician merchant.

"Make no preparation for equipage on the morrow," said Marduk, "for I, too, am summoned northward."

"I cannot go to-morrow," replied Manasseh.

"But that is your agreement with the governor, is it not, on condition of his allowing you to retire from the city without the show of force?"

"That is my compact; yet I must seek delay, for I have a higher compact."

"There can be no compact higher than that of a man's fairly given word," said Marduk.

"I can take no offence at your rebuke," replied the young exile, "because you will not blame me when I tell you that I have given my word of honour to one who is of higher rank than the Tirshatha. I have pledged this person to discharge a certain obligation in Jerusalem, and I cannot discharge it before to-morrow's light."

"Who is above the governor in rank?"

Manasseh, lowering his voice, and bowing reverently, replied: "The king. The king of Tyre, and my king, if you will accept my loyalty. Has your majesty forgotten that you appointed me grand treasurer? I have so far kept fealty, and deposited the jewels beneath the very altar of God within the temple court. There they are in a little nook between the stones, full a score of cubits below the cave which I once showed you beneath the threshing-floor of Araunah. The old Jebusite never put such a precious harvest down that hole. And, for that matter, all the beasts whose blood has

run through that vault since the day that Solomon slew a thousand bullocks on the altar were not worth so much as I have put there. But now see this order from the governor! I am to be unmolested on condition of my not appearing in the streets or at the temple. The tyrant fears an insurrection against his cruelty if I but so much as show myself. If I brave him and venture there, I will be watched. But as the Lord heard my pledge to you, I shall not leave Jerusalem without the treasure."

"It is a serious business," replied Marduk. "Cannot some venture be made to-night to secure the jewels? Put me on the clue, and I will go myself; or bribe some temple-servant to fetch them."

"It is impossible. Nehemiah has seen to it that only the most bigoted priests and servitors are allowed in the temple precincts. The expulsion of Tobiah was done with such a high hand that the governor's party fear retaliation. A rumour was started that the Ammonite's partisans might set fire to the building and wreak their vengeance. So they have guarded it as closely as if it were besieged by Sanballat himself."

"Then there is nothing to be gained by your remaining," said Marduk. "Indeed, it is better that you withdraw, and let matters settle. When suspicion is diverted, you can return. The jewels are safe?"

"Safe as a rock that has never been uncovered in the earth, for no man knows their hiding-place. As a boy in the high priest's family I was allowed to play among the masonry while they were repairing the temple court, and I know of byways that a mole could not find."

"Then nothing can be done until you can come back to the city, which must be before long. This rancour cannot last. Your grandsire will have influence for your recall. I absolve you from all obligation."

"With that assurance on your part," said Manasseh, "and a new pledge on my part that I shall not go five leagues from the city until the jewels are in some way rescued, I will join your camp to-morrow."

Immense throngs crowded the street through which, on the following day, Nicaso passed in her palanquin, attended by her husband on horseback. An unintermitted roar of applause followed them to the gates, and a gay cavalcade of young bloods escorted them to the camp of Marduk, which had been pitched some miles to the north, near to the half-built, or rather half-ruined, ancient city of Gibeah.

(To be continued.)

### GOD AND THE MASSES.

The Jewish people never *reasoned* themselves into a conviction that there is only one God, and there never yet was in this world a nation that did or could do so. Individuals here and there in the world's history have found, or thought that they had found, the truth that there was one supreme God, but the masses of mankind never yet found that for themselves. For a nation, for the masses of mankind, there are but two thoughts about God—one is Paganism, the other is Atheism. One is the superstitious belief in many Gods, and the other is the utter denial, it may be merely practically, or it may be speculatively and intellectually, that there is any God. The one is the belief that sees God everywhere, the other is the darkness that sees Him nowhere; one or other of these is the fate of every human being who has no revelation. Superstition peoples the world with gods, men see and hear a god in every rock and stream and tree; in the sound of the wind and in the roar of the waves, they hear the voice of many gods. And they cower before them and entreat their mercy and believe that in the manifold workings of nature they have the capricious wills of their imaginary gods. And with this superstition science is ever at war—it is ever teaching men that what they believe to be gods are no gods; it is ever resolving what seems will into force, and what seems force into law. The domain of what is known is ever intruding itself further and further, day by day and age by age, into the region of the unknown. The mists of the early dawn of man's ignorance are melting away before the clear white light of science; and science breaks into fragments one after another—breaks into the minutest fragments, as with the wand of a magician, the idols of the heathen, and strewing their temples with them, asks the worshippers, not always angrily, sometimes very sadly and sorrowfully, and calmly, Where are now your Gods? Between these two extremes, the superstition that sees God everywhere and the scientific desolation that sees Him nowhere, there is no logical standing ground for man without revelation.—*Christ the Light of all Scripture, by the late W. C. Magee, D.D., Lord Archbishop of York.*

### THE EARLY CHRISTIANS AND CLEANLINESS.

In the reaction against the monstrous corruptions and unbridled sensuality of Pagan Rome, Christian enthusiasts rushed to the opposite extreme. An age of asceticism succeeded to an age of sensuality. The human body which Imperial Rome had pampered and indulged was now to be neglected and humiliated. A "cult of bodily uncleanness" began. A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, became, as Mr. Lecky has said, "the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato. . . . The cleanliness of the body was regarded as the pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth." To borrow but one or two illustrations from the "History of European Morals," St. Athanasius relates with a thrill of admiration how St. Anthony had never once been guilty of washing his feet. For fifty years St. Abraham the hermit washed neither