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"COME FORTH."

A STORY OF THE TIME OF CHRIST.

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VII.

It was sunset at Capernaum. The lake was quite smooth. She carried a broad sheet of colors upon her quiet face and looked more like a huge tinted sail spread to dry among the hills, than the vixen sea she was. Capernaum was a thriving place, being on the high-road from Damascus to the South, and gay with travelers and summer residents. It was the favorite watering place of Jerusalem and the sun-smitten country round about. It was a picturesque place, with effective houses built of black and white stones, and a caressing scenery decorated and tapestried with myrtles, pinks, tamarisk, acacia, and oleanders. In fact, Capernaum had many of these points appreciated by wealthy people in search of summer houses; and, when united to a lake-breeze, liberally paid for.

Upon the heights at the northwest end of the town, stood a stately villa conspicuous for its elegance. The stones which composed it were of white and rose, outlined with black upon the facade; the architecture was inspiring, if not imposing, the grounds extensive and liberally cultivated, and the whole place had an unmistakable air of an *grand Seigneur*.

Walking in the fruit garden at the cool of the day, like the Almighty after creation—an old man viewed his country seat with elderly and opulent satisfaction. His venerable beard flowed to his breast. His important costume had a dignity of its own. He well kept, not to say well-fed, hands fully took on the gesture of benediction as he moved among his family of slaves. His comfortable eye wandered over the hills and the sea to return easily to the little horizon of his villa, which he regarded with the supreme complacency of wealth and position and ease from affairs. It was known in Jerusalem that the High Priest was at home at his country seat in Capernaum for a matter of some weeks.

Upon the Sea of Galilee, at that calm and alluring hour, a pretty painted shallop, rowed by slaves, and well filled with women, attracted much attention. Galilee was crowded with sails. She always was, but this sultry and silent evening had added the pleasure-seekers to the bread-seekers, the summer guests to the fishermen.

The little fleet was so great that boats became entangled at the landings and beaches and had there been a breeze, skillful steering would have been needed to avoid collision in sailing. But of breeze there was hardly enough to stir the pretty toys of the pleasure people, or the clumsier wings of the fishing boats. One floated that evening, drifted, idled, dreamed, but did not expect to sail.

The lady, mistress of the gay shallop—which, by the way, wore a purple sail and was tied or trimmed with golden ropes—sat among the maidens haughtily. She seemed dissatisfied and distraite.

"It is a dull place this Capernaum," she said. "Why did we come, Rebecca?"

"It will be livelier when the new wing is added to the villa," replied Rebecca.

"That does not follow," said Zahara, differently. "Who buildeth the wing?"

"The High Priest," said Rebecca, "and he is a great man."

"But he is not a great man," said Zahara, "if we compare him to the High Priest of the temple."

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to the High Priest's daughter. For the first time in her history, Zahara was sad.

"It is a stupid sea," said Zahara, "and what a stupid boat! One might as well go home and take a nap or a prayer rug. Bid the fellows take the oars, for we shall drift all night. Get out the oars and have me rowed across to the other shore. I desire to see a new wave, if nothing more is possible, in this town where nothing happens."

At the moment when this order was given, and the rowers of the lady's boat took to their oars, and made a marked course away from the rest of the pleasure fleet heading across the lake, a young man came out of one of the tents which Rebecca had pointed out to her mistress and walked rapidly down to the beach. His eyes were on the water, but no special interest in anything he saw appeared upon his countenance, until by chance he overheard a by-stander observe carelessly:

"The daughter of Annas saileth to-night. Vonder is her shallop."

"Ah!" cried the young man, stopping short, "which one? Yes, I see. The sail is a sail of purple. Is that the lady's shallop?"

"Verily, yes," said the by-stander, "she goeth to the opposite shore. She is rowed by the slaves of her father."

The young man bowed and passed on. His eyes now sought the water as a king commandeth the world. His face had grown vivid and beautiful. His lips moved tenderly underneath his bright beard. His eyes melted. He breathed, but did not articulate the word—

"Zahara!"

For Annas was a cautious man, not accustomed to make known his purposes to the women of his household and Rebecca was entirely unacquainted with the fact that the master builder, Lazarus, had accepted the job upon the villa; and would himself oversee it; having quartered his men in tents upon the hillside, and taking lodgings for himself at the Khan, or village inn.

Lazarus had done this with precipitation, almost without reflection. When the summons came from Annas, whose fancy had lightly forgotten the proposed repairs at the palace, and substituted others in his villa with the facile absorption of a man in his country seat, the builder had responded with such promptness that the high priest took quick advantage of the situation to beat him down to an easy price. Lazarus accepted it without protest, almost without consciousness that he, the first master builder in the vicinity of Jerusalem, was undervaluing the trade to the point of absurdity, one might say, of indecency. What could it matter? Lazarus would have given Annas a villa, to be at Capernaum just then.

On this evening, as he walked nervously up and down the strand, watching the sail of Zahara, he observed a man stop and watch the same, with something more than casual attention. The man was a fisherman. He cast the deep and steady eye of a fisherman upon the sea. "I hope these fellows will not row the women too far," he said. "We are to have a change in the wind."

Then Lazarus perceived that he knew the man, and said: "I salute you, Peter. Tell me, the lady is not likely to get into any trouble, is she, yonder?"

"Lazarus, I salute you. Your face is a stranger of late to me. As to the lady, all I can say is, that these pleasure boats are poor affairs. It is a singular thing to me that the richer a man is the more doth he care for danger upon the face of the waters. On days past yet did I know properly to supply the want of these vessels, Peter passed on, for he had become a certain of cloud and wind, and night. The High Priest stood distractedly calling certain slaves of his, and urging them into the boat.

"Ho there! In with you! Row forth! Row yonder to your mistress, ye dogs!"

Lazarus, moved by one of his uncontrolled

was to come, upon which their natures would beat as one pulse, and that a throbbing artery.

Peter the fisherman had hardly turned the curve of the beach toward the town when a light breeze tickled the surface of the lake, as fingers play with sensitive flesh. The water seemed to shrink and writhed a little playfully. Then a sound like a slight, protesting laugh whirled from shore to shore. This was followed by a little shriek of rising wind. Then, in a moment, came whirl and darkness, foam and fury, uproar and confusion. One of the violent and dangerous squalls to which Galilee was subject had struck the lake. The peaceful tints of the water darkened into angry masses of color; pearl and rose and gold became slate and black and iron.

Cries arose from the pleasure boats. The clumsy sails of the age, struggled in the tornado, and came down. People made for the shore as fast as their senses permitted. Those flung from the gorges among the hills were greatly feared upon the shores of the lake and there was little fooling with them. Cries of excitement or fear arose from the boats and from the beaches. One mad little boat capsized, but a couple of sturdy young Jews were the only passengers, and, being nearly ashore, they swam for it comfortably and attracted but little attention.

The wind had now beaten itself into a maniacal temper; and a vicious-looking storm-cloud swung over the sea, and in mid-heaven. In the midst of the uproar, the sun sank; and the sudden darkness of the hill-country was added to the dismal scene.

Among the crowd upon the beach—a scurrying mass of incoherent men, these landing, and those shouting, some pushing up the shore to get away, and others pushing down to it to see what was going on—one man stood in a kind of stupor, straining his eyes over the black belt of water, where the foam was flying wildly. It was Lazarus. He was transfixed with agony. Zahara's boat had become invisible.

"A boat!" cried Lazarus, suddenly starting to his senses, "a boat, to save a lady! A boat and boatmen! I pay a price for it!"

But the by-standers shook their heads, looking dogged and sullen through the half-light. No man stirred. Lazarus ran down to the water and seized a skiff, and began to push it out wildly. Half a dozen hands snatched it away from him.

"You get no boat and no boatmen from a Galilee fisherman in a blow like this," said one of the men imperiously, "if you would kill yourself—which is contrary to the law—you get no help from us."

At this moment an authoritative voice came crashing into the crowd:

"A boat! A boat! Fifty denarin for a boat and the rowers thereof!" It was the voice of the High Priest. His venerable figure trembled with terror. His long beard blew in the wild wind. His face was convulsed. A Roman, standing by, said carelessly:

"Some of his women are across the lake." Lazarus ran up to Annas, and poured forth wild words—a torrent of them: offering his services, himself, his body, soul, all Lazarus to save Zahara.

"But wrench thou the boat from these craven fellows and I will reach her, by the God of our fathers! I save Zahara!"

Annas, in the naturalness of the awful moment held out his hand and grasped the hand of the builder. The two men swayed together on one mighty impulse. They ran down into the water, wading on. The High Priest drew a handful of gold into the face of a fisherman, with a force that knocked the fellow flat; and snatching his boat from him, hauled it into the water. Lazarus sprang in. Then the senses of the High Priest returned to him.

"Are you familiar with seacraft?" He asked suddenly. "Can you row well?"

"No," answered the inland mechanic, "not well, but I have handled oars. I can get to her."

"She is safer without you," answered the High Priest, coldly. The storm was now a tempest. It howled at the two men, so that they could with difficulty hear each other's voices through the blast. The lake had become a curtain of cloud and wind, and night. The High Priest stood distractedly calling certain slaves of his, and urging them into the boat.

"Ho there! In with you! Row forth! Row yonder to your mistress, ye dogs!"

Lazarus, moved by one of his uncontrolled

able impulses that madden or inspire men, turned from the disheartening scene, and dashed off down the shore upon his own responsibility. Scarcely knowing what he did or why he did it, but urged by the wild longing to get as near as possible to the endangered boat, the young man rushed along the edge of the lake on the leeward side of the storm, making mad haste, scrambling over rock and wreck, and beating onward blindly. Of course if Zahara had crossed the lake, it was a hopeless undertaking to reach a sight of her. But, suppose she had been blown out of her way, the boat might even be in sight, as soon as the clouds should lift, and the course which the lover's instinct took proved not so aimless at it seemed.

Lazarus made, in his wild way, a long distance—miles or leagues, for aught he knew—he had lost all estimate of time or space. Whether it was midnight or morning, if he were in Capernaum or Jerusalem, he knew not, when suddenly, to his blurred and blood-shot eyes there appeared a vision of a little beaten boat, laboring heavily in the sea, and blown directly toward him half a league out. Lazarus flung all his soul into his voice and called: "Zahara!" But he might as well have summoned the shade of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, from the tomb, as Zahara from that raging expanse of night and sea.

He could see as he seemed to see the pretty purple sail of the toy boat, rent and ruined, flapping to the gale; the silly craft careened like the shell of a dove egg, and lo, while he stood helpless and shouting, and perishing of his anguish, the boat did overturn before his eyes, and human figures were spilled into the water like beetles. Then the storm burst with a roar and he saw no more.

When Lazarus came to himself it had lightened a little. A cleft in the mass of angry cloud showed a single star. He crawled to his feet and waded out into the water, madly calling and pleading for Zahara. He waded out up to his neck and tried to swim toward the rock. But he was a poor swimmer, and the waves beat him back. He sank upon the sands and tried nothing more. Despair took him. He no longer even wailed her name, but lay like a dead man with his face upturned to the storm. Now as he lay there, wild, prone, and helpless lover, suddenly a singular silence fell upon the raving scene. The huge violence of wind which was over his head, came to a stop, with a concussion. It was a tremendous concussion, like thunder. But thunder it was not, nor was it any sound with the like of which ears were familiar. The storm simply ceased, as if at a military "Halt!" The cloud overhead lightened, brightened, and burst. Sky shone through. The water, still unconquered, leaped, like rebel forces, high to meet it. As the young man crawled to his knees, to watch the turmoil of the sea, straining for a sight of the doomed boat, he perceived a remarkable thing.

Straight between the shore and the spot where the boat had overturned, a long narrow line of light and calm appeared, cut like a path between billows and foam. Upon this fair and shining waterway, a majestic figure moved. It glided toward the shore, with light feet treading the water as a man treadeth the solid sand. The face of the man could not be seen; but his mien was mighty. In his arms he bore a helpless human form—a woman's—dripping from the sea.

The heart of Lazarus beat as if it would strangle him. His breath came in gasps. He struggled to his feet; then sank again, fell upon his knees. In the outline and attitude of the commanding figure, something familiar and pathetic seemed to appeal to him. It advanced only. It spoke no word. God was it, or man, or angel, wraith, or vision?

It moved on majestically. It reached the shore. It stooped above the young man, and gently laid the woman at his feet.

Then Lazarus came to himself, and sprang, and cried out lightly, and clutched after the two figures—the woman's and his who carried her—and his cry rang to the skies, and pierced the shore of Galilee far and wide. But this was the order of the cry:

"Zahara!"

"Master!"

And, whether God or man, whether wraith or angel, the vision answered not; but bent above the young man and the woman in the attitude of benediction; and departed from them in the thick foliage of the lake shore.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)