

FATHER EYAN.

BY THE REV. BEVERLY D. TUCKER.

There was never a voice to utter
The grief and the pain of the land,
Till his music awoke responsive
To the tender touch of his hand.

BEN HUR; OR, THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH.

BOOK FOURTH. CHAPTER XIV. ILDERIM'S SUPPER.

If the reader will return now to the
repet of the wise men at their meeting
in the desert, he will understand the
preparations for the supper in Ilderim's tent.

Three rugs were spread on the carpet
within the space so nearly enclosed by the
divan; a table not more than a foot in
height was brought and set within the
same place, and covered with a cloth.

On to one side a portable earthenware
oven was established under the presidency
of a woman whose duty it was to keep
the company hot, and more precisely,
in hot cakes of flour from the handmill
grinding with constant sound in a neigh-
bouring tent.

Meanwhile Balthasar was conducted to
the divan, where Ilderim and Ben-Hur
received him standing. A loose black
gown covered his person; his step was
feeble, and his whole movement slow and
cautious, apparently upon a long staff and
the arm of a servant.

"Peace to you, my friend," said Ilderim
respectfully. "Peace and welcome."
The Egyptian raised his head and
replied, "And to thee, good sheik—to
thee and thine, peace and the blessing of
the One God—God, the true and loving."

The manner was gentle and devout, and
impressed Ben-Hur with a feeling of awe;
besides, the blessing included in the
answering salutation had been partly
addressed to him, and while that was
being spoken, the eyes of the aged guest,
hollow yet luminous, rested upon his
face long enough to stir an emotion new
and mysterious, and so strong that he
gave and again during the rest of the
much-wrinkled and bloodless face for
its meaning; but always there was the ex-
pression bland, placid, and trustful as a
child's. A little later he found that
expression habitual.

"This is he, O Balthasar," said the sheik,
laying his hand on Ben-Hur's arm, "who
will break bread with us this evening?"
The Egyptian glanced at the young man,
and looked again surprised and doubting;
seeing which the sheik continued, "I have
promised him my horses for trial to-mor-
row; and if all goes well, he will drive
them in the Circus."

Balthasar continued his gaze. "He came
well recommended," Ilderim
pursued, much puzzled. "You may know
him as the son of Arrius, who was a noble
Roman sailor, though—the sheik hesi-
tated, then resumed with a laugh—"though
he declares himself an Israelite of the
tribe of Judah; and by the splendour of
God, I believe that he tells me."

Balthasar could no longer withhold ex-
planation. "To-day, O most generous sheik, my
life was in peril, and would have been lost
had not a youth, the counterpart of this
one—if, indeed, he be not the very same—
intervened when all others fled, and saved
me." Then he addressed Ben-Hur di-
rectly, "Art thou not he?"

"I cannot answer so far," Ben-Hur
replied with no less deference. "I am
he who stopped the horses of the insolent
Roman when they were rushing upon thy
camel at the Fountain of Castalia. Thy
daughter left a cup with me."

From the bosom of his tunic he pro-
duced the cup, and gave it to Balthasar.
A glow lighted the faded countenance
of the Egyptian.

"The Lord sent thee to me at the Foun-
tain to-day," he said in a tremulous voice,
stretching his hand towards Ben-Hur;
"and He sends thee to me now. I give
Him thanks; and praise Him thou, for of
His favour I have wherewith to give thee
great reward, and I will. The cup is thine;
keep it."

Ben-Hur took back the gift, and
Balthasar, seeing the inquiry upon Her-
im's face, related the occurrence at the
Fountain.

"What!" said the sheik to Ben-Hur.
"Thou saidst nothing of this to me, when
better recommendation thou couldst not
have brought. Am I not an Arab, and
shalt of my tribe of tens of thousands?
And is not by my quest? And is it not in
my quest bond that the good or evil thou
doest him is good or evil done to me?"

Whether shouldst thou go for reward but
here? And whose the hand to give it but
mine?"

His voice at the end of the speech rose
to cutting shrillness.

"Good sheik, spare me, I pray. I came
not for reward, great or small; and that I
may be acquitted of the thought, I say
the help I gave this excellent man would
have been given as well to thy humblest
servant."

"But he is my friend, my guest—not my
servant; and seat thou not in the dis-
favour of Fortune!" Then to
Balthasar the sheik said, "Ah, by the
splendour of God! I tell thee again he is
not a Roman."

With that he turned away, and gave
attention to the servants, whose prepara-
tions for the supper were about complete.

The reader who recollects the history of
Balthasar as given by himself at the meet-
ing in the desert, will understand the
effect of Ben-Hur's assertion of disinter-
estedness upon that worthy. In his devo-
tion to men there had been, it will be
remembered, no distinctions; while the
redemption which had been promised him
in the way of reward—the redemption for
which he was waiting—was universal. To
him, therefore, the assertion sounded
somewhat like an echo of himself. He
took a step nearer Ben-Hur, and spoke to
him in a childlike way.

"How did the sheik say I should call
you? It was a Roman name, I think."

"Arrius, the son of Arrius."

"Yes, thou art not a Roman."

"All my people are Jews."

"Were, saidst thou? Are they not liv-
ing?"

The question was subtle as well as sim-
ple; but Ilderim saved Ben-Hur from
reply.

"Come," he said to them, "the meal is
ready."

Ben-Hur gave his arm to Balthasar, and
conducted him to the table, where shortly
they were all seated on their rugs. Eastern
fashion. The lavers were brought then,
and they washed and dried their hands;
then the sheik made a sign, the servants
stopped, and the voice of the Egyptian
arose tremulous with holy feeling.

"Father of All—God! What we have
is of Thee; take our thanks, and bless us,
that we may continue to do Thy will."

It was the grace the good man had said
simultaneously with his brethren Gaspas,
the Greek and Melchior the Hindoo, the
utterance in diverse tongues out of which
had come the miracle attesting the Divine
Presence at the meal in the desert years
before.

The table to which they immediately
addressed themselves was, as may be
thought, rich in the substantial and deli-
cacies favourite in the East—in cakes hot
from the oven, vegetables from the gar-
dens, meats singly, compounds of meats
and vegetables, milk of kine, and honey
and butter—all eaten or drunk, it should
be remarked, without any of the modern
accoutrements—knives, forks, spoons, cups, or
plates; and in this part of the repast
but little was said, for they were
hungry. But when the dessert was in
course it was otherwise. They lavished
their hands again, had the lapclothes shaken out,
and with a renewed table and the sharp
edge of their appetites gone they were
disposed to talk and listen.

With such a company—an Arab, a Jew,
and an Egyptian, all believers alike in the
One God—there could be at that age but one
subject of conversation; and of the three,
which should be speaker but he to whom
the Deity had been so nearly a personal
appearance, who had seen him in a star,
had heard his voice in direction, had
had his feet so miraculously by His
Spirit; and of what should he talk,
that of which he had been called to testify!

CHAPTER XV. BEN-HUR'S WONDER.

The shadows cast over the Orchard of
Palms by the mountains at set of sun left
no sweet margin time of violet sky and
drowning earth between the day and night.

The latter came early and swift;
and against its glooming in the tent
that evening the servants brought four can-
dlesticks of brass, and set them by the
corners of the table. To each candlestick
were four branches, and on each branch
a lighted silver lamp and a supply cup of
olive oil. In light ample, even brilliant,
the group of desert continued their con-
versation, speaking in the Syriac dialect,
familiar to all people in that part of the
world.

The Egyptian told his story of the meet-
ing of the three in the desert, and agreed
with the sheik that it was in December,
twenty-seven years before, when he and
his companions fleeing from Herod arrived
at the tent praying shelter. The narrative
was with intense interest; even the
servants listening when they could to
catch its details. Ben-Hur, who had
become a man listening to a revelation of
deep concern to all humanity, and to none
of more concern than the people of Israel.

In his mind, as we shall presently see,
there was crystallizing an idea which was
to change his course of life, if not absorb
it absolutely.

As the recital proceeded, the impression
made by Balthasar upon the young Jew
increased; at its conclusion, his feeling
was so profound to permit a doubt of its
truth; indeed, there was nothing left him
desirable in the connection but assurance,
if such were to be had, pertaining exclu-
sively to the consequences of the amazing
event.

And now there is wanting an explana-
tion which the very discerning may have
heretofore demanded; certainly it can be
no longer delayed. Our tale begins, in
point of date not less than fact, to trench
close upon the opening of the ministry of
the Son of Mary, whom we have seen
but once since this same
Balthasar left Him worshipfully in
His mother's lap in the cave
by Bethlehem. Henceforth to the end
of the narrative, and slowly though
surely the current of events with which
we are dealing will bring us nearer and
nearer to Him, until finally we see Him a
man—we would like to farm, contrary to
opinion would permit it, to add—A
MAN WHOM THE WORLD COULD
NOT DO WITHOUT. Of this declara-
tion, apparently so simple, a shrewd mind
inspired by faith will make much—and
welcome. Before His time, and since,
there have been men indispensable to
particular people and periods; but His

indispensability was to the whole race,
and for all time—a respect in which it is
unique, solitary, divine.

To Sheik Ilderim the story was not
new. He had heard it from the three
wise men together under circumstances
which left no room for doubt; he had
acted upon it seriously, for the helping
a fugitive escape from the anger of the
first Herod was dangerous. Now one of
the three sat at his table again, a welcome
guest and revered friend. Sheik Ilderim
certainly believed the story; yet, in the
nature of things, its mighty central fact
could not come home to him with the
force and absorbing effect it came to Ben-
Hur. He was an Arab, whose interest
in the consequences was but general; on
the other hand, Ben-Hur was an Israelite
and a Jew, with more than a special in-
terest in—if the solemnic can be par-
doned—the truth of the fact. He laid
hold of the circumstance with a purely
Jewish mind.

From his cradle, let it be remembered,
he had heard of the Messiah; at the col-
leges he had been made familiar with all
that was known of that Being at the
time of the hope, and the peculiar glory
of the chosen people; the prophets from
the first to the last of the heroic line fore-
told him; and the coming had been, and
yet was, the theme of endless exposition
with the rabbis—in the synagogues, in
the schools, in the Temple, of fast-days
and feast days, in public and in private,
the national teachers expounded as if
kept expounding until all the children
of Abraham wherever their lots were cast
and moulded their lives.

Doubtless, it will be understood from
this that there was much argument
among the Jews themselves about the
messiah, and so there was; but the dis-
putation was all limited to one point, and
one only—when would He come?

Disquisition is for the preacher; where-
as the writer is but telling a tale, and
that he may not lose his character, the
explanation he is making requires notice
merely of a point connected with the
Messiah about which the unanimity
among the chosen people was matter of
marvellous astonishment: He was to be,
when come, the KING OF THE JEWS
—their political King, their Caesar. By
their instrumentalities He was to make
armed conquest of the earth, and, for
their profit and in the name of God,
hold it down forever. On this faith, dear
reader, the Pharisees or Separatists—the
latter being rather a political term—in
the cloisters and around the altars of the
Temple, built an edifice of hope far over-
topping the dream of the Macedonian.

Their instrumentality He was to cover
the earth and fill the skies.

Returning directly to Ben-Hur, it is to
be observed now that there were two
circumstances in his life the result of
which had been to keep him in a state
comparatively free from the influence and
hard effects of the audacious faith of his
Separatist countrymen.

In the first place, his father followed
the way of the Sadducees, who may, in a
general way, be termed the Liberals of
their time. They had some loose opin-
ions in denial of the soul. They were
strict constructionists and rigorous
observers of the law as found in the
books of Moses; but they held the vast
mass of rabbinical addenda to those books
in contempt. They were un-
questionably a sect, but they were not
more a philosophy than a creed; and they
do not deny themselves the enjoyments of
life, and saw many admirable methods
and productions among the Gentile
divisions of the race. In politics they
were the active opposition of the Separa-
tists. In the natural order of things,
these circumstances, under the conditions,
opinions and peculiarities we have men-
tioned, descended to the son as certainly
and really as any portion of his father's estate;
and, as we have seen, he was actually in
course of acquiring them, when the sec-
ond saving event overtook him.

Upon a youth of Ben-Hur's mind and
temperament the influence of five years
of silent life in Rome can be appre-
ciated by recalling that the great
city was then, in fact, the meeting place
of the nations—their meeting place
politically and commercially, as well as
for the indulgence of pleasure without
restraint. Round and round the golden
milestone in front of the Forum—now in
gloom of eclipse, now in unapproachable
splendour—flowed all the active currents
of humanity. In society, manners,
refinement, and glory of achievement, made
intellect, and glory of achievement, made
no impression upon him, how could he,
as the son of Arrius, pass day after day,
through a period so long, from the beauti-
ful villa near Misenum to the receptions
of Caesar, and be wholly unimpressed?

But he saw there of kings,
princes, ambassadors, hostages, and
delegates, suitors all of them from every
known land, waiting humbly the eyes or
no which was to make or unmake them?
As mere assemblages, to be sure, there was
nothing to compare with the gatherings
at Jerusalem in celebration of the Pass-
over; yet when he sat under the purple
velvet of the Circus Maximus one of the
three hundred and fifty thousand specta-
tors to be must have been visited by the
thought that possibly there might be
some branches of the family of man
worthy divine consideration, if not mercy,
though they were of the undistinguished—
some, by their sorrows, and yet worse, by
their hopelessness in the midst
of sorrows, fitted for brotherhood in
and Germany with the Hyperbur-
dies and Arrubis; the Persians, who were
devoted to Ormuzd and Ahriman, holding
them in equal honor; in hope of the
Nirvana, the Hindoos moved on patient
as ever in the rayless paths of Brahmi; the
beautiful Greek mind, in pauses of phil-

osophy, still sang the heroic gods of
Homer; while in Rome nothing was so
common and cheap as gods. According to
whom, the masters of the world, because
they were masters carried their worship
and offerings indifferently from altar to
altar, delighted in the pandemonium they
had erected. Their discontent, if they
were discontented, was with the number
of gods; for, after borrowing all the
divinities of the earth, they proceeded to
dify their Caesar, and vote them alars
and holy service. No, the unhappy con-
dition was not from religion, but mis-
government and usurpation and countless
tyrannies. The Avarus men had been
tumbled into, and were praying to be
relieved from, was terrible, but essentially
political. The supplication—everywhere
alike, in Lodiann, Alexandria, Athens,
Jerusalem—was for a king to conquer
with, not a god to worship.

Studying the situation after two thou-
sand years, we can see and say that
religiously there was no relief from the
universal confusion except some God could
prove himself true, divine, and mas-
terful one, and come to the rescue, but
the people of the time, even the discern-
ing and philosophical, discovered no hope
except in crushing Rome; that done, the
relief would follow in restorations and
reorganizations; therefore they prayed,
they rebelled, fought, and died,
drenching the soil to day with blood, to-
morrow with tears—and always with the
same result.

It remains to be said now that Ben-Hur
was in agreement with the men of his
time not Roman. The five years' resi-
dence in the capital served him with
opportunity to see and study the miseries
of the degraded world; and in fall belief
that the evil which afflicted it was
political, and to be cured only by
political, he was going forth to fit himself
for a part in the day of resort to the
heroic remedy. By practice of arms he
was a perfect soldier; but war has its
highest fields, and he who would move
successfully in them must know more
than to defend with shield and thrust with
spear. In those fields, the great of his
tasks, the greatest of which is the
reduction of the many into one, and that
one himself; the consummate captain is a
fighting man armed with an army. This
conception entered into the scheme of
life to which he was further away by
the reflection that the vengeance he
dreamed of in connection with his indi-
vidual wrongs, would be more surely
found in some of the ways of war than in
any pursuit of peace.

The feelings with which he listened to
Balthasar can be now understood. The
story touched two of the most sensitive
points of his being so, they rang within
him. His heart beat fast—and faster still
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conception entered into the scheme of
life to which he was further away by
the reflection that the vengeance he
dreamed of in connection with his indi-
vidual wrongs, would be more surely
found in some of the ways of war than in
any pursuit of peace.

The feelings with which he listened to
Balthasar can be now understood. The
story touched two of the most sensitive
points of his being so, they rang within
him. His heart beat fast—and faster still
when searching himself, he found not a
word which the recital was not in
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will tell you why I believe the Child is
living."

Both Ilderim and Ben-Hur looked
astonished, as if they might understand as
well as hear. The interest reached the
servants, who drew near to the divan,
and stood listening. Throughout the tent
there was the profoundest silence.

"We three believe in God."

Balthasar bowed his head as he spoke.

"And He is the Truth," he resumed.

"His word is God. The hills may turn
to dust, and the seas be drunk dry by
the south winds; but His word shall
stand, because it is the Truth."

The utterance was in a manner inex-
pressibly solemn.

"The voice, which was His, speaking
to me by the lake, said, 'Blessed art
thou, O son of Benjamin! The Redem-
ption is the work of the Father, but the
remoteness of the earth, thou shalt see
the Saviour.' I have seen the Saviour—
blessed be His name—but the Redem-
tion, which was the second part of the
promise, is yet to come. Seat thou
now! If the Child be dead, there is no
reason for my belief, and God—nay,
I dare not say it!"

He turned up both hands in horror.

"The Redemtion was the work for
which the Child was born; and so long
as the promise abides, not even death
can separate Him from His work until it
is fulfilled, or at least in the way of ful-
fillment. Take you that now as that one
reason for my belief; then give me fur-
ther attention."

The good man paused.

"Wilt thou not taste the wine? It is
at thy hand—see," said Ilderim respect-
fully.

Balthasar drank, and, seeming re-
freshed, continued:

"The Saviour I saw was born of
woman, in nature like us, and subject to
all our ills—even death. Let that stand
as the first proposition. Consider next
the work set apart to Him. Was it not a
performance for which only a man is
fitted—a man wise, firm, discreet—a
man, not a child? To become such He
had to grow as we grow. Bethink you
now of the dangers His life was subject
to, in the interval between the inter-
twined childhood and maturity. The
existing powers were His enemies;
Herod was His enemy; and what would
Rome have been? And as for Israel—that
He should not be accepted by Israel was
the motive for cutting Him off. See you
now. What better way was there to take
care of His life in the helpless growing
time than by passing Him into obscurity?

Wherefore I say to myself, and to my
listening faith, which is never moved
except by yearning of love—I say He is
not dead, but lost; and His work re-
maining undone, He will come again.
There you have the reasons for my
belief. Are they not good?"

Ilderim's small Arab eyes were bright
with understanding, and Ben-Hur, lifted
from his dejection, said heartily, "I
at least, may not gainsay them. What further,
pray?"

"Hast thou not enough, my son? Well,"
he began in calmer tone, "seeing that
the reasons were good—more plainly, seeing
it was God's will that the Child should not
be found—I settled my faith into the
keeping of patience, and took to waiting."

He raised his eyes, full of holy trust, and
broke off abstractedly—"I am waiting
now. He lives, keeping well His mighty
secret. What though I cannot go to Him,
or name the hill or the vale of His abid-
ing place? He lives—it may be as the
fruit in blossom, it may be as the fruit
just ripening; but by the certainty there
is in the promise and reason of God, I
know He lives."

A thrill of awe struck Ben-Hur—a
thrill which was but the dying of his
half-formed doubt.

"Where hast thou He is?" he asked
in a low voice, and hesitating, like one
who feels upon his lips the pressure of a
sacred silence.