



BEN HUR; OR, THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH.

BOOK SEVENTH.

CHAPTER IV. (Continued.)

"Your speech does not sound in the least like your father's. Are you not of his faith?" "I might have been"—and she laughed low—"I might have been had I seen what he has. I may be when I get old like him. My father's God is too awful for me. I failed to find him in the Grove of Daphna. He was never heard of as present in the stir of Rome. But, son of Hur, I have a wish."

and touched its front face with her lips. "O thou most of thy kind!—that, because there is no suspicion in thy love." An instant, and she was gone.

CHAPTER V. THE HERALD AND HIS KING. The third day of the journey the party halted by the river Jabok, where there were a hundred or more men, mostly of Persia, resting themselves and their beasts. Hardly had they dismounted, before a man came to them with a pitcher of water and a bowl, and offered them drink; as they received the attention with much courtesy, he said, looking at the camel, "I am returning from the Jordan, where just now there are many people from distant parts, travelling as you are, illustrious friends; but they had none of them the equal of your servant here. A very noble animal. May I ask of what breed he is sprung?"

ing of body, and separated them from others of their kind as absolutely as if they had not been born like them—and notwithstanding he had been notified on the way to look for a preacher whose simple description of himself was a voice from the Wilderness—still Ben Hur's dream of the King, with its attendant of holiness, much had colored all his thoughts of him, so that he never doubted to find in the forerunner some sign or token of the goodness and royalty he was announcing. Gazing at the savage figure before him, the long trains of courtiers whom he had seen in the corridors at Rome arose before him, forcing a comparison. Shocked, ashamed, bewildered, he could only answer: "It is the Baptist."

entirely released from the divine relations to which it had been formerly admitted, or as the fitting reward of a life in that age so without examples of holiness—a life itself a miracle. The ideal of his faith was before him, perfect in face, form, dress, action, age; and he was in his view, the very man he sought. Ah, now if something should happen to identify the stranger beyond all doubt! And that was what did happen. Exactly at the fitting moment, as if to assure the trembling Egyptian, the Baptist repeated the cry: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

left of the tragic circumstances so ruinous to the family, but the reformation was in a style richer than before. At every point, indeed, a visitor was met by evidence of the higher tastes acquired by the young proprietor during his years of residence in the villa by Misenum and in the home of the Roman aristocracy. Now it should not be inferred from this explanation that Ben-Hur had publicly assumed ownership of the property. In his opinion, the hour for that was not yet come. Neither had he yet taken his proper name. Passing the time in the labours of preparation in Galilee, he waited patiently the action of the Nazarene, who became daily more and more a mystery to him, and by prodigies done, often before his eyes, kept him in a state of anxious doubt both as to his character and mission. Occasionally he came up to the Holy City, stopping at the paternal house; always, however, as a stranger and a guest.

Either made no attempt to conceal the effects of three weeks' absence from the family, but the reformation was in a style richer than before. At every point, indeed, a visitor was met by evidence of the higher tastes acquired by the young proprietor during his years of residence in the villa by Misenum and in the home of the Roman aristocracy. Now it should not be inferred from this explanation that Ben-Hur had publicly assumed ownership of the property. In his opinion, the hour for that was not yet come. Neither had he yet taken his proper name. Passing the time in the labours of preparation in Galilee, he waited patiently the action of the Nazarene, who became daily more and more a mystery to him, and by prodigies done, often before his eyes, kept him in a state of anxious doubt both as to his character and mission.

dropped several notes lower—"the Nazarene will be here to-morrow, and Ben-Hur to-night." "Save him, father! It is not too late!" she said untrusting. He answered with a dubious smile, "A man drowning may be saved; not so a man in love."











