

AMAL

A PRINCE OF THE
AMALEKITES



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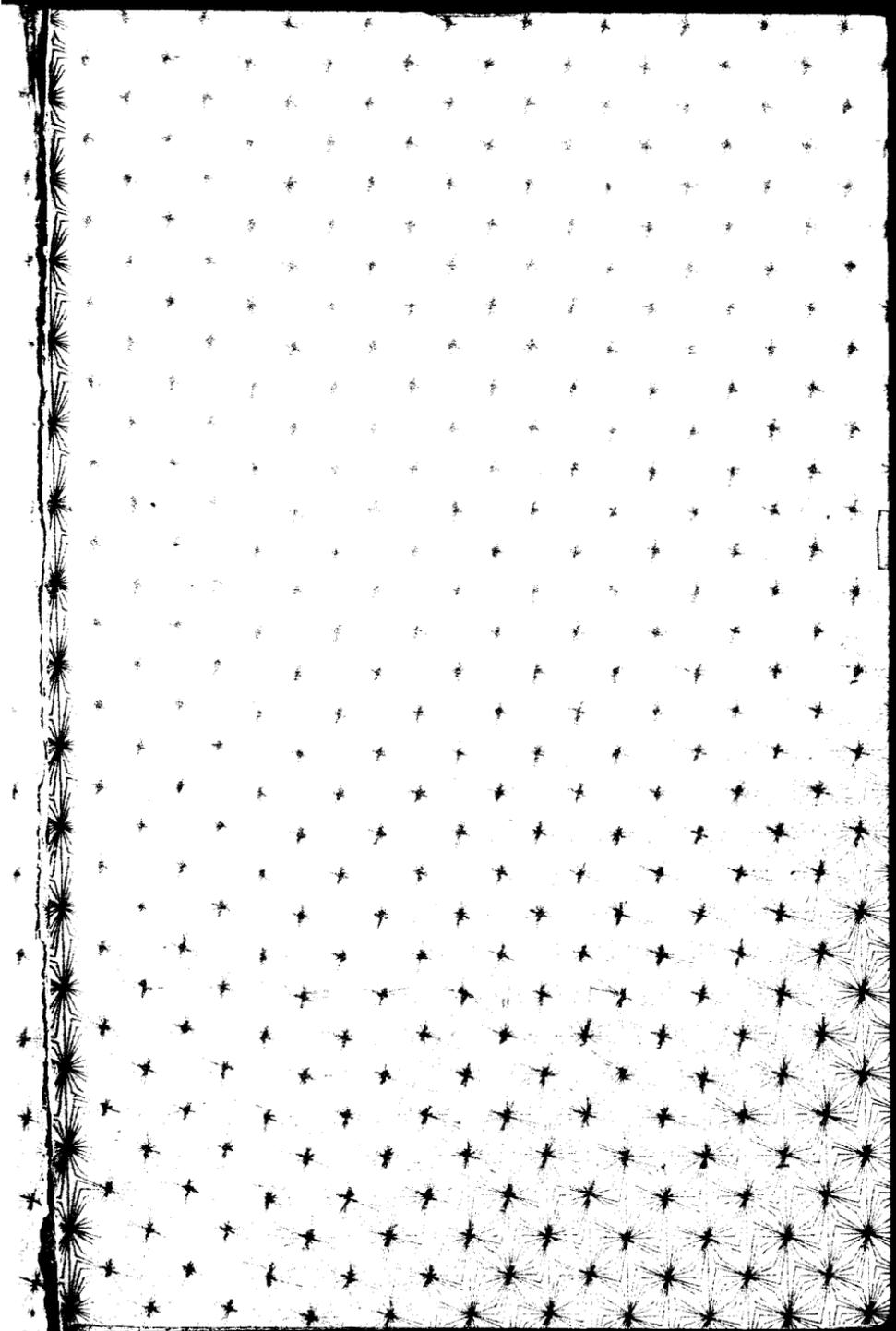


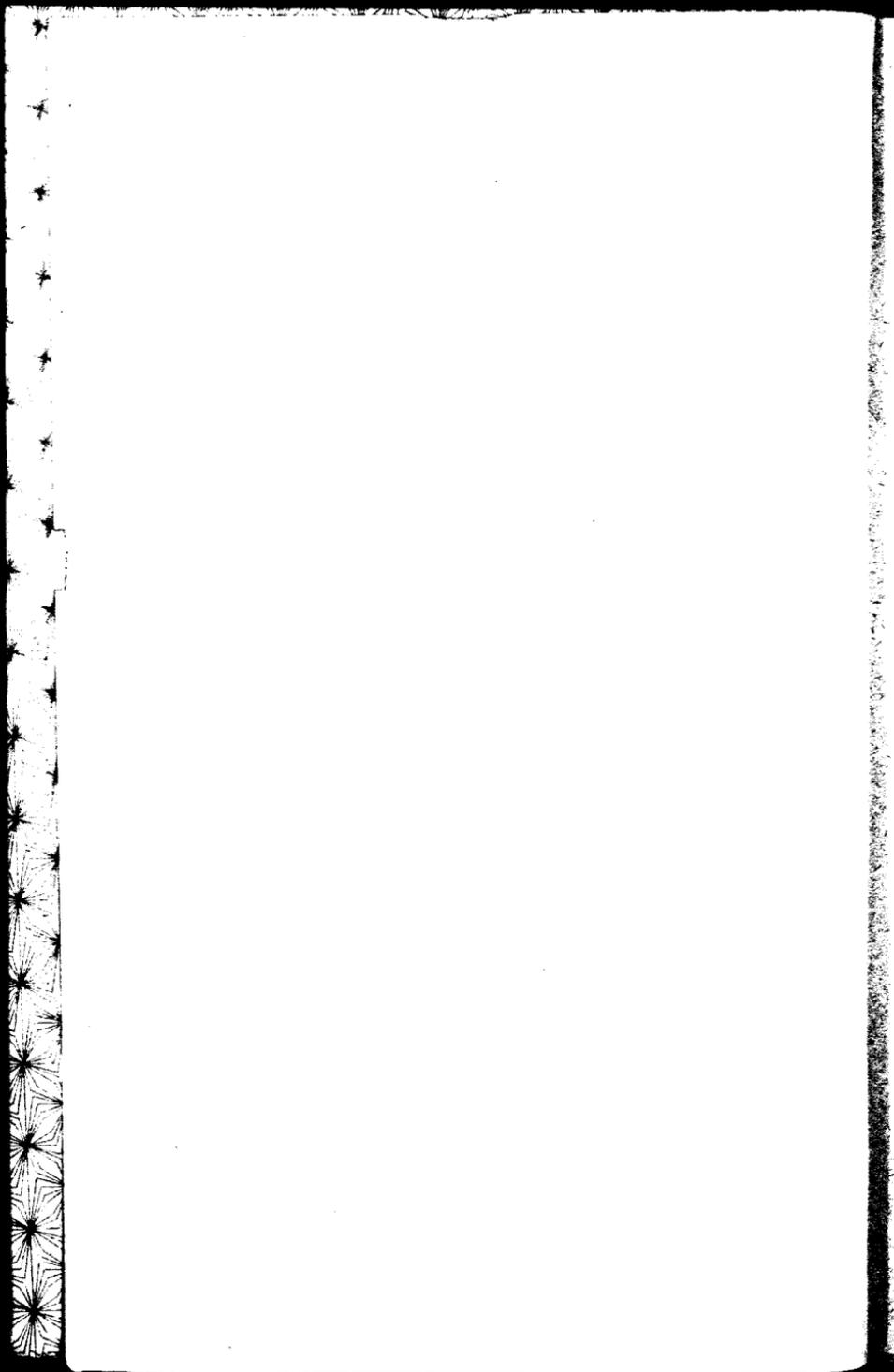
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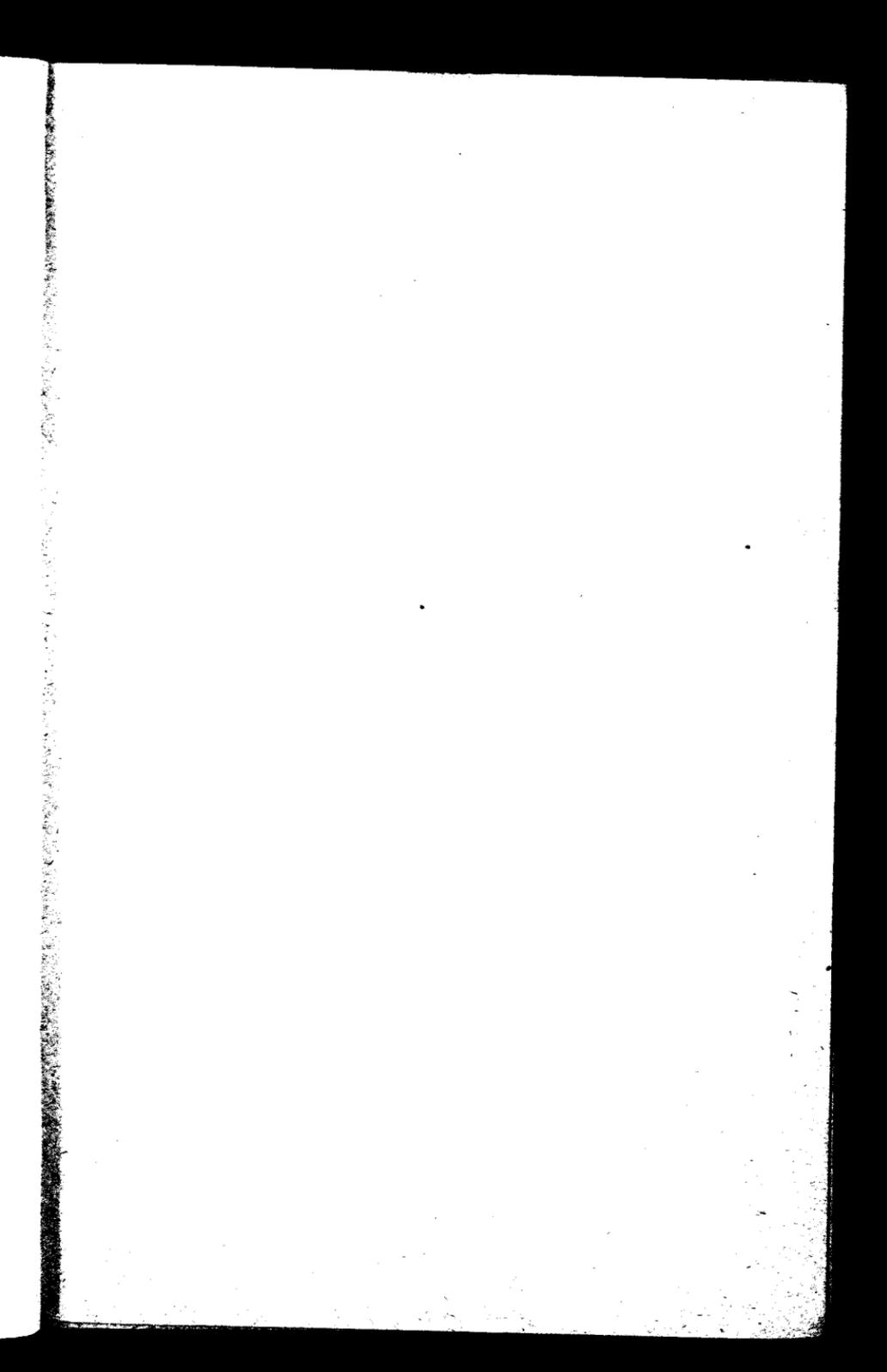
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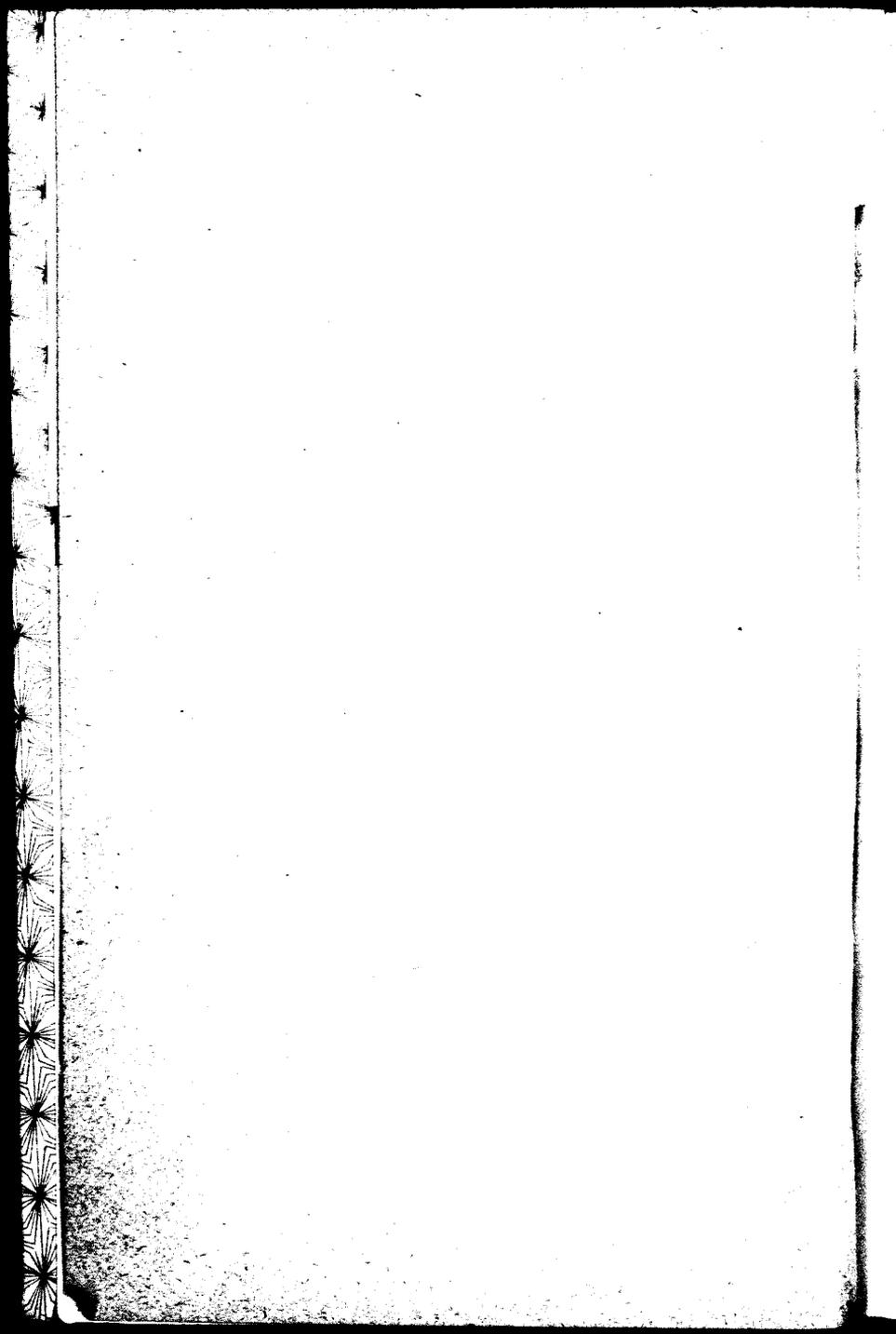
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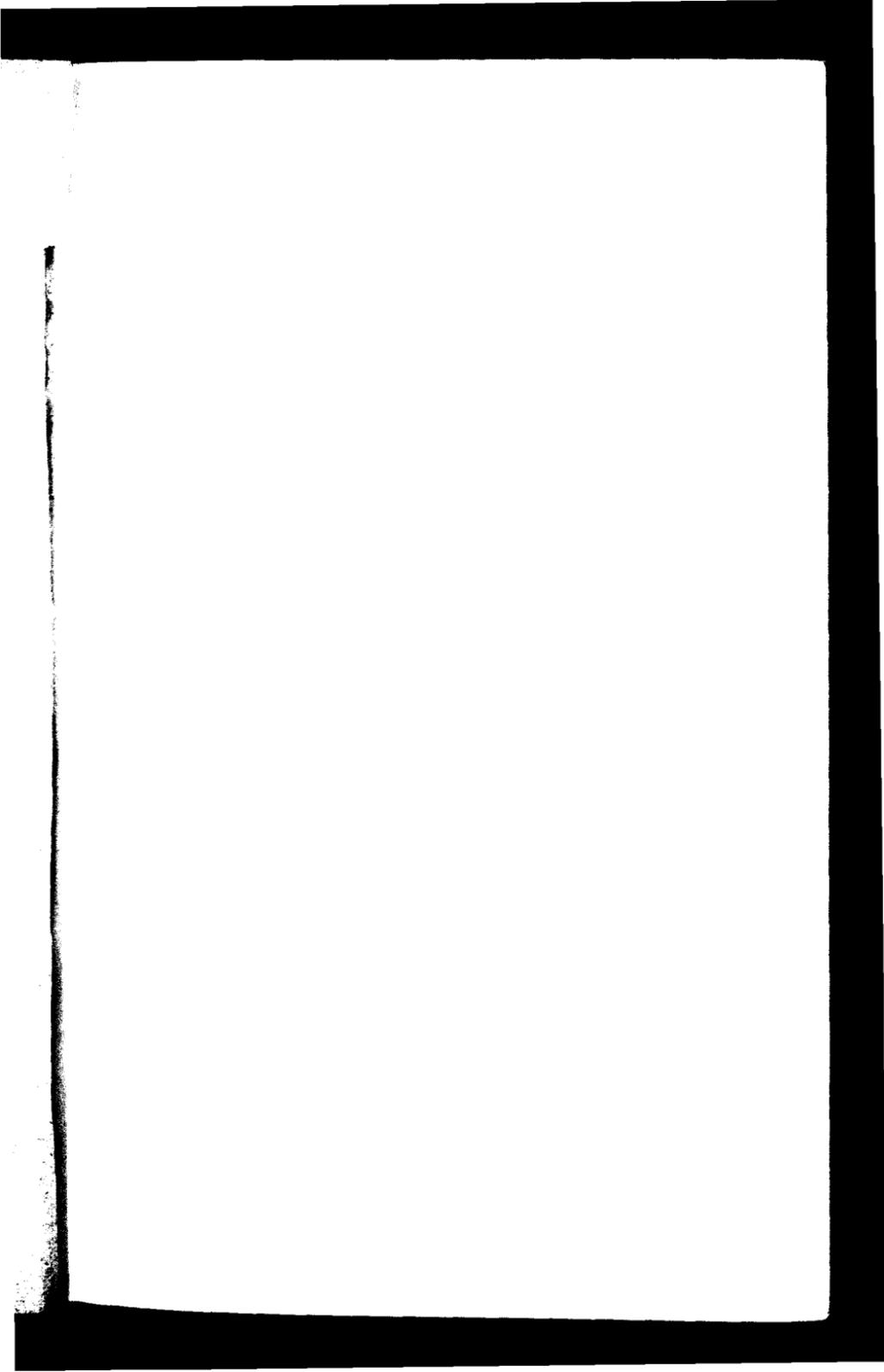
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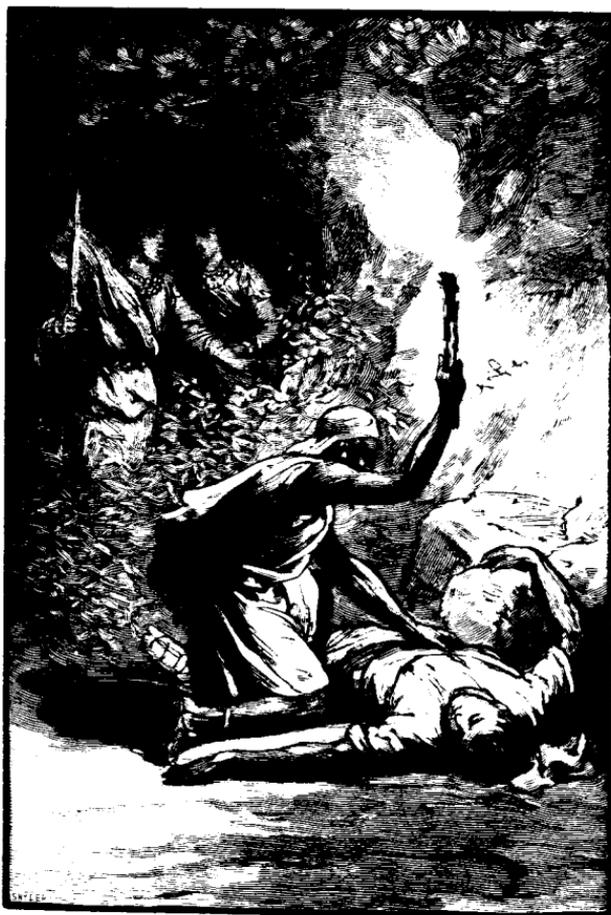




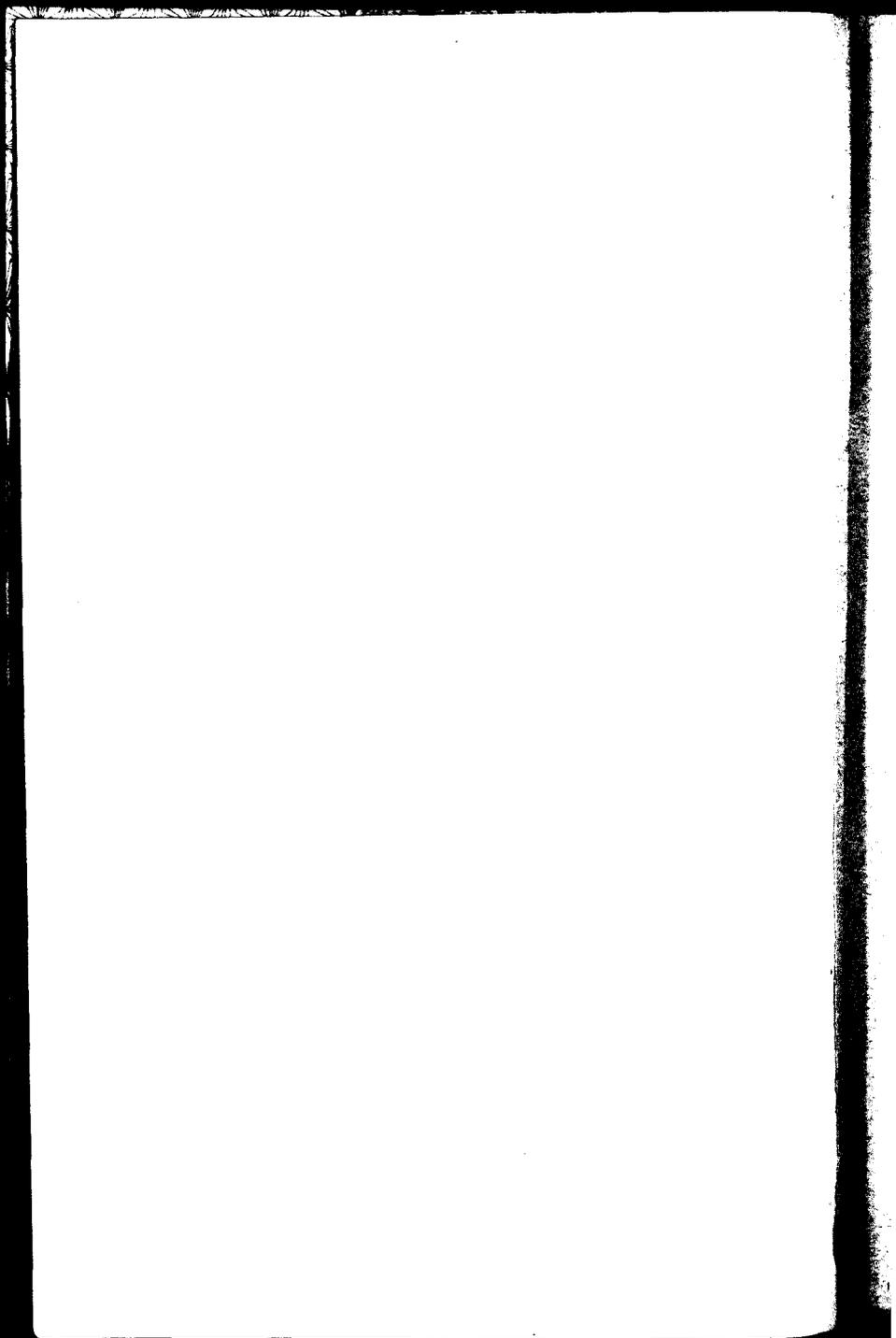








Amal.



AMAL:

A PRINCE OF THE AMALEKITES.

A STORY OF SINAI DURING THE EXODUS.

BY

REV. EDWIN McMINN,

*Author of "Breaker Boy," "Brave Hearts Win," "Judith and Glauca,"
"The Eaglesmere Trio," "Ben Ammi," etc.*



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AMAL, THE AMALEKITE.

CHAPTER I.

THE COMING OF THE AMALEKITES.

THE lofty summits of Musa and Serbal—the giant mountains of Sinai—were glittering in splendor as the rays of the retreating sun, leaping from the chasm-like valleys, were now touching only the tops of the highest peaks, and threatening soon to leave them also to the obscurity of night.

Wady Feiran, the paradise of the desert tribes, was not allowed the peaceful silence which prevailed in the smaller valleys. The masses of red rocks which rose steep and high above it did not impress its inhabitants with either the fear or the reverence that has marked the experience of thousands of travelers since that time, as from these deep glades they have watched the upward creeping of the line of golden light, and have mused as the quiet shadows have darkened their camp.

Fully an hour before the shadows covered the

valley, a company of travelers, consisting of men, women, and children, had entered the narrow, rocky gateway of the vale. As these travelers passed between walls of rock, only twenty feet apart, for a distance of a hundred feet or more, they poised their spears carefully in their right hands, and with keen scrutiny surveyed the rocks on either side and above them, to guard against sudden attack from whatever foe might be lurking there.

On each side of this gateway, the bare and craggy rocks, rising high and steep, frowning upon them, formed the sharpest contrast with the sloping hills, clothed in luxuriant foliage in the valley beyond.

The travelers were weary from their long journey, and the vale was to them the more charming, because on every hand it seemed, by its natural luxuriance, to breathe "Welcome."

Through the midst of the valley a stream of sweet, pure water merrily rippled along between even, grassy banks. The sides of the valley were ornamented by lofty, fantastically-shaped heaps of alluvial deposits, showing that at one time this hill-surrounded valley had been a lake, and that where peace now reigned the storm king had dashed along with fierce tread, until this vale had been rent and broken by his passing. Then resistless floods washed the soil from the lofty peaks, and poured their strength through the

open, rocky gates, leaving these strange forms as a remembrance of the work done in the past. The brook was shaded by gnarled tamarisks, groups of graceful, lofty, and fruitful palms, here and there a nebbuk tree, while from copse and thicket, from shrub and flower, there exhaled a sweet fragrance, such as the traveler had not enjoyed for a long time. From the foliage of the trees and bushes arose the songs of birds—birds whose beauty and grace were in perfect harmony with the foliage in which they had made their homes. The melody of the songsters, the tall, graceful trees by the water, and the black earth of the valley, seemed like a paradise when compared with the silence, the stunted growth, the dryness, and the glistening whiteness of the desert sands over which they had come.

After riding a short distance into the valley they came to a curve in the brook, selected a grassy plat shaded by tamarisks and palms, where they dismounted from their camels and loosed them from their burdens. The weary beasts sought a place to rest. The men pitched their tents, kindled the fires, and attended to their various duties, while the women got ready the evening meal. As they worked they lifted up their clear, shrill voices in songs so loud that the hills caught the strains, and in prolonged echoes carried them from one peak to another, until they

were lost among the distant ranges. After partaking of the abundant provisions so quickly prepared, they spread their rugs and sought repose.

The travelers had returned to stay for a long time, and they noticed with gratification that since they had left this vale on their desert expedition, no changes had affected it. Every one appeared to be happy in its balmy air; but, as the night came on rapidly, all were soon in restless slumber, while the glow of the burning embers fitfully lighted the darkness, and the columns of smoke silently rolled upward toward the stars.

These people were Amalekites, who had no abiding home, but roved wherever life offered them the most pleasure, always returning, however, to this vale, in which their fathers had erected the sanctuary, and which they called "the Paradise of the Earth." No where else were the tamarisks so gorgeous, the dates so sweet and refreshing, the waters so pure and invigorating, the birds so graceful and melodious, as in this delightful vale. For centuries it had been the conceit of lovers that no where else could words of love be spoken more tenderly, or awaken a quicker response than beneath the palms of this valley, which was blest by the presence and favor of the priests of their gods.

This tribe was the advance guard of the Amalekite

host. In a few days all the wadies in the neighborhood would be filled with the swarming tribes, and they would spend the summer days in feasting and frolic.

What a strange people these Amalekites were! They were strong in numbers, and valiant in battle, yet they roved from mountain to desert, and from desert to mountain, with their flocks and herds, and were happiest when engaging in sports in the most secret recesses of the towering mountains. At their camp fires the fathers repeated in songs the many traditions of their tribes. They sung of the days when Amalek battled on the shores of the Persian Sea with the mighty Assyrians; of the days when the mountains, the plains, and the valleys of the land of Canaan were beneath their sway; of the centuries when in Egypt their fathers, having driven the native Egyptians beyond the cataracts of the mysterious Nile, dwelt in ceiled houses at the base of the pyramids, enjoying the luxury from which they had driven their foes. Now, dwelling in tents, restricted to the deserts and mountains, and privileged to see only from afar the growth of nations and cities, they recalled with bitter hatred the days of the past, and with thirst for vengeance hoped for their return. The valley in which they were now encamped rested on the northern slopes of the magnificent mountain Serbal, whose white granite cliffs rose like great towers above all its

surroundings, being inferior only to *the* giant of Sinai—a mountain a few miles farther east. The topmost peak of Serbal was a succession of rounded crags, with deep, rugged ravines between them. The man who was brave and skillful enough to cross these ravines and climb this peak, was rewarded by a view of all Sinai in its majestic grandeur lying at his feet; then of the white chalk-like line of the surrounding desert on the north, the blue sea on the south, and the hills of Egypt, in the hazy distance beyond the sea of reeds.

The young men of the Amalekites were ambitious to climb this lofty peak, and on returning to the camp to please the elders and startle the maidens by descriptions of the awful ravines through which they had passed, and in which lay the bones of the wild mountain goats, bleaching on the rocks where they had made their last leap; or of the glimpses of distant Egypt, where the lofty pyramids and great cities were.

But the work was not completed until the adventurous climber, with the sharp point of his hunting knife, inscribed his sign upon the granite head of Serbal, where it would remain as long as the mountain should stand.¹ Woe unto the youth whose name

¹The inscriptions on this mountain are to-day the wonder of all learned travelers.

or sign was not there to prove that he had indeed climbed the rock, as he boasted of having done!

As the light of the camp-fires grew fainter, and the darkness increased, the entire camp, except one tent, was wrapped in slumber. In this tent, thoughts of the morrow pressed heavily upon the inmates, and drove sleep away.

Amal was the pride of the tent. The venerable father looked to him as his successor in the chieftainship of the tribe; his mother rejoiced in the displays of gallantry which had already distinguished him as a true son of Amalek; his sister regarded him with highest pride, for she thought he knew not fear, and in all the tribes she acknowledged no one as his superior in strength or courage.

When the morrow came Amal was to venture upon the ascent of Serbal, there to carve his sign by the side of his father's, as one of the bold sons of Amalek, or to perish in the attempt. His youthful heart throbbed violently with anticipation; for his father had declared to him that upon his return he should marry the beautiful and queenly daughter of the warlike Jebel, whose tent was second only to his own amongst the Amalekites in wealth and splendor. Amal knew the maiden well; he had played with her in their happy childhood. But his heart had never been touched with love, and now he feared to

approach her more than to attempt the ascent of Serbal.

Sleepless he arose, and went out from the tent to the grove of acacias near by. Silence reigned throughout the valley. The moon was casting a ghastly light over the scene, and grim, white-faced Serbal, with its three miles of front, stood there, as if defying the spirit of the bold and adventurous youth. But no fear entered his heart. The courage and pride of his race was in his blood; and as he gazed upon the huge mountain he longed for the hours in which he should master its tremendous cliffs and yawning ravines. Gazing at it for a while, he suddenly stooped down, picked up a stone from the path, and with all his strength hurled it against the face of the mountain, in disdain at the thought of failure; then he turned, and slowly walked toward the camp.

He had proceeded but a short distance when he perceived a man standing in the pathway. The suddenness of the sight startled him; but fearless, he advanced toward him, saying, as he approached: "Who art thou?" The stranger threw aside his mantle, and Amal saw the white beard and the wrinkled face of the venerable priest of their tribes, who alone of them all never left this valley of the sanctuary. Gazing for a moment upon the young man,

the priest again gathered his mantle about him, and saying, "Follow me," turned, and swiftly ascended another path, which led through the thickets along the edge of the mountain, until he came to a small stone building, before which he stopped, and again turned toward the young man.

Amal saw that he had been led to the priest's sanctuary, in front of which was the altar where the sacrifices of their tribes were offered. He had been taught to revere the priests and the sacrifices, and he did not now forget the respect due to his aged guide. But the priest, bidding him be seated on the luxuriant grass beneath a lofty palm, fixed his gaze steadily upon him, and after a few moments' of silence, said :

"Amal, thou art the pride of our tribes, in whom we all take delight, as we see how the gods have bestowed upon thee health, courage, and ambition. Thou art fitted to lead thy people in the days to come, and as a proof of my word, thou wilt carve thy sign on Serbal's lofty crown before the sun again sinks in the western horizon. Thy life will be one of struggles, for I discern a vision of blood overshadowing thy career; thy sun will soon go down, but see to it that its course end in glory. Thou wilt be sorely tempted to forsake the principles of thy fathers. I cannot now reveal to thee the course of thy temptations; but be thou true! Desert not Amalek! In

manhood, as in youth, be faithful, brave, and courageous; and when Amalek is surrounded by her foes, count not thy life worth having, save as Amalek prevails. And now, my son, I bid thee farewell, and give unto thee my blessing, and the blessing of the gods. Thou wilt never see me again; but from the eternal halls of the gods I will mark thy course, and be a witness of thy life, be it true or false. If thou be true, may the blessings of the gods be ever upon thee; but if thou be false, may their curses be thy everlasting portion. Farewell!"

Amal had prostrated himself upon the ground before the priest, as he thus spoke to him. When the words ceased, he looked up; but the priest had disappeared, and he was alone.

What strange mystery was hidden in the words of the minister of the sanctuary! Why should he be told of blood-shedding, of temptation, of battle, of early death, when all about him breathed peace? But the priest did not return. Time only would reveal the mystery.

Amal arose and walked down into the vale again, to seek rest in slumber before the dawn should call him to his task. In his sleep, he beheld visions of perils, escapes, foes, and triumphs. He awoke late, but strong in spirit and ready for the perilous undertaking. After eating a meal of his mother's own

preparing, with the kisses of his sister upon his lips, the exhortations of his father in his heart, the smiles of the maidens and the shouts of his tribesmen nerving his spirit, he placed some food in the pouch fastened to his girdle, slung his quiver of arrows across his shoulder, and, with bow and spear in his hands, waved his people a hasty farewell, and began the arduous journey. In a few moments he disappeared from their view behind the intervening crags.

At first he walked rapidly, then slowly; for large, smooth blocks of granite, which in ancient times had tumbled down the mountain, impeded his progress. After some time spent in thus toiling, he came to the bed of a brook. He now traveled with ease, until he arrived at the fountain from which the brook flowed. Here he threw himself on the ground to rest, while eating of the dried fruit he carried in his pouch.

Then going forward, in three hours he crossed the ridge separating the two highest of the five peaks of Serbal. From this point he pressed on with fresh energy, scrambling over blocks of granite, leaping over chasms, and climbing up the steep mountain, until the summit, like a slender tower, was all that was above him. Then laying weapons and food-pouch on the flat surface of a rock, with only his knife in hand, and his scarlet robe tightly girdled about him, he climbed higher and higher, from crag

to crag, until, with perspiration dripping from every pore, he mounted the dizzy summit, and boldly carved his sign. In the valley below, the people of his tribe were looking for him.

Hand in hand, the sister of Amal and the daughter of Jebel watched for hours, to be the first witnesses of his triumph. At length they were rewarded; for they saw a minute, scarlet speck moving upon the lofty white tower. They watched it until it was lost from sight upon the top of the great mountain; then shouts and songs rent the air, while the fathers congratulated the father of Amal, and the maidens and youths joyfully danced in a circle around his smiling sister and the blushing daughter of Jebel. Upon the lofty mountain, Amal did not hear their shouting, nor witness their sports; for his soul was enraptured with the amazing spectacle before him.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDIANITE SHEPHERDESS.

FOR a long time Amal silently gazed upon the sublime and extensive picture beneath him. Although he was thoroughly familiar with the camping stations of his tribe, he had never before seen the whole expanse of country in one view; and now he gazed in astonishment at the wonderful arrangement of mountains and valleys surrounding Serbal.

In the far distance he beheld the desert and the sky meeting, while a haze, like a delicate veil, hung over the horizon of sand. Toward the west, across the water of the great sea, he saw the land of mystery—Egypt, a land which the Amalekites cursed, as the memories of former days reminded them that they had been driven from its fertile plains into this rocky wilderness. Then he gazed toward the east and saw near by, in that part of Sinai occupied by the Midianites, the giant Horeb; and as he observed that its crown was still more lofty than Serbal, his ambition was inflamed to scale its crags also, and to return to his own camp a double conqueror.

The valleys also were not without attractions, for

in one view he saw the various camps of the tribes of the Amalekites and the coming hosts as they moved into their chosen quarters. In the wadies toward Horeb were the encampments of the Midianites, and upon a luxuriantly verdant slope of the mountain he beheld youths and maidens engaged in dancing, and swinging their musical instruments, as at a feast or a nuptial festival.

As he watched them he decided to seek their camp, and join them in their games; for he was fond of the sports of youth. His heart beat rapidly with this thought; for he well knew that the Midianite maidens were the most beautiful and enchanting of all who dwelt in the deserts. Amal gave another glance at the scenery about the lofty peak, and then, as quickly as the rugged cliffs would admit, descended to the rock upon which he had left his weapons and food.

Taking possession of these, he began his journey in the direction of the Midianite encampment, but soon found that a trackless course over the cliffs of an unknown mountain was full of dangers and unexpected delays. Sliding down a steep cliff, he would find his progress barred by huge blocks of granite, compelling him to re-climb the cliff he had just descended and seek an outlet in some other way.

He toiled for hours, even until the going down of

the sun; when, faint and weary, he seemed no nearer the place for which he had started than when the sun moved high in the heavens, and he was strong in limb and hopeful in heart. He was also suffering from thirst, for he had found no water. At intervals he passed the bleaching bones of animals. These poor creatures, unable to get out of this barren place to streams of water or grassy vales, had died in terrible want.

As the sun went down, he wondered if such would be his fate; but no—hope and fate shed light upon his pathway; for he remembered that the priest had told him that he should be the glory of their tribe, and that success would crown this day's undertakings. As this word was recalled, new hope inspired his soul and he pressed forward more earnestly. As in the fading light he beheld in the distance a ridge, the summit of which was crowned with prickly acacias, he struggled to reach the spot, hoping it was the beginning of the mountain verdure. With renewed courage he pressed on, reached the coveted spot, and from it saw in the darkening valley before him the camp-fires of some mountain shepherds. The palm trees showed the location of the springs of water; and about them, on the thick and plentiful pastures, the flocks were calmly resting.

The sight of plenty increased Amal's sense of want,

and once more he strove to find a path that would lead him to their camp. But the darkness deepened, and he could no longer see the way, while bushes, rocks, and crags became indistinct before him. He thought he heard the voice of a shepherdess singing, and tried to follow the sound, when suddenly he stumbled over the face of a cliff. He clutched at the rock to save himself, but it crumbled in his grasp. Down, down he rolled into the rugged abyss, until finally he lay bruised and tattered in a state of utter unconsciousness.

The Midianites, dwelling at the foot of Horeb, were holding a reception festival for some of their tribe, who had been journeying in the far East, among the cities of the Chaldeans. They had returned to Sinai, with their camels heavily laden, bringing an abundance of ornaments to their people, who were excessively fond of brilliant jewels and golden rings. The utmost joy prevailed in the camps of the Midianites, because of the safe return of their caravan, which they manifested in the free, unrestrained, emotional dances around their camp fires, characteristic of the children of the desert. The young maidens bedecked themselves with rings for their ankles, ears, nose, and fingers; with bracelets for their arms and jewels for their hair; while strings of jewels were around their necks and on their bosoms, and their graceful forms

were draped with handsome, Babylonish garments, all of which had been presented by the young men from their abundant stores. The givers were rewarded with the maidens' sweetest smiles and most complimentary phrases, as they surrendered themselves to the accustomed revelry in expression of joy at their brothers' return.

This was the scene which Amal beheld from the lofty summit of Serbal. As evening came on, many of the happy maidens left the circle to go and attend to their flocks, which were browsing on the luxurious grass in the neighboring wadies; for, while the men were the warriors and merchants, the maidens watched the flocks and tended the lambs.

Keturah and Hagar, two of these maidens, joined their flocks, and went to the same pastures. Keturah was by descent a pure Midianite, and traced her ancestry in an unbroken line from Abraham and Keturah. Her father was a prince, and was held in the highest honor among the tribes; and she was a princess, to whom all the youths of the tribe sought to pay homage. But thus far she was free, and the sweetness of her maiden heart was in happy harmony with all that was beautiful and true about her. Hagar, her companion, though of high birth, was not a pure Midianite; for her father's house was allied with the descendants of Ishmael. From her own

mother she had received the name of her ancestress, who had caused so much bitterness to dwell in the heart of Abraham's princess wife. Hagar was, however, a true child of the desert; and, like Keturah, received only kindness, admiration, and blessings from those with whom she associated.

After the feast that accompanied the revelry with which they welcomed their returning tribesmen, the maidens with their servants had returned to the pastures to tend their flocks; and while the sheep were peacefully grazing, they reclined on the green sward by the camp fire, and recounted the events of the day. As Keturah thought of the victories she had gained in winning the admiration and the presents from the young men of the tribe, she sang in a loud, clear voice her notes of joy and satisfaction; and while she sung, Amal, in the distance, heard the song as he stumbled along in the darkness.

But at length the song ceased; the maidens, giving way to retrospective reveries, became silent, when suddenly their reveries were broken by the noise of some object moving along the rocky height above them, and they drew closer to each other and listened. Keturah gave a low whistle, and in a moment a trusty slave, who was always at hand to serve them, and ready to give his life in their defense, came, and standing by them with his spear in hand, also list-

ened. In a moment the sound was repeated, and they knew it came from some living object upon the rocks above them. The maidens firmly grasped their knotted shepherd clubs; for when thus equipped no danger appalled them, and they were ready to battle for the flocks entrusted to their care. If the young men of Midian could be brave on the battlefield, the maidens of Midian could be brave on the pastures. The sound of the treading of whatever creature it might be approached the edge of the cliff, and then all were startled by the cry of a man, as he fell from the rocky height to the ground below. Grasping a brand from the fire, the slave, followed by the surprised maidens, ran to the spot where the man had fallen. And there, at the base of the cliff, they saw the insensible body of a young Amalekite, his weapons lying near his outstretched hand. The slave, after closely scrutinizing his face and garments, said:

“It is a noble prince of the Amalekites; but how came he here?”

The maidens gazed upon his face for a moment, and concluded, as did the slave, that such a noble countenance, such richly embroidered garments, and elegant weapons, could only belong to a member of a wealthy and honorable family. The slave had, in the mean time, stooped to see if there were any signs

of life, and soon turned to the maidens, saying: "There is life still in him; for he breathes."

With the assistance of the maidens, the slave carried him beneath the awning by the camp-fire; then bringing water, he stood silently by while the maidens, bathing the brow and lips of the wounded man, sought to restore him to consciousness. At length he moved his head and groaned; then opened his eyes and gazed about him. For a moment he was dazed by the strangeness of the sight; but as memory returned, he recollected his desperate walk in the darkness, and the fall over the cliff. But where was he now? Was he in Paradise? Were these the angels waiting upon him? Above him the stars were shining brightly, like silvery lamps, over mountain and valley; near by, the smoke of a camp-fire was slowly curling upward; on either side great shadows of huge mountains loomed up in darkness, enclosing the scene, while just before him, within reach of his hand, a maiden was kneeling, and gazing steadily upon him with a look of unutterable pity and anxiety.

But what a face it was! Surely he had never before seen such a countenance! No daughter of the Amalekites possessed such glowing eyes, expressive features, transparent complexion, nor such silken tresses, such consummate beauty. She seemed to be a visitant from the favored fields of Paradise; and he

feared to turn away his gaze, lest he might forever lose the vision. Only when, with her face suffused with blushes, she turned aside, did he realize that she was indeed mortal. As she moved away, he saw that she was richly adorned with ornaments—for she had not yet taken off the gifts of the returned merchants—and knew that she was a Midianite shepherdess tending her flock in the mountain pasture. As she went into the shadows, he tried to rise, but sank back on the ground, and partially relapsed into unconsciousness. But the maiden hastened to him again with water, which refreshed and strengthened him.

By this time Hagar had prepared some food, of which he greedily ate, and then dropped into slumber. The maidens left him in the care of the slave, while they withdrew into their own tent.

Hagar was astonished to see how greatly Keturah was affected by the appearance of the Amalekite. She knew the goodness and the tenderness of her friend's heart, and she realized that to be kind to those in distress was right in itself, as well as pleasing to the gods; but why, when the stranger had been fed, and was quietly sleeping, should Keturah still gaze upon him with that peculiar anxiety in her glance, that fervid clasping of the hands, and that frequent motion of the lips, as if in supplication, and then allow her fair face to be covered with blushes when she saw she

was observed. But Hagar was the more astonished when Keturah suddenly began to sob, and laying her head upon her friend's bosom, continued for many minutes to give way to the peculiar feelings that afflicted her. Was it a nervous fatigue, caused by the prolonged excitement of the day? or was it the sudden change from the revelry of dancing to the labor of restoring to consciousness this unknown, wandering prince? Could it be that this stranger, so beautiful and noble looking, had in his misfortune touched her heart more tenderly than any of the youths of Midian had yet been able to do? But Keturah said nothing, and Hagar was perplexed.

When the dawn appeared, the slave led the sheep to the fountain, and after the maidens had watered them, they returned to the fire, and prepared food for themselves and the still slumbering stranger. At length he awoke, and while they listened, he told them of his tent in the beautiful vale of Feiran, and of his climbing the loftiest peak of Serbal to place his sign with the sign of the boldest of their tribes; then of his efforts to reach the Midianite camp to join in their festivities, and of his losing his way upon the mountain, his hunger and fatigue, and at length of his falling over the unseen cliff. Every word he spoke was of the deepest interest to the sympathetic Keturah; and he could not fail to interpret the signifi-

cance of the smiles and blushes which in turn possessed her fair face. The response to his own feelings given so freely, and the evident sincerity of the Midianite, thrilled his soul with delight. His bliss was more than he could have imagined, and he seemed to be basking in the sunlight of a glory beyond the comprehension of man. All the attractions of earth and heaven seemed to be concentrated in her glance; and while under its influence, he felt willing to surrender his pride, his tribe, his hopes in life, and all that had hitherto aroused his ambition as an Amalekite, to dwell with her alone in the bliss of their awakened and responsive love. But calmer thoughts prevailed, and he remembered the anxiety which his people had always felt in his absence.

When he had recovered sufficiently from the effects of his fall to travel, he bade the maiden farewell, and by the nearest route through the wadies, sought the camp of his people in the vale of Feiran. The watchmen of the camp had seen him in the distance, and when he came near he was greeted by a procession of his people, who, in the most joyful manner, in songs, and shouts, expressed their gratification at his success in climbing the mountain, and in his safe return. His family rejoiced in the ending of their solicitude. He had accomplished all they had hoped for. The elders rejoiced in this proof of his courageous spirit, while

his companion shouted with enthusiasm. He had proved himself as brave as his ancestors, and the fair daughters crowned him with floral wreaths, and scattered roses and gay-colored blossoms along his pathway. At the head of the procession of maidens came Timna, the proud daughter of Jebel, and with the light of love in her eyes she crowned him with a wreath of the brightest roses which grew in Feiran.

Timna was the pride of her father's tent; and her beauty the envy of all the maidens in the vale. She was tall, and of full, round figure; her skin of the softest brown tint; her eyes as dark as the raven wing; her smile revealed pearly teeth, and dimpled cheeks, which gave a rich radiance to her countenance; her hair, worn in long tresses, was so dark in color, that only the blackness of her eyes could equal it; her voice, sweet in its richness, and yet commanding, because of the spirit with which she used it; her tread elastic, and her muscles so developed that she almost baffled fatigue. Keeping ahead of her companions, and singing in richest tones, with joy in her heart springing from full sympathy with the success of her tribesman, she gave utterance to the song of triumph, of prophecy, and of praise; and as her train of maidens joined in the chorus, she placed her crown upon the bowed head of Amal.

As Amal knelt to accept it, he trembled as never

before. The color fled from his cheeks; his eyes lost their glance of daring, and it was apparent to all the youths in his train that he was possessed by the spirit of fear. Timna was deeply offended. Her own enthusiasm felt a chill; and, quick to perceive the least inattention, she saw that his thoughts were not with them, and that neither her beauty, her smiles, nor her song had even in the least degree touched his heart. She knew not the cause; but suddenly seized with a jealousy of some unknown rival, breathed from that moment an oath of terrible retribution upon his head. With all the exuberance of Amalekite passion, she had sought this opportunity to show Amal that she chose him above his fellows; but the coldness of his return was unendurable; and with bitter words she exhorted her father and brother to resent the insult she had received.

CHAPTER III.

RIVAL LOVERS.

THE Midianite maidens were sitting by the fountain, watching their flocks as they drank from the slender rivulet, which, beginning at the fountain, flowed down the valley. They had been talking of the events that had so recently stirred their hearts; and Keturah, in abandonment of all reserve, no longer attempted to conceal her infatuation from her companion, but freely sought her approval by asking her again and again if she did not consider Amal the most graceful youth she had ever met. They talked about his features, his boldness, his strength, his beautiful language, the tenderness of his bearing toward them, and of the unexpected way in which they had been permitted to rescue him from threatening death. As Hagar cordially responded to the words of her friend, Keturah became the happier; and true to the Midianite nature, showed such impetuosity in her affection, that Hagar was not only amazed, but alarmed.

Their familiar chat was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a number of youths, who came riding up the valley with loud shouts and waving of spears.

They dismounted in the presence of the maidens, and craved permission to spend the noonday hour there.

It was a strangely beautiful scene. The flocks having been well watered, and placed in charge of the slave, were led over to the other side of the valley. Graceful palm trees waved their lofty heads above the fountain, which gave so refreshing a vigor to the verdure of the valley. Shaded from the fierce rays of the sun by the foliage of the trees, the maidens, reclining upon the luxuriant grass, could watch their flocks on the opposite side of the valley. They could also look down the valley, and see many other flocks grazing beneath the watchful care of Midianite shepherds, and in the distance, in the broader part of the grassy expanse, the spacious tribal camp.

The gallant youths who came to them to while away their lonesome hours, were riding on horses as beautiful as ever trod the sands of the desert. Their owners were very proud of them, and they became almost inseparable companions. Where the master went, the horse went also. They had large, expressive eyes, broad foreheads, long manes, and slender tails, almost sweeping the ground. Their soft and silky coats fairly shone from the constant rubbings bestowed upon them. Every day they received their portion of camel's milk and eggs. In return they were faithful, always quickly responding to the word of their

master. They were the darlings of the desert; and the Midianite did not consider that he had the privileges of manhood until he possessed one of these beautiful steeds.

The young men, too, were splendidly attired; for they also had availed themselves of the stores of rich goods brought by the merchants to their camp. At the head of the troop, and more richly arrayed than the others, was the young prince, Bela, the brother of Hagar. The Ishmaelite blood in his veins gave his complexion a slightly darker tinge than that of the pure Midianite; but it also gave his eyes a deeper flashing, and his motions a quicker action. He was a true child of the desert; and with the pride natural to one who had never known defeat, he surveyed all his surroundings with the eye of a conqueror. He had been with the caravan in its journeying, and for the first time in his life had seen the wonderful cities in the far East. His mind was filled with the memory of the sights which he had so greatly enjoyed, and he was impatient for the opportunity to tell his companions of the delightful experience he had gained.

Fond of ornament, as was every child of the desert, he had adorned himself with rings and jewels of curious designs, and his garments were of the most brilliant Babylonish coloring. He was clothed in scarlet and fine linen, with the mysterious, emblematic,

embroidered figures—so common to the people of the East—worked over the breast and shoulder of the garments he so proudly wore. As they all reclined beneath the palms, he related to them, in his impetuous way, the story of his travels, until he fired their desires to behold such scenes, and to be able to attract the admiration which he had awakened in the Chaldeans as they saw the graceful and successful horsemanship of the child of the desert. A Midianite was as much a wonder to them as they were to the Midianites.

Hagar, whose countenance was all aglow with interest and affection for her brilliant brother, listened devotedly to every word; but Keturah seemed to lack interest in his narrative, and did not respond as he was eagerly desiring she would. In all his travels he had seen no one so beautiful as Keturah, and he yearned to bestow upon her all the wealth of affection with which nature had endowed him. One word from her lips could command him as the words of no other person. One glance of her eye fired all the ardor of his soul; and when in her presence he was ready to be her slave in whatever task she might assign him.

He was grievously disappointed; for while all the others were aroused by his story, she alone was passive, even absent minded. Hagar suspected the

cause, and as she now for the first time became aware of the love her brother entertained for the fair Keturah, she began to hate the Amalekite who already possessed the heart which Bela coveted. Bela was distressed at the peculiar reserve of the maiden, and the thought flashed across his mind that his presence was not desired. With his usual impetuosity, he gave the signal to his troop, who quickly mounted their horses, and were ready to go whither he might command. As they were about to depart, Hagar, taking some clusters of dried fruit, handed them to her brother; and as he leaned forward on his horse's neck to receive them, she whispered to him:

“When the moon hides behind Serbal, meet me at the tamarisk beyond the palm grove of the fountain.”

With a quick glance into her eyes, he saw that his secret was discovered, and bending his head toward her in approval, he turned toward his companions, and in a moment they were galloping swiftly toward their camp.

As the hours of the day passed, Hagar, with winning ways and seductive words, drew from her companion confessions of love for the princely Amal; but every word aroused the anger of Bela's sister; for well did she know that if Amal were enshrined in Keturah's heart, Bela would be so stricken that he could never again know the peace and joy that had

until now characterized his life. To Hagar, the blood of the Amalekite was of little account compared with the happiness of her own devoted brother.

The evening came on. The flocks were brought back to the fountain, and the slaves were given their watch-stations. The stars came out one by one, until the heavens were brilliant with their sparkling splendor. Shadowy forms flitted through the valley, while here and there the blaze of the watch-fires burst forth, sending their flickering columns of smoke toward the sky. Hagar soon retired into her tent; but Keturah remained outside, watching the beautiful stars above her. Then the moon began her course, threading her way among the stars, and hiding them in the folds of her splendor. From the rifted curtain of the tent, Hagar watched until she saw the moon drawing near to Serbal's lofty head; then quietly going forth, she rapidly walked through the grove of palms to meet her brother by the gnarled tamarisk.

Keturah had noticed the silent manner of her companion; and fearing some trouble was afflicting her, was about to enter the tent, when she became a witness of Hagar's stealthy departure.

Instantly the thought flashed upon her that Hagar was engaging in some secret plotting; and what could it be but something which she would oppose? If not, why this secrecy? Then the thought came that Hagar

loved Amal; for had she not spoken of him in the tenderest terms? And she was now, perhaps, going to meet him. Fired by a jealous suspicion, she softly followed her; and keeping in the shadow of the palms, was able to keep closely to her until she came to the gnarled tamarisk, where she saw her folded for a moment in the embrace of a man; and then, standing by his side, they became engaged in earnest conversation.

Keturah's heart raged within her at this spectacle. Jealousy almost forced her to cry aloud, when, to her astonishment, she discovered, on drawing nearer, that it was not Amal, but Bela. For a moment, regret and shame for mistrusting her companion oppressed her; but hearing Amal's name spoken, she listened to hear what they would say about him. As she heard the words of the brother and sister, she clenched her hands in rage, and the fierceness of her wrath drove all love from her heart. The cunning of a desert rover usurped the place so lately possessed by the spirit of fond confidence in her companion. She heard Bela tell his sister of the love he cherished for the beautiful Keturah, and she saw his earnest look, as he inquired of her if that love was returned. She heard Hagar tell Bela of the coming of the young prince Amal, and how he had gained the affection of the tender-hearted Keturah. She heard her tell how

deeply Keturah was in love with the handsome Amalekite, and that unless he was prevented from seeking Keturah, she could give her love to no other man. For a moment both were silent; then, piece by piece, a plot was formed whereby Bela and his troop could capture Amal, and how, unless he would swear never to enter their vale again, the earth should drink his blood, and no recompense be given for his life to the avengers of his tribe. With a feeling of horror, Keturah listened to their designs.

Their plans now agreed upon, the brother and sister parted, and Bela returned to his camp. Waiting until she could no longer hear his footsteps, Hagar began to retrace her way toward her tent; but before she left the shade of the tamarisk, she was confronted by the thoroughly aroused Keturah. As the moon came out from behind Serbal, and threw its beams of light upon the valley, Hagar saw clearly the face of her friend—such a face as she had never before seen—full of anger, spirit, revenge; and smitten with the consciousness of guilt, she quailed before the sternly reproachful glances. Keturah did not utter a word. She had found her bosom friend to be false. Henceforth she would keep her purposes to herself. She, too, turned and went to her tent; and as the night wore away, planned how she might save the life and the honor of her Amalekite lover. She, a princess

in Midian, would not be treated as a slave, nor a captive. Her will was law, and it should be obeyed to the letter.

Hagar was now filled with the most poignant distress. She realized, in gazing into Keturah's face, how much injury her mistaken zeal for her brother's welfare might cause; and fearing lest Keturah might become an enemy to both her and her brother, as soon as the morning's light had come she cast herself at the feet of her lifelong companion, and begged forgiveness. She did this with a sincere sorrow; but for a while Keturah was inflexible; her heart had been wounded too deeply to be healed so soon. But, at length she consented to hear Hagar's pleadings. With thorough truthfulness Hagar told the whole story of her brother's love for Keturah, and that loving her brother as she did, the greatest desire of her heart had been to see her brother and her dearest friend husband and wife. She had been prompted to these plottings through this love, and not through enmity; for she was ready to lay down her life for Keturah. She declared that she would rather give up her life than give up Keturah's love.

The Midianite princess was not unmoved by this tender appeal. She had valued the love of Hagar, and if Hagar left her, there was no one to whom she would give her confidence; but the life of Amal had

been plotted against, and this most cruel blow had been struck by her bosom friend. After reflecting awhile, she said :

“Hagar, if the blood of Amal falls to the ground by the hand of your brother, or by your aid, you shall receive my unbending hatred. Nothing shall appease my soul but your life and that of your brother. Blood for blood—I myself as his blood avenger will require it.”

Hagar's fear increased as Keturah thus assumed the position of blood avenger, and she was now as anxious to prevent the fray, as she had been before to bring it to pass. But no opportunity presented itself, and the fateful hour drew nigh.

Keturah realized that the affair could not end with the victory of one of these young men over the other. She well knew that every Midianite in Sinai would rise up to defend or avenge the favorite Bela ; and that, likewise, not an Amalekite would rest his spear in peace until a full blood atonement was rendered for the slaying of their prince. To plunge these desert tribes into war, and deluge the flowery vales of Sinai in blood, through the thoughtless jealousies of love-smitten princes, was a catastrophe she could not contemplate without horror.

Hagar was seized with dismay as Keturah thus pictured the consequences of her rash act, and she begged

her to devise some plan to prevent such issues from being consummated. The only course possible was to intercept Amal on his way from Feiran before Bela and his troop should meet him. It was well that they were strong in limb and able to traverse the mountain paths, running for miles without exhaustion; else even this plan would have failed.

Amal, clothed in his gayest garments, carrying his knife in his girdle and his spear in his hand, with a light and joyous heart, was swiftly coming to meet his beloved, when, in a narrow ravine which wound about high granite bowlders, he was suddenly commanded to halt—and there sprang from behind a rock a band of young Midianite warriors, who intercepted his way.

In an instant Amal's spear was poised ready for action, and with a fearless glance at the Midianites, he haughtily commanded them to retire from the path, so that he might proceed on his journey. In reply, the chief of the Midianites stepped in front of his companions, and waving his spear, claimed the right to meet the Amalekite in mortal combat as his personal foe. Amal at once accepted the challenge, and dared the issue at arms. For a moment the two warriors surveyed each other with the most careful precision, then each man cast his spear; but, with a dexterity peculiar to their practice, each succeeded in avoiding the thrust of the other. Then they rushed

upon each other, and as two wrestlers, without other weapons than nature have given them, each sought the other's overthrow. The combat was fierce, and it was soon evident that it would be long; for they were about equally matched. They strained every muscle until the cords of their well-developed limbs stood out in severe tension, and the grip of their powerful hands knew no relaxing. Now one seemed to be bending toward the ground, then the other, until it was apparent that the one whose breathing would longest stand the strain would win the contest.

Suddenly a voice commanded them to cease, and Keturah, with Hagar, sprang before them. Rushing up to the wrestlers, Keturah laid her hands on them, and bade them instantly desist their contest and listen to her. Surprised, both men yielded, and releasing their hold, with bowed heads, stood before her, and she saw that the contest had been so fierce that even when at rest the sweat in great drops fell from their reddened bodies.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COVENANT OF BLOOD.

KETURAH, standing before the young warriors, with eyes sparkling from excitement, cheeks suffused with color from her exertions to reach the place of the encounter; and with her jeweled arm gracefully elevated above her head with the motion of command, was the embodiment of the highest type of loveliness and majesty that the desert hosts could produce; and it had a thrilling effect upon all who beheld her. As she stood in this attitude she upbraided Bela for his cowardice in attacking a lone warrior of another tribe, with a troop of defenders at his own back—a deed that would cause the men of his tribe to blush with shame when hearing of it. This was not the deed of a brave warrior, but the treachery of a skulking coward, afraid to meet his foe on equal grounds.

The Midianite had not meant to do this; and now, seeing how it appeared to others, kept silent through shame. Receiving no answer, Keturah continued:

“And why should the desert vales be plunged into war, and the peace that has lasted for centuries be so



Amal.



ruthlessly destroyed? Know ye not that Amalek and Midian are brothers? For centuries they have roamed in the same flowery vales, and over the same desert sands. They have exchanged wealth with each other, and on equal terms have associated in the camp and at the feast. Abraham and Amalek lived at peace, and exchanged gifts by their flowing wells. And their children have ever shared the fields, the pastures, the streams, and the wells; and why should war now cause them to destroy each other?

“But if the young warriors of the desert desire a use for their weapons, do they not know that a common foe is gradually encroaching upon them? Who can fail to see how the grasping hand of Pharaoh is daily stretching nearer and nearer to the very heart of Sinai? Since he has overthrown the Hittites, and has compassed the paths of the merchants with his merciless armies, will he rest with Sinai free from his control? Nay! he is even now adding to the companies of soldiers stationed at the emerald and turquoise mines, which were wrested by his greed from the desert tribes to whom they belong. Let Midian and Amalek unite, and, with one soul and one arm, drive the intruder back beyond the sea.”

Then fastening her thrilling gaze upon the two rivals, she said:

“And when can this union be consummated better

than now? And by whom but by the two noble chieftains, who, possessing in an equal degree the love of their people, can more than any others command the favor and the obedience of their tribes? Yea, let Amal and Bela covenant with each other in blood, and the announcement of the sacred union will send a thrill along every desert path, and shouts of joy will spring up in every oasis. Wherever Amalek, Midian, or Ishmael may be found, life and wealth will be dedicated to the purpose of their union. Will you, noble chieftains, enter into this covenant? By my favor I beseech you! And cursed be the man who rejects the offer of blood brotherhood!"

She ceased speaking, but gazed upon them with all the intense fervor of her soul in the glance. All waited in silence for the response. They waited only a moment, for the young men looked into each other's faces, then advancing, embraced each other, not as before with the ardor of battle, but with the tenderness of friendship and the pledge of peace. The place where they had been standing was exposed to the fierce heat of the sun's rays, and the naked rocks added to the intensity of the glare, so that the maidens began to suffer from heat and fatigue. Noticing this, Bela suggested that they seek the shelter of some grove of palms, if any could be found near by, and there consummate the rite.

Not far from where they stood was a spacious wady with a rich carpet of grass covering the sloping sides of the enclosing mountains, and in it many springs and palm trees. Amal at once directed their footsteps thither. When they reached the fountain, they sent messengers to the Amalekites in Feiran, and also to the Midianites back of Horeb, summoning the elders and youths of the various tribes to celebrate the covenant about to be entered into. Others were sent out to gather tender lambs, sweet vegetables, luscious fruits, and the finest cakes of meal, in order to feast upon them in harmony with each other.

In a few hours, the hosts began to gather in obedience to the strange summons. The names of the youths were sufficient to command the attention of their tribes, and the hosts were not slow to respond. The Amalekites from Feiran were riding on horses of raven black color, shining with the delicate polish of their smooth coats. The Midianites were riding on white horses, every one of which glistened as with the radiance of the sun. As they met in the valley, each boasted to the others of the matchless qualities of his steed, and told of the intelligence and courage he had shown in the day of trial; and no one contradicted, for they knew that every horse in the valley was worthy of praise. Tents were also brought, for the mothers and sisters of the warriors were to be present

to join in the feasting and rejoicing. With the maidens from Feiran came Timna. She had not as yet spoken of her injuries beyond her father's tent; and now she came, magnificently arrayed, desiring above all else to see the maiden whose beauty, so much superior to her own, had won the love of Amal. The maidens of Midian brought with them the tent and wardrobe of their princess, so that she might appear in all her splendor before the assembled tribes.

When all was ready, and the trumpets had sounded the threefold call, the elders formed a circle upon the grassy plat, while back of the elders the young people clustered. At the second blast of the trumpets Keturah, robed in gorgeous blue with flashing jewels in thick profusion decorating her robes, came from her tent, carrying in her hand a sharp stone knife, such as their priests used in sacrifice. As she entered the circle, she was greeted by the hearty applause of all save Timna, who, gazing upon her rival, flashed deepest hatred from her raven-black eyes. Following Keturah, came the two warriors, Amal and Bela, both clothed in scarlet robes. The dark-skinned Amalekite and the light-skinned Midianite were almost similar in size and form, and were the noblest representatives that could have been chosen from all the hosts. They stood in silence before the queenly maiden while she told them the meaning of the rite. She said:

“No tie is closer than that of blood brotherhood. It is closer than that of parent and child, or of brother and sister, or of husband and wife. It is the union of life, so that the life of the one belongs to the other, and is at all times at his disposal. It is a privilege to prove its claims, and with gladness of heart the one seeks the opportunity to sacrifice for the other. A violation of it, a carelessness in regard to its claims, or a forgetfulness of its existence, is a crime so heinous that it at once brands the guilty one as the basest of mankind. He is looked upon as one who has lost all self respect, honor, and virtue. He is not fit to live, and the dogs should be unhindered in gnawing his bones. But to the one who is true to this covenant all men render praise; his deeds are spoken of by the elders, and his children rise up to call him blessed.”

Keturah now took a piece of reed which grew by the fountain, and cut it into two pieces, sharpening one end of each, and blowing the pith out, so that they might serve as tubes. Then she took a small piece of linen, and cut it into two pieces, and gave a tube and a piece of linen to each of the young men. Taking hold of the right arm of the Midianite, she cut into it with the stone knife until the blood appeared. Amal now put the sharpened end of his tube into this cut, and sucking some of the blood,

swallowed it. Keturah bound up the wound, and wiped the tube on the linen cloth that she had given Bela, then returned him the cloth to be carefully tied up and suspended by a cord about his neck, ever after to be worn over his heart as a witness against Amal. Then Keturah took Amal's arm in her grasp, made a similar incision, out of which in the same manner Bela drew the blood, and Amal received his linen cloth as a witness against Bela.

The ceremony being complete, the entire company, as witnesses, declared them to be blood brothers, and that no change of circumstances in life could alter the relation. If one should be killed, the other must not fail to demand for his life a full and adequate equivalent—not in wealth nor in honors, but in blood of equal value in the books of eternal life. The circle was now broken, and the people mixed together in groups, conversing until the women should declare the feast ready.

When the preparations were completed, the trumpets were sounded, and in the order of their rank and age they were called to the feast. Then one of the elders of the Amalekites arose and spoke of the honor and trust involved in blood brotherhood, and said that in all the history of the past, no son of Amalek had ever violated its obligations. He added that Bela would be the same to them as Amal, and

also, that every one who partook of the feast would, in a sense, be included in the consecration of the bond ; while, by their presence at this feast, the elders and warriors ratified the deed of their brother this day.

When he had concluded, one of the elders of Midian arose and made similar remarks, in which he referred to the recent success of Amal as not only winning the admiration of his own people, but of all who knew the dangerous way to Serbal's lofty crown—the dangers of which so few were able to overcome, or, having overcome, had returned sound enough in body to boast of a complete triumph. Henceforth, Amal was welcome in the tents of Midian ; and in the chase, the caravan, and the battlefield, would be to them as their own.

As the Midianite concluded, the attention of all was attracted to a stranger, who suddenly appeared among them.

The newcomer was a tall, majestic-looking man, one apparently formed to command, and full of vigor, though advanced in years. His glistening eyes seemed to read the thoughts of those before him. He was clothed in the garb of a priest, but carried in his hand a shepherd's rod, the only weapon that he bore.

The Amalekites were surprised to see the profound interest and filial reverence with which the Midianites

received him. The maidens rejoiced in his coming; and Keturah, running to him, took him by the hand and led him to the elders who sat at the head of the feast. They rose to do him honor, and made room for him at their side, inviting him to participate with them in the feast of blood brotherhood.

For a moment his keen glance went from one to another, until it rested upon Amal and Bela, whom he saw marked with the token of blood-brotherhood. Looking steadily at them, he addressed them in most fervid tones. He, too, recounted the obligations of their vow, then referred to the advantages to be gained by the union of Amalek and Midian. As his speech became more earnest, he assumed the manner of a prophet, and spoke as if the future lay unveiled before him. He told them of the tramping of armies urged on by love of conquest and thirst for glory; of the treasures piled up in the palaces of Egypt, which had been wrung out of the lives of the subject nations about them; of the gloom settling upon men because of the iniquity of those in power, and how this thirst for glory and wealth grew as the nation grew, and with its growth, made the bondage of the oppressed the more cruel and hopeless. Then he pictured to them the union of all the nations that sought the equal rights of the people, who believed not in oppression, but in the enthronement of the truth.

In still more thrilling tones, he told them how the nations in the deserts could prepare a highway for the march of the redeemed host, from the oppressions of the Egyptians to the Paradise of God.

As he concluded, his words were approved by a hearty response from the elders of both Amalek and Midian ; and as he sat down among them, the feast began. Amal had heard of the stranger, who had married the daughter of Jethro, the priest of the Midianites ; and he now gazed upon him with eager curiosity ; for in his actions the older men of Midian rested their hopes of the glory of their people. It was said that, in the days of his youth, Moses had been the commander of the armies of Egypt ; that he had been adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, and was recognized as heir to the throne.

He was versed in all the wisdom of the priests, magicians, and philosophers of that wonderful land ; but that on account of the oppressions of the bondmen in that land, he had given up all these privileges and honors, and had fled to the mountains of Sinai, where, in solitude, the God of heaven had taught him greater mysteries than all the priests of Egypt knew, and was preparing him to become the greatest of all kings.

It was said that for a long time Jethro had been urging him to put himself at the head of the hosts of Midian, and lead them on to glory ; but Moses still

remained in the wilderness, saying the time had not yet come, but that it was approaching, and would soon be here.

Amal now learned that it was from Moses Keturah had received her ideas as to the impending conflict in which the union of Amalek and Midian would advance the cause of the poor and the oppressed. As the hour advanced the camp-fires were renewed, until the whole valley was illuminated by the huge flames. The young people, in groups, engaged in their lively games around the camp-fires, while the late comers continued the feasting.

Keturah was the happiest of the maidens, since all had been reconciled, and she joyfully restored Hagar to her place as companion and confidant, and in token thereof, now consigned her—smiling with delight as she did so—to the care of the valiant Amal. Hagar not only rejoiced in the prominence which this act gave her, but also in winning his regard, which she now coveted, since Bela and he were blood brothers. The glowing countenances of the youths of the two races gave evidence that the harmony was from the depths of their hearts. Radiant with happiness, Keturah went from one group to another speaking words of welcome and cheer; and everywhere the brightness of her lovely countenance added grace and satisfaction to the scene.

In one place only was there displayed a contrary spirit. This was when Keturah approached the group of which the proud Timna was the leader; and here, for the first time, the rival beauties of Amalek and Midian confronted each other. As Keturah came to them with beaming smiles, beautiful as the moon in its course amidst the stars, Timna drew her graceful form up to its extreme height, and with her dark eyes flashing the fire of her awful hatred, her lips arched in deepest scorn, and with a menace in the motion of her jeweled hand that could not be misunderstood, expressed the determination that, come what may, she would yet have revenge on the woman who had stolen from her the heart of the noblest youth of Amalek. Keturah was startled at the vindictive spirit of the beautiful Amalekite. She gazed into the angry face for a moment only, and then, without uttering a word in reply, returned to the festive board.

Moses had withdrawn from the feast when the youths began their games, and with the good wishes of all, had returned to his mountain home. He left to others the pleasures of festive life—he chose to spend his time in the deep studies of the soul. As the mountain rose above the plains, so did his thoughts rise above the thoughts of the multitude. He was seeking the understanding of the mystery of life and death.

Suddenly the crowds lingering at the table were startled by a cry of agony but a short distance from them, and as they looked for the cause of it, they saw a man rushing with all his might toward them down one of the rugged ravines opening into the valley, and coming toward them. He did not pause in his impetuous haste until he burst into the festive circle; then, beholding the elders, he cast himself at their feet, crying for mercy and protection. Noticing the feasting still going on, he arose, rushed to the table, grasped a cake of meal, then seizing some salt, sprinkled the cake, ravenously ate it, and once more cast himself at the feet of the elders. Food and water were now given him; and his hunger appeased, he became calm, and lost the frightened look that was on his face when he first came. His features indicated that he was an Egyptian, and his tattered clothing was such as was worn by the Egyptian guards at the turquoise mines. It was evident that he had rushed through thickets of acacia bushes; for not only had his clothing been torn by the thorns, but his body was badly scratched, and blood, dust, shreds of cloth, and broken thorns united to indicate the severity of the struggle through which he had passed.

The news of his coming had spread among the people; and the festive groups left their pleasures to crowd about him, and know the cause of his distress.

He was still eating when once more a commotion was observed on the outer line of the camp-fires. A band of Egyptian soldiers, well armed, pressed their way into the presence of the elders, and demanded possession of their prisoner. The insolence of the soldiers aroused the anger of the young men. They immediately laid hold of their spears, and, ready for battle, surrounded the elders and the prisoner, pointing their spears toward the intruding Egyptians. Seeing the spirit of the young men, the chief of the Midianites arose and said :

“Far be it from us, O ye Egyptians ! to interfere between a prisoner and his guards. Nor do we desire to have the peace heretofore existing between us destroyed ; but we cannot give up to you this man who claims our protection. He came to us, and from our table has eaten bread and salt—the bread and salt of the feast of blood brotherhood. He thus commands our protection—yea, the protection of every man who has eaten at this feast, according to the inviolable custom of all the desert tribes.

“We know not the nature of his crime ; but until he voluntarily leaves us, we can do him no harm, but must defend him from every foe. Therefore, O ye Egyptians ! hasten to your camp before the rashness of the young men of Amalek and Midian break forth upon you for disturbing the harmony of our feast.”

The Egyptians saw about them the angry faces of the men, and the shining of hundreds of spears; and without further parley departed, cursing the customs of the desert tribes, and vowing vengeance upon them.

The prisoner, seeing he was free, fell on his face and prayed.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPED CAPTIVE.

WHEN the Egyptian refugee arose from the attitude of prayer, he observed that the number of men about him had greatly increased ; and, in the flickering glare of the camp-fires, they appeared more like an encamped army than peaceful tribes at a social feast. They were excited to an unusual degree. The threats and insolence of the Egyptian soldiers had struck at their sense of freedom. For these intruders to assert that they had no right to observe the customs which their fathers from the most remote ages had been careful to honor, was a declaration so absurd that only a feeling of contempt for them could have prompted it. The display of such a feeling they earnestly resented. They paid tribute to Pharaoh ; but in return their lands were held inviolable, and they were protected in their routes of caravan travel. No one, not even an Egyptian, had the right to encroach upon their privileges ; and the news of such a threat flew like wind over the mountains and into the vales, until every camp was in commotion. Naturally, they were

antagonistic to the Egyptians ; and they hated, with all the bitterness of their liberty-loving spirit, the power that kept the prisoners at the emerald and turquoise mines in such abject bondage. The Egyptians, knowing this, were compelled to keep constantly stationed at those mines a large body of guards to prevent frequent insurrections.

The chief of the Midianites, with a motion of his hand commanding silence, thus addressed the refugee :

“O stranger ! who hast penetrated our vales, and hast partaken of our feast, fear nothing ! We will defend thee, even with our lives ; for we hold it to be dishonorable to forsake one who has broken bread and eaten salt with us. Tell us, we pray thee, whom thou art, and how thou didst find thy way into this remote vale ?”

Encouraged by the friendliness of the faces turned towards him, without fear or hesitation, the man replied :

“Most noble chieftain, and ye valiant men of the desert, I am Kenkenes, a priest of the house of Seti. I was so unfortunate as to incur the displeasure of the chief priest of our temple, and by false accusations to be thrust out from my position by the governor of our district, and sent to labor in the copper mines of Ta Mafka. If ye will have patience with me, I will narrate the story of my life, and ye

can then judge if ye have done well in rescuing me from my pursuers."

A mat was now placed on the ground for him, and while the people ranged themselves about him, maintaining a solemn stillness, Kenkenes sat down on the mat. After a moment of silence, in which to gather the threads of his memory, he said :

"In the house of Seti, on the western bank of the Nile, opposite the palaces of the great Pharaohs, I passed my boyhood ; being trained in the school of the priests to understand the mysteries which were only to be revealed to those who were of proper birth and education, and by their purity of life, and strength of intellect showed themselves to be worthy. With me from the beginning was the noble Shafre, who came of a family as honorable as my own. From earliest childhood we were inseparable companions.

"Entering the University of Seti together, we sat side by side as we learned our tasks, and imbibed wisdom from our teachers. When the time of our probation ended, we entered the house of Seti together as priests, to receive the revelation of the mysteries. Our hearts rejoiced in the possession of perfect happiness, for we had never known secrecy or disobedience, except so far as to keep secret the revelations of our temple, and to be disobedient to the temptations thrust before us to entice us into evil. We possessed the

confidence of our superiors, and were rapidly advanced until special privileges were granted us, such as were given only to those who were the favorites of the gods.

“Every morning and evening we came out of the high enclosing walls of the temple, with our fellow priests, and sang hymns of praise, as the course of the sun reminded us of the life of man. When the sun rose over the temples of Thebes, we sang the praises of the child Horus. When the sun stood over the Nile, we sang to the hero Ra, who conquered the serpent Uraeus for his diadem; then, as the sun went down over the city of the dead, back of our temple, we sang to Tum the old man. At this time all the people visiting the city of the dead were required to return to their boats, or to the inns; for now all voices were to be hushed. Even the ferryman on the river could chant no more until we came out in the early morn, and awakened the spirit of day by our morning song. We were often sent among the people to pray for them, or to give to them such comfort as their gifts to our temple entitled them to receive.

“We had been on such a mission, and as we returned to the landing place where our boat was anchored, we felt the severity of Sechet’s influence. This daughter of Ra—with the head of a lioness, and the body of the serpent Uraeus—was driving her

chariot over the sky, and arousing in our hearts such passions and thirst for pleasure as were unknown within the cool precincts of our sacred temple. We therefore hastened our return, and were soon swiftly gliding over the intervening waters of the Nile.

“There were many boats upon the river, merchants conveying their wares ; worshipers on their way to the temples ; mourners going to the tombs ; pleasure parties singing their gay songs ; and officers attending to the affairs of the kingdom. We were suddenly horror stricken to see a boat filled with gay revelers, and swiftly propelled by strong armed slaves, run into a smaller boat in which there were two maidens, and an aged slave as oarsman.

“When the large boat crashed upon the smaller, it broke it in half and drove it beneath the waves. So heartless were the revelers, that they did not stop to see what damage they had done, but swiftly pressed on their way. We turned our boat toward the victims, and in a few seconds after the accident had drawn the almost drowned maidens into our boat. But their slave was not to be seen : he had sunk beneath the waters. Letting the oars rest, we gave our attention to restoring the maidens to animation. We were soon rewarded by seeing them open their eyes and observe what was taking place about them. Telling us where their home was, we immediately rowed quickly there, as it

was by the side of the river, and gave them in charge of the slaves of their palace.

“As we returned, I beheld a strange light in the eyes of my companion, and in tones of awe he declared that the maiden whom he had restored to consciousness was surely one of the Hathors—that is, one of the seven forms in which Isis appears to her worshipers, bearing as her gift all the pure joys of life, beautifying it with enjoyment, love, song, and dance. The maiden who had so strangely affected him was the bond slave of the other. She was of medium height, with a clear, creamy complexion, large brown eyes, and hair of long, fine silky curls. She was, indeed, beautiful, and Isis would have blessed her, but she was a Hebrew; and all the Hebrews, except the most degraded, steadily turned from the gods of Egypt to worship the God of their fathers. Katuti, the maiden whom I restored, and the mistress of the other, was of one of the noblest families in Egypt, and her offerings upon the altar of our temples had been of great value. She urged us to visit her mansion and teach her a song of praise to the gods for her deliverance from death, and we could not refuse her sweet and tender pleadings.

“From this day forth Shafre was a changed man. His conversations were only about the bond slave, and it seemed as if his priestly vows were no longer sacred in his sight. Tirzah, the slave, seemed to be entirely

unconscious of the impression she had made, and Shafre had not so far lost his reason but that he could see the consequences of his mad passion were it discovered by the high priest. Tirzah was of a noble family. She could trace her ancestry to the most ancient times; and she had the proud spirit of a princess. While she served her mistress with all fidelity, she carefully maintained a pure life, and by constant study of such writings as were within her reach, improved the quality and capacity of her mind.

“We soon discovered that she could ask us many questions which we could not answer, but led us to ask her questions which dealt with the mysteries of the faith of the Egyptians, when, to our surprise, we received answers which made clear to us many mysteries, and removed from our eyes the veil that had kept us from discerning their spiritual interpretation. Thus we, initiated priests, sat at the footstool of a slave girl and learned the truth. We learned that there was only the one Supreme Being, the Almighty, who created the heavens and the earth; and that all the forces of the earth and forms of life are but instruments in his hands for carrying forward the work of his creating. We learned that all the signs and forms worshiped by the people, the observance of which is so strictly enforced by the priesthood, are only representative in their nature, and that all true worship is

spiritual; for it is the spirit of man in communion with the spirit of the living and eternal God. To me such knowledge was overwhelming. I seemed at one bound to pass from the depths of soul bondage to the heights of soul freedom, and in everything I beheld the hand of God. I became as anxious to meet Tirzah as was Shafre, but from an entirely different motive.

“In the intoxication of our souls, we forgot prudence. We were observed by the servants of the high priest. Spies were placed around us, so that when we imagined ourselves to be alone, our conversations, which were of the most confidential character, were heard, written down, and carried to the high priest. And when we were the most insensible to the danger threatening us, we were called before the assembled priesthood, our conversations were read before them all, and we were driven out of the temple, stripped of our priestly robes, clothed in the garb of malefactors, loaded with chains, and placed in dark, noisome prison cells. After many days we were led out of prison, and then we learned from the conversations of our guards that we were condemned to labor as long as we should live, in the mines of Mafkat.

“It was a weary march to the road leading out of Egypt into the wilderness, and as we passed along, the rattling of our chains and the crack of our guard’s

whips caused the people who crowded the roadside to see us, to gaze upon us with unspeakable horror. Then we passed down the Eastern shore of the Sea of Reeds to the plain of El Markha. This was a dreary, desolate waste of sand, with a long white ridge of chalk hills on the one side, and the sea, with its misty blue-green waves on the other. Oh, how great was the change to us, who had never before known want or suffering! The drinking water was brackish, and of that there was only one small spring. No life could be seen, except a few lizards or stray sea birds, and the heart-broken captives and the brutal guards. Here we remained only long enough to have our burdens rearranged, and then we entered the mountain cleft leading to the mines. There was no chance of escape from such a place. There were soldiers in front of us and soldiers behind us, every one of them armed with dagger, battle axe, shield, and lance, and nothing would have pleased them more than to use their weapons on some poor, fainting captive.

“We were stripped of all clothing, being allowed only a rag about our loins, and were all chained together, each man having a copper chain riveted around his ankles, and connected with the main chain. Upon our shoulders were placed burdens as heavy as we could bear, and beneath which it required all our

strength to move forward ; yet, if any one lagged, he was speedily quickened by the lash from one of the guards.

“ We soon left the sea, ascended the steep path, and entered the lower part of the mountain gorge. Here for a while the shade was refreshing, for we followed the bed of a small stream in a gorge often not more than eight feet in width, with steep granite walls rising up on either side to a height that almost shut out the light of the day.

“ We continued on until we came to a broad place, where the camp was fixed for the night. The guards and soldiers lighted their fires, but we were compelled to remain at one side. They were sheltered by a cleft in the rocks ; we, subject to the changing air of the night. And now we felt the need of clothing more than in the hot sun of midday ; for mosquitoes, flying ants, and gigantic beetles swarmed upon us, and stung us, being unable to protect ourselves against them. We had yearned for rest, but could get none ; yet the dreary laborious march of another day was before us, and to be begun as soon as the day dawned. We were allowed a scanty breakfast of lentil broth, hard bread, and brackish water, after which, taking up our burdens, we went forward.

“ The path was now steeper than before ; the walls of rock on either side were like great columns one

after the other. Our path lay alongside of deep and yawning precipices, and it seemed as if our unsteady steps would cause us to fall into the depths below. Thus we wearily dragged on until we came to the end of our journey in the Mafkat valley.

“Our first glance at this valley as we entered it caused us to lose all hope, for it seemed shut in from the reach of all the world. It was in every way adapted for a despot’s prison. It was closed in by two high and rocky mountain walls, the southern cliff wall—the one over which we had come—being of dark-colored granite, while the northern wall was of red sandstone. In this valley were thousands of men toiling hopelessly, praying for death to release them from their state of misery.

“Ah! how great the change in a few weeks! Clothed in the fine linen of the priesthood; sitting in the elegant palace of the handsome Katuti; ardent, filled with hope; ambitious, seeking truth while we listened to the wisdom of the gifted Tirzah; and now, with only a rag about our loins; not a friend to whom we dared to speak; subject to the blows of unfeeling guards; hopeless of any bettering of our condition in life; doomed to do slaves’ work until death should release us, and then our bodies to be cast out to become the prey of vultures—this was our fate.

“But hope came back to us as we saw more of the mountains, and we determined to escape, if possible, either together or alone. If alone, the one first successful to seek the liberation of the other. Only three days ago my opportunity came. My guard led me into a ravine of the encircling mountain to carry back a load of charcoal. I watched his movements, and when he was least expecting resistance I sprung upon him, dashed him to the ground, bound him with the chains which I broke from my ankles, put upon him my rags, and, clothing myself in his garments, left him there and fled. The gods directed my steps to your hospitable feast, and I am at your mercy.

“Oh, how sweet the sense of liberty is! How terrible is bondage! I am free! I will die before being made a slave again; and now my freedom shall be consecrated to redeeming the pledge to secure the liberty of my friend.”

As Kenkenes ceased, the youths about him manifested great excitement, and Amal and Bela sprung to his side, declaring that they would aid him, as his own blood brothers.

With shouts of approval the Midianites and Amalekites clustered about them, and then threw themselves on the grass by the camp-fires, to sleep until the coming dawn.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BURNING BUSH.

AS soon as the morning dawned the dispersion of the people began, and all were in haste to return to their own camps. Amal, with the youths and maidens of his own tribe, hastened toward Feiran. But he kept in front with the young men, for he had already discerned the anger of Timna, who was the leader of the maidens. His mind was fully aroused to devise some plan by which Shafre, the Egyptian, might be rescued, which he knew could only be done by strategy; the Egyptian guards must be outwitted.

The Amalekites dwelt along the borders of the mining valley, and at times were called on by the Egyptians to supply them with charcoal. The Midianites dwelt in the more distant part of Sinai, only coming in contact with the Egyptians on the great thoroughfares traversing the deserts. Amal was considering the possibility of visiting the mines, under the pretext of bargaining to supply them with charcoal, so that while there he might discover the exact condition of Shafre, and arrange with him as to the manner of his escape.

In the mean time, Kenkenes was received in the camps of the Midianites as a welcome guest. Bela freely acknowledged him as his own special friend. In the Midianite camp, Kenkenes heard much of a highly-esteemed old man, whose name called to his remembrance a name he had heard spoken in the halls of Seti. It was the name of one who was the most gifted in intellect of all who had been instructed in the temple. He was supposed to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and as the heir to the throne, had received the most exalted honors from all. But in some mysterious way he was proved to be the child of a Hebrew woman, and had only been adopted by the princess. In consequence of this discovery he had been cast out of the court, and had disappeared so effectually that no one knew whither he had gone. Many sought his supposed hiding place, that they might put him to death; but he was not to be found. As time passed on, those who had sought his overthrow died, and his name became a matter of tradition, save to a few of the oldest priests, who in their youthful days had known him, and loved him, and still kept his name in loving remembrance.

Kenkenes was filled with the desire to see this wonderful man—if, indeed, it was the one of whom tradition spoke—who had stepped from the loftiest seat in the palaces of Egypt, to the remote mountains of Sinai,

to exchange the symbol of power over courts and armies for the shepherd's rod and staff. And the conversation of the Midianites, in which the spiritual gifts of their hero were referred to with superstitious awe, increased the yearning of the Egyptian to see him, and to talk with him.

If Tirzah, a daughter of a Hebrew servant, could give him more light on questions of the soul than the wisest teachers in Seti, surely Moses, who had learned all the mysteries taught in Egypt, and had mastered all the skill and wisdom of the magicians; had spent forty years, when the mental faculties of man are at their highest development, in communion with God concerning the soul—he would be able to reveal to him such truths as would give his troubled mind perfect rest. So, guided by Bela, he passed along the deep ravine which wound among the mountains, in the rear of mighty Horeb, to seek the place where Moses dwelt.

The red granite cliffs of the mountain rose like great shattered pinnacles, their summits bare of verdure, and their glens and chasms luxuriant in rich pastures and foliage.

They passed through vales in which grew numerous tamarisk trees. Above these on the mountain slopes were thorns and acacias and junipers, and still higher up were fragrant herbs, such as myrrh and thyme. In some of the vales were plants upon which

the camels delighted to feed, and in others were great stretches of vegetation on which large flocks of sheep and goats were feeding.

The atmosphere was clear, and redolent with the perfumes of the fragrant herbs; the beautiful blue sky overhead, by contrast, made the mountains appear the grander, and Kenkenes felt as never before that there was a harmony in all the works of nature which displayed the handiwork of one God—the God of whom Tirzah had so intelligently informed him.

They had come to a verdant plain upon the slope of the mountain, when they beheld all about them large flocks; and in the midst of the flocks, in the attitude of deep meditation, stood the majestic form of the man whom they were seeking.

He seemed utterly unconscious of their approach, and so devout was his manner, so intense his thought, that, unable to approach him from awe, they stood at a short distance and gazed upon him in surprise and admiration. Suddenly, as if awakened out of a trance, Moses looked up, and gazed with a fixed earnestness toward the top of the mountain. Then, with a startled expression, rapidly walked toward the rocks and bushes bordering the mountain side of the pastures.

The two young men noiselessly followed. As they came nearer they beheld that which caused Bela to

prostrate himself on the ground, but Kenkenes gazed upon it with increasing astonishment. After a few moments he looked toward Bela, and saw that he had retired from the place; then Kenkenes felt the thrill of being alone with Moses, and a witness of the revelation of God. His heart beat wildly with expectation. The thought of fear did not occur to him. The greatest desire of his soul was to know God. He looked and listened eagerly, and this is what he saw and heard:

Over the rocky hillside grew the spreading thorn bushes peculiar to that mountain. One of these seemed to be enveloped in flame. From the roots to stem, and every branch, the fire seemed to glow and shine, and yet the branches were not consumed.

The fire seemed to play upon the spot with wonderful brilliancy. Moses stood watching its forked tongues for several minutes, but no change came to the bush. He was about to go nearer to it to see how this could be, when from the midst of the flame came a voice calling his name.

Filled with astonishment, Moses answered:

“Here am I.” (Ex. 6 : 3.)

The voice from the flame then said:

“Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God of thy father, the God

of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

As thus the voice out of the flame declared that God was manifesting himself in the flame, Moses trembled, and hid his face. Kenkenes was filled with awe at this scene. He could see the bush in all its glory, and observe the actions of Moses, but the voice of God was for Moses only. The reverence Moses manifested was such as could only be the outcome of the fullest trust, and while he was thus waiting the voice continued :

“I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters ; for I know their sorrows ; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey ; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite ; and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me ; moreover, I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

The voice ceased ; and Moses, filled with the deepest

humility, the natural outcome of forty years of meditation, in the presence of God, forgot his ambition, his dream of leadership, his thirst for glory, and from the depths of his meekness replied to this, the grandest call ever given to man to go forward to earthly glory :

“Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

“Certainly, I will be with thee,” the voice replied ; “and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee ; when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Again there was silence ; and Moses, his voice trembling with emotion, swayed by a multitude of thoughts—full of faith in God—yet like a skillful leader, careful not to err, with the boldness of a seeker of the right, asked :

“Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you ; and they shall say to me, What is his name ? what shall I say unto them ?”

Kenkenes, now trembling in every limb, his heart beating wildly within him—for the question that had troubled his soul so much was now asked—not as he had hoped, by himself of Moses, but by Moses of God. What would the answer be ? To Moses only

came clear and distinct, with an emphasis that was startling in its intensity :

“I Am that I Am : Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt : and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice : and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us : and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in

the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians." Thus clearly and explicitly God declared to Moses how events should follow each other. But Moses, with human hesitancy in that hour, remembered the ungratefulness of the Israelite when he had slain the Egyptian, and their stupidity through continued bondage, and speaking to God as to a man, he said:

"But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

For a moment there was silence, but the flame glowed with its fiery brightness, twirling from branch to branch, yet consuming it not. Moses stood with his head bowed, and his eyes not daring to look upward, his soul troubled by the voice.

Again the voice came to him:

"What is that in thine hand?"

"A rod," Moses answered.

"Cast it on the ground," the voice continued.

Moses did so, and instantly it became a serpent, and

curling itself, darted forth its tongue, and appeared about to spring upon Moses, and he ran to one side to escape its blow. But the voice again commanded :

“Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.”

Moses did not hesitate, but watching his opportunity, seized hold of its tail, and as he did so the serpent was the rod once more.

Again the voice commanded :

“Put now thine hand into thy bosom.”

Moses did so ; then taking it out he saw that it was leprous, and as white as snow.

The voice then said :

“Put thine hand into thy bosom again.”

Moses did so, and taking it out found it just as it had been at first.

Then the voice said to him :

“Do this that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land : and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.”

Thus promise of protection, of the divine presence, and of testimonial signs were given to Moses; but once more he bowed his head, and thought of the hindrances in the way. Again his diffidence overwhelmed him. His years of silence had prevented the cultivation of the graces of speech, and knowing his infirmity, he sadly said :

“O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.”

The voice rebuked him by replying :

“Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh a man dumb or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak.”

Moses, overwhelmed with the thought of his unworthiness, yet this great assurance silencing his objections, did not remove the shrinking of his heart, and he faintly muttered :

“O Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.”

Once more the patience of the Lord was manifested, and as the flame glowed brighter and brighter, the words came from it :

“Is there not Aaron, thy brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee,

he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth ; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and I will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people ; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God. And thou shalt take in thine hand this rod, wherewith thou shalt do the signs."

The voice ceased ; the flames suddenly disappeared from the bush ; and as the astonished witnesses looked upon it, they saw only the spreading branches of the acacia, covered with white thorns just like the other thorn bushes on the mountain. Moses prostrated himself on the ground in humble submission and in prayer, while Kenkenes noiselessly retired from the sacred place, knowing now beyond all doubt that Moses could satisfy the questionings of his heart ; for he had seen the symbol of God's presence, and had heard Moses ask questions of God. In the lower end of the pastures he met Bela, who was not astonished to see the blanched face of the Egyptian, who had seen a revelation such as had never been witnessed in temples made by hand.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT.

ALL the tribes in Sinai were busy in preparing their products for the great market in Egypt. The time was drawing nigh for the coming of the immense caravan on its way from Chaldea to Egypt. In a few days it would reach Kadesh, the richest gathering place in the desert, where, by the abounding fountains and broad rich pastures, it would rest, and receive the various contingents from Sinai, and the adjacent deserts. It was a journey of eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh, traveling at caravan speed, but if pressed with haste the journey could be accomplished in a much shorter time.

Provisions were to be prepared; camels to be laden; surplus stock of cheeses, goat's hair, sheep's wool, desert gums, and aromatic woods were to be packed; feasts were to be held, and those going on the journey were to receive the blessings of the priests and elders.

The tribes were aroused to the highest pitch of excitement, for this was the greatest occasion of the year. Many of the people were preparing to go to

Kadesh to see the caravan ; then to return and tell their companions of its wonderful size and value.

Amal was commissioned by his tribe to take a herd of their choicest cattle, horses, and asses, and join the caravan ; for the rich men of Egypt paid large prices for the pure thoroughbred stock of the Amalekites. A number of the Amalekite youths went with these animals to care for them, and thus enjoyed the wonders of Egypt. Bela and his companions who had been with the previous caravan to the far East, now gathered their stores of ornaments, cloths, spices, and desert treasures, and started for the general rendezvous. Moses, too, came out of his solitude, and going to his father-in-law, the venerable priest of Midian, said to him :

“Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren, which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive.” (Ex. 4: 18.)

The aged priest laid his hands on the head of the suppliant, and blessed him, as he had already blessed Bela and his troop, and said :

“Go in peace.”

As Moses on his way passed by Horeb, the conviction of his being called to the leadership of Israel pressed heavily upon him. His blood was stirred within him, as it had not been during the forty years he had lived in the desert of Sinai. As the memory

of martial life came over him, he shook off the meditative habits of his solitude, and felt awakening in him a resolute spirit that would enable him to stand before kings and magicians, and defy them in the name of the living God.

He entered into one of the ravines of the mountain, once more to seek God in prayer. While there he heard footsteps approaching. His quick perception told him that it was the step of one unaccustomed to climbing mountains, and at once he felt in his heart, "It is Aaron, whom the Lord has sent to meet me here." Moses arose, and stood by the path, awaiting the stranger's approach. As the venerable Aaron appeared, Moses spread wide his arms to receive him. Aaron, seeing his brother thus awaiting him, with an expression of gratitude to God, fell upon his bosom, and in loving embrace the two brothers felt, after forty years of separation, the strength of the ties that bound them to each other. As they sat beneath the shade of the acacias, they related to each other the signs which they had received from God, and the words with which God had called each to his work.

Moses eagerly listened as Aaron informed him minutely of the condition of Israel, and of the burdens which so severely oppressed them. The necessity of Israel's immediate release from bondage was plain to their minds; and because of their advanced age

they would doubtless be unable to assist their brethren, or accomplish God's command, unless the work was begun at once.

Hearing the noise of trumpets in the distance, they descended the ravine to the foot of the mountain, and there joined the company of Midianites which was on its way to unite with the caravan at Kadesh. It was no light duty to direct so large a number of travelers; but Moses had no fears when he saw at the head of the train his brother-in-law Hobab, the keenest-eyed scout and guide of the peninsula. He knew all the fountains, watercourses, palm groves, honey-dripping rock clefts, pastures, and at a glance at the pathway could tell the number that had passed along it, and the race to which they belonged. With such a guide they went forward, and the more securely because the host were cautioned not to reveal the names or the purposes of the two aged men accompanying them.

In due time they reached the gathering place, in an immense fertile tract, where the main thoroughfares of the deserts cross each other, a little to one side of the fountains of Kadesh with their strongly-fortified natural surroundings, which were the pride of the desert tribes. All about the fountains were stretched the tents of the great caravan, with hundreds of camels, horses, asses, and the men of numerous tribes bringing to Egypt the product of many nations. In a few days

all the neighboring bands were assembled, and assigned their places in the caravan. Then those who were to return to Sinai bade their brothers farewell, and the great host moved slowly forward.

The young men regarded Moses and Aaron as wonderful characters. They were of an age which always commanded respect in the desert, but they were also men of great wisdom, and the youths sought their presence to learn from them. When the caravan came to the end of the day's journey, groups clustered about Aaron, while he told them of the wonderful splendor to be seen in the cities of the land they were approaching.

Aaron was an eloquent man, and having passed his entire life in the presence of Egyptian grandeur, was well qualified to describe it to his eager listeners. When all were seated about him in silence, and Moses was sitting by his side, he said :

“ Egyptian magnificence surpasses everything elsewhere known or possessed by men. All the nations bordering her territories are either subject to Pharaoh, or are careful to remain on friendly terms with him by frequently sending him costly gifts.

“ In war, the tread of Egypt's armies has been heard from the sources of the Nile to the border of the Euphrates. Even the great nation of the Hittites, beyond the land of the Canaanites, was com-

pelled to yield to their power. At home, splendor and luxury dwell in her palaces, while her monuments and obelisks display the power and enterprise of her kings. The river Nile is her glory. Its waters, for five months during the hot season, spread plenty and luxury throughout the valley that borders it. Her many waters teem with life, while the black soil of the wide plain on either side of the flowing streams yield the most abundant crops, and seem as the gardens of the gods in contrast with the desert wastes which stretch between the Nile and Red Sea on the one side, and to the western horizon on the other.

“The banks of the stream are lined with papyrus reeds, and the lotus floats on the waters. The landscape is dotted with groves and gardens, while in the palace gardens artificial lakes, filled with water from the Nile, support gold and silver carp, and by numerous little canals spread fertility and nourishment on every hand.

“Nowhere on earth do men more thoroughly enjoy the mere pleasure of existence; for the buoyancy of the climate gives one the spirit of gayety and contentment. There is no moisture in the atmosphere to interfere with perfect vision, and all objects in nature stand out clearly and accurately before the spectator. The skies are a perpetual blue, the sun courses its way

in cloudless majesty, and in the evening goes down in a sea of golden glory. At night the splendor of the heavens enraptures the wise men. The stars in myriads stand out so brilliantly—each one seeming to burn with its glorious light—that the roofs of towers and temples are occupied night after night by those who in the motion of the stars behold the finger of God. The moon, like a matchless queen, sails on her course among the stars, giving to the brightest of them her own illuminating splendor. Nature has indeed done her best to provide this fair land with all that is beautiful and helpful to the enjoyment of her people.”

Moses, now taking advantage of a pause in Aaron’s description, said :

“Yea, my brother, nature has made Egypt a land to be a blessing to mankind ; but her kings, not satisfied with this, have sought to stifle the liberties of the people, and by severe toil to make their lives a curse.”

“It is even so,” Aaron replied. “And now, as the night is coming on, let us seek our rest, and at tomorrow’s camping-place we will speak again of the wonders of man’s hands.”

At the close of the next day’s journey the young Midianites again clustered about the aged men, desiring to know still more of the glories of the land of

Egypt. Seeing their deep interest, Aaron's eyes lighted up with increasing fervor, as he said :

“A glorious land it is with its temples, pyramids, obelisks, colonnades, palaces, tombs, walls, lakes, and canals. Out of the mists of the ages the pyramids arise to tell the glory of her ancient monarchs. And each succeeding Pharaoh has sought, by splendid works of art, or of architecture, or by vast public improvements, to distinguish himself more than did any of his fathers. Even cities have caught this spirit until Thebes, Memphis, the City of the Sun, and Zoan, each claims to be superior to the others. Thebes is surrounded by a mighty wall with a hundred gates. When Pharaoh calls for his army, out of each of these gates there goes forth two hundred men with horses and chariots. Here are great buildings erected to the honor of Meneph and Rameses. On the left of the steps leading to the Ramesion, stands a granite statue of Rameses, cut out of a single stone from the granite quarries of Syene, where it was perfectly dressed and polished, and by the labor of thousands of men brought to this place and erected. It is nine times the size of an ordinary man, and its weight is that of nine thousand men.

“In the building dedicated to Meneph are two statues, carved out of the coarse, hard breccia of the Mokattan hills. They are more than eight times the

size of a man, and stand on pedestals twice the height of the largest men. In the Libyan hills is a temple, which no one can approach without first passing between a double row of statues for a distance of a mile, containing more than two hundred in each row. These statues, called sphinxes, have the face of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle.

“But the erecting of the statues is not the only way of decorating the temples, for the people of Egypt are excessively proud of their skill in writing. In some of the temples, the walls, and also columns erected for the purpose, are covered with inscriptions proclaiming the glorious achievements of their builders.

“The greatest of all the temples in the vicinity of Thebes is Karnak, which was begun by the Pharaoh who drove the ancestors of the Amalekites out of Egypt. Additions to it have been made by each successive monarch since that day. It would take a rapid walker half an hour to walk around its walls, and it would require fifteen men, standing on each other's shoulders, to reach to the top of the wall, while the top of the wall is wide enough for fifteen men to walk abreast upon it. Standing at the portal of the temple one would look into a vast court crowded with a forest of magnificent columns, each one of which rises to the height of sixteen men, and as thick as the length of two men. Each column is covered with

picture writing, surmounted by capitals of different patterns, and painted in the most gorgeous and durable colors.

“ But these temples, when unadorned by the multitude of serving priests and worshiping people, are only as the bare branches of trees. When the temples are crowded with worshipers, they are like trees in full foliage, and heavily laden with the most beautiful fruit. The spectacle of one of these temples on a festive occasion can never be forgotten. No language can adequately describe its magnificence, or the magnitude of the pageants in which the wealth, culture, pride, and devotion of the entire kingdom are manifested.

“ But now I can say no more ; yet the day is coming when the cities of the distant East, from whence this caravan started, will remember that they were old when Egypt was young, and they will renew the spirit of their youth and build walls and palaces greater than those of Egypt, and send mighty armies who will spread their tents at the foot of the pyramids, and all Egypt shall wail because of her fall.”

When Aaron ceased speaking, the young men withdrew one by one to their tents.

CHAPTER VIII. .

THE GLORY OF EGYPT.

THE great caravan moved slowly, and although the various nations came in contact with one another during the time spent in pitching their tents, yet in the evening hours each tribe or family kept within its own circle around its camp-fire.

The Midianites from Sinai, during the day's march, came in contact with the merchants from the Eastern countries, and learned what products and merchandise they were carrying into Egypt. But with the usual desert silence they carefully refrained from speaking of the venerable men traveling with them, or of anything else save general matters of business. Only at their own camp, where they were of one mind, was the purport of the secret mission broached.

Soon after leaving Kadesh, Amal had found in the caravan a company of Amalekites from the Hittite country. To these he joined himself as one of the same blood. These, being rivals of the Midianites in commerce, would have felt injured if he had ignored them by remaining wholly with their rivals. Thus he was unable to listen more fully to Aaron's descrip-

tions, eager though he was to hear of the City of the Sun.

At the next encampment the youths again gathered about Aaron to hear of the famous city. When all were silent, he began by saying: "The City of the Sun faces the river Nile, and its gates are distant from the river half an hour's ride. The avenue from the river to the city is lined with the most gorgeous temples that the hands of man have ever built. This avenue is entered through a gateway in a temple which faces the river, and has many palaces on the right and on the left, forming wings to it. The sacred edifice, however, excels them all in beauty. Each of these palaces is adorned with three hundred columns, beautified by the highest artistic conceptions of sculptors and painters, while the capitals of the columns are exquisite representations of buds and half-open flowers, showing the lotus in its various degrees of unfolding, and in the richest colors.

"The temple in the centre is built of red sandstone, adorned with sixty marble columns of the same immense size and splendor as the three hundred. The gateway of this wonderful temple is in three divisions, each of which is decorated with the most brilliant paintings of festivals, priestly processions, and the different religious ceremonies which in the days past have distinguished the temple. The central gate is

above the others, and is embellished with a representation of Osiris. It is an immense half sphere of gold, like a shield, from the sides of which extend immense wings, each feather glittering with precious stones, and around the shield two asps are entwined, the peculiar symbol of the god. The gates are two-leaved. They are made of the finest brass, and at the motion of a wand silently swing apart, revealing the entire avenue beyond them leading to the city. From the river to the city the temples rise one above the other, each one glittering in golden splendor as it catches the rays of the sun. The temple of Osiris stands higher than all the others; within its splendid girdle of twelve obelisks, and upon the apex of a pyramid two hundred feet high, in the very centre of this glittering girdle, the sacred shield of Osiris continually blazes, as it reflects from its golden face the sun's glittering rays. The avenues leading to this temple are adorned with a great number of sphinxes resting in majestic silence. The gaze of their stony eyes seems to penetrate into the very depths of the hearts of every worshiper that approaches the temple.

"I will not weary you with descriptions of the various avenues, although each one has its particular type of beauty. There are statues of gods and heroes, with their shields wrought by the highest art, recording their titles and deeds. There are obelisks, mono-

liths of kings, pylons with pyramidal wings, alternate rows of obelisks and sphinxes, triple stories of colonnades, fountains in palace yards, immense palaces adorned with all forms of art, and displaying a splendor which the great wealth of the kings had enabled them to gather from all parts of the earth.

“But the most wonderful piece of sculpture of all is the sphinx guarding the pyramidal temple. The approach to it is called the sacred way. This way is the most wonderful in its profusion of temples, monuments, porticoes, statues, fountains, and mausoleums to be found on the earth. The temple at its entrance is consecrated to the god of the winds, and for a full league the way extends over the plain to the mighty pyramid. The wings of the gates are towers of granite from Syene, and in height rise above the tallest palms. Each one of their twelve stories is painted and sculptured in the most wonderful manner. From the court of the gate, for a distance of a thousand cubits, stretches a double colonnade of the most artistically-carved pillars, ending at the greatest of all sphinxes, which keeps guard before the great pyramid.

“This sphinx appears as if crouching at full length upon the eastern edge of the elevated table on which the pyramid stands. Its immense lion paws spread out before it. Its size is so great that its helmet-crowned brow is seventy feet from the earth. Its

paws are fifty feet in length, and its body is three times as long. As a crest on the helmet there is placed the sacred serpent Uraeus, made of glittering gold. The neck band of the helmet is of scales in the colors of the rainbow mixed with gleams of gold, beneath which extends the full beard of the man-like face. Beneath this beard and between his feet is the temple, in which sacrifices are daily offered to the god here adored. Back of the sphinx, on a stone platform, stands an ancient figure sculptured out of coarse marble. It is that of Chephres the Great. Under his feet he stamps a sea dragon; upon his capped head he wears the beak of a galley, with the head and wings of a dove. From the terrace on which he stands the pyramids appear in all the majesty of their glorious surroundings."

The lateness of the hour warned Aaron that the hours for rest were in danger of being encroached upon; and, complimenting the young men for their strict attention to the words of an old man, he closed his descriptions by saying:

"It is not necessary for me to describe Tsan (Zoan) to you, as you will soon be within its walls, and can behold its glories for yourselves."

As Moses listened to the words of his brother, he seemed to see Egypt as when forty years before he had traversed it, the acknowledged heir of the throne.

Then the multitudes gathered about his pathway to shout his praises ; now he was returning, almost alone, to show that its worship was false, and that the God of the despised Israelites was the only true God. But at this time he said nothing, listening in silence to the comments of wonder and praise from the young men.

The next halting place was just outside of the great wall of Egypt, where the caravan remained until the officers of Pharaoh had taken account of their merchandise, and had received the portion that belonged to him as the ruler of the land in which the merchandise was to be sold. When this was satisfactorily accomplished, the officers withdrew and made their report to the captain of the gate. The great gates were then opened, and the caravan in single file passed into the land of Egypt. In stately silence the aged men, clothed as Midianite princes, rode by the watchful guards. They were not disturbed ; for following them were scores of young Midianites, bearing great treasures from their desert strongholds.

When all had entered within the wall, the caravan pursued its march toward the great camping grounds, the place known as Succoth. Here the various merchants unloaded their goods, and spread them out for the examination of the merchants of Egypt, who came from the cities to obtain the first choice of the

treasures. The Midianite youths now came in contact with the Egyptian trader, whose skill in bargaining—in fair ways and in foul—so severely tried the patience of the merchants of the caravan.

The sheiks, who for many years had brought caravans to this place, knew every argument the traders could offer, and with real desert-like silence, listened to them, then insisted on their own terms.

All over the camp noise and confusion prevailed, as the tents were pitched, and the beasts loosed from their burdens. Many days would be spent here, and hundreds of Egyptian merchants would come and search every part of the camp, and question every sheik, and peer into every tent in search of bargains.

As Moses and Aaron were not in charge of merchandise, their purposes would soon be questioned. Gossip would carry strange tales concerning them; the ever-watchful spies of Pharaoh would be on their track, and discovery would bring death. Knowing this, they did not even wait for the pitching of the tents, but at once pressed on to Aaron's home in Goshen. Hobab, Bela, and Amal remained in Succoth, intent on securing good bargains. They were silent as to the journey of the old men; for they, too, realized that if a whisper of their intentions should come to Pharaoh before their plans were ripe, all of them as fellow-conspirators would be put to death.

Many days had passed, and the camp at Succoth was almost emptied of the merchandise brought thither. Amal had disposed of his stock to advantage, and was now awaiting the forming of an out-going caravan to return home. He was loitering on the outskirts of the camp when he saw approaching from the direction of the gates a troop of Midianites mounted on large, strong camels.

As they came near, the camels slackened their speed, and to his astonishment he beheld Keturah at the head of the troop. With calm dignity she saluted him, and asked him to direct her to the part of Succoth in which the Midianites were encamped. With joy and surprise at the sight of his heart's beloved, he led the way to the tents of her tribe, and there, by the side of Bela's tent, Keturah commanded her own to be pitched.

When the youths gathered about her to learn the purpose of her visit, she first bade them see that no foes might be near, and then said :

"The excitement among the Midianites over the departure of their young men to Egypt was intense. The rumors of approaching revolution were kept as quiet as possible for fear the Egyptians at the turquoise mines might hear of them, and send the news to Pharaoh. Knowing the intentions of Moses, and believing the hand of God to be in them, I sought Zipporah's

tent to commune with her, and to learn more of the strange visitation of the angel to her husband at the desert camping place. Then Hagar and I went to our pastures, and as we discussed the projects of Moses, allowed our imaginations to picture the glory that would come to the noble men so dear to us, if this uprising should succeed.

“In one of our most secluded vales, where the pasture was thick and high, we fed our flocks, and watered them from the fountains beneath the palms. We rejoiced in our refreshing solitude. High mountains were all about us, and we felt no fear, for we had our shepherd clubs in our hands; and with abundance of provisions in our tents, and our servants in the borders of the pasture ready to respond to our call, we passed our time in confidential conversations.

“One day we were startled by the approach of a number of persons, but our fears subsided when we saw they were a company of Amalekite maidens. We arose to receive them, when my cheeks grew pale with apprehension, for I saw that the leader of the maidens was the black-eyed Timna, and I remembered that she had sworn vengeance against me. I grasped Hagar’s hand, to feel the inspiration of her touch, and growing calmer, exercised Midianite courtesy by inviting the maidens to dismount and partake of such

provisions as we had. Timna declined to eat, and leaving her maidens with Hagar, drew me to one side ; and, with the smile of vindictive ferocity lighting up her features, told me that the purpose for which Moses had gone to Egypt was well known, and that swift couriers were about to start on a journey to Egypt to inform the officers of Pharaoh ; that before the coming of the new moon Moses, Bela, and Amal would be sacrificed to the vengeance of Pharaoh ; that she was about to journey to Egypt to witness their death, and to tell Amal in his last moments how the daughter of an Amalekite could enjoy her revenge. Then she left me, and with her maidens singing a song of triumph, swiftly passed out of the valley. Shocked at her cool effrontery, and believing her capable of what she threatened, before she passed from sight I had formed my plans to frustrate her designs.

“ Early the following morning, Hagar with a company of Midianite maidens went to Feiran to visit Timna, and a company of youths also went there to arrange for a joint accumulation of desert products to be sent by the next caravan to Egypt. They had their secret instructions to protract the observance of social courtesies for three days, and thus during this time prevent Timna and the couriers from beginning their journey. The same hour these youths and

maidens started for Feiran, I, with this company to guard me, on the swiftest camels of our tribes, began the journey to warn you in time of the impending danger. My mission is complete. You are warned. Now let Timna do what she can."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ISRAELITES IN GOSHEN.

JUST above the "City of the Gods" the wady Tumeylát begins, and stretches in a northeasterly direction toward the lakes, near the eastern boundary of Egypt. This wady ran through the very heart of the land of Goshen, and was thickly inhabited by the Hebrews, who had dwelt here ever since they came into the land in the time of Joseph. It was a country splendidly adapted to the pasturing of flocks, and the cultivation of the finest vegetables. It was a country for a peaceful people. To the north of it lay the great lake of Menzaleh ; to the east of it, at the upper corner, was Lake Ballah, and at the lower corner Lake Timsah. The wady was about the shape of a cornucopia. On the west it was bounded by one of the branches of the Nile, while on the south it touched and crossed the fresh-water canal, by which the water was conveyed from Lake Timsah to the royal city of the Pharaohs. On the eastern boundary, between the two lakes, was a part of the great canal connecting the Red Sea with the great sea to the north of Egypt. Thus the land of Goshen was well watered—indeed,

surrounded with water—and it possessed the advantages of all the sources of Egyptian fertility. It was, in fact, the choicest of all the lands of Egypt. Its productiveness from the earliest times attracted the attention of the rulers of Egypt, and upon the fertile plains by the borders of the great lake, on one of the arms of the river Nile, they had built a great city, and called it Tsan, called by Greeks Tanis, by Jews Zoan.

In this land the ancient monarchs built splendid palaces and erected lofty temples, while the shepherd kings dwelt in power and glory; and here Joseph stood next to Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne. In the fields of Zoan—as the Hebrews called the land of Goshen—the Hebrews were given their homes; and when the shepherd kings were driven out, the wrath of the returning Pharaoh was vented upon the strangers.

It was here that the great Rameses built his capital and erected splendid trophies of his victories, and in temples and other prominent buildings placed statues of himself, to be adored by the people as though he were a god.

Tradition located Goshen as the birthplace of Moses, and it was here he looked for the last time upon the face of Pharaoh. All the wealth of Egypt was poured into this city. Prisoners, produce, and monumental stores were sent to it down the waters of the Nile,

through the entire length of the land ; for it was situate at the extreme northern part of the country. In other parts of this fertile tract treasure cities were established, and through it passed the canal conveying fresh water from the lakes to the City of the Sun.

The rapidly-increasing numbers of these thriving Israelites filled the princes of Egypt with apprehension, as they saw an alien race surrounding their strongholds, and by their numbers menacing the public peace. The problem for the wise men to solve was, how to prevent the growth of this people. The destruction of the male children was tried, but it did not accomplish the purpose. Then Pharaoh sought to destroy the men by excessive toil. Armed with royal authority, the officers selected the men of Israel to do the most degrading work. They were forced to dig canals, build walls, make brick, and erect treasure houses. The pride of the taskmasters was to see how much work could be exacted of the toilers, and they cared not, though men fell dead from exhaustion in the pits out of which the clay for the bricks was dug. The Israelites were not the slaves of individuals, to be bought and sold, like the prisoners taken in war, and the slaves from the markets of the far-distant South. They were rather the slaves of the government, and used by the government to do the work of Pharaoh, while the Egyptians gave their strength to

wage battle for the glory of the land. The native Egyptians, being the soldiers, were the privileged class. Labor was for bondmen ; although the national unity of Israel was not disturbed, and each tribe was allowed to dwell in its own territory and preserve its individuality.

The ethnic pride of the Israelites was as great as that of the Egyptians. Although they dwelt along the great Egyptian highways between the royal city of Rameses and the City of the Sun, and were surrounded by the temples and the works of art of the Egyptians, and were in continual contact with their business life, they still remained as distinct in habits of life, religious customs and belief, household virtues and affections, as they were different in form and feature, and in the outward circumstances of their lives. They were constantly recalling the words of their ancestors, and in the midst of every kind of trial remained true to the traditions of their fathers. From the households of Israel, crowded with children, the Egyptians were able to obtain all the household servants they needed, and for their use be under tribute to Pharaoh.

The new moon, as a silver crescent, was eagerly looked for by the Hebrew harvesters, who were ready to enter the broad fields of golden grain, and reap with shouts of praise as soon as the sign should

appear. The huts of the Israelites at this time were in the best of order; for the beginning of harvest was, with the Hebrews, a festival season, in which as families they expressed their rejoicings. The people in bondage were displaying the same spirit all over Goshen; and free from toil for the time, the young people gathered beneath the shade of the lofty trees, and talked in their genial happiness as young people do all the world over, of the pleasant things here and there touching their lives.

The homes of the Israelites were in strong contrast with those of the Egyptians. Instead of dwelling in great palaces, and having all the conveniences which skilled workmen could supply, they lived in low cottages made out of the clay which lay beneath the soil of Goshen. The thought of a permanent home did not enter their minds when constructing their dwellings. Had they attempted to build like the Egyptians, the jealous servants of Pharaoh would have prevented them. Yet they made their mud hovels externally attractive by the trailing, flowery vines which clambered over them, hiding them in bowers of beauty. Common as their houses were, they were homes; and this to the Israelite was more important than mere material grandeur. Although these cottages were plain, many of them within were decorated with bits of finery brought home from the palaces of

the Egyptians by the Israelite maidens. They had received them as gifts from their owners, who had no further use for them. Thus the artistic taste acquired in the palaces by the aptness of the maidens entered into their home life, and added a touch of elegance to the simple surroundings in Goshen.

A short time after the punishment of the priests, Kenkenes and Shafre, the members of the household in one of these cottages were earnestly discussing the rumors of the day. The aged father Uriel was too old to go forth to a daily toil, and was wholly dependent upon his children for such care as he needed. Though feeble in body, his mind was strong, and he clearly understood the significance of the movements taking place among the people. He spent much time in reflecting upon the traditions of the fathers, and the comments by the wise.

In the midst of the distresses coming upon the Israelites, he cherished the more confidently the promises given unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for he clearly apprehended that some great change was impending. By his side sat the fair flower of the household, his daughter Tirzah. For many months she had been absent, but was now at home, never to return to the palaces of the Egyptians, and the father's heart was glad. Her face was radiant with delight as they conversed together; and the supreme tendency

of her soul seemed to be the exaltation of the name of the people whom she called brethren.

The father rejoiced all the more in her presence, for he knew the awful trial through which she had passed. Into his sympathizing ear she had told the story of her disgrace in the eyes of the Egyptians, but of her glory in the sight of Israel. She told the aged sire of the beautiful home by the banks of the Nile, not far from the great school of Seti, where, surrounded with every luxury from morning until night, the crowds of slaves spent their time and energies in contributing to the pleasure of their mistress. Here she had become the companion of her mistress, and a partaker of all this enjoyment; so that for bodily comfort and ease she could desire nothing more.

Then came the visits of the priests, and she told her father of the earnest inquiries of the studious Kenkenes, who step by step had led her on in making known the religion of her fathers, until the entire household was affected by the charm of the religion of the Hebrews. She also told of the growing tenderness of the gentle Shafre, whose soul spoke through his eyes, and who even whispered to her his affection; daring to offer her all he possessed—a heart free from guile, and himself honored as an upright priest of the venerable Egyptian religion. The aged Uriel

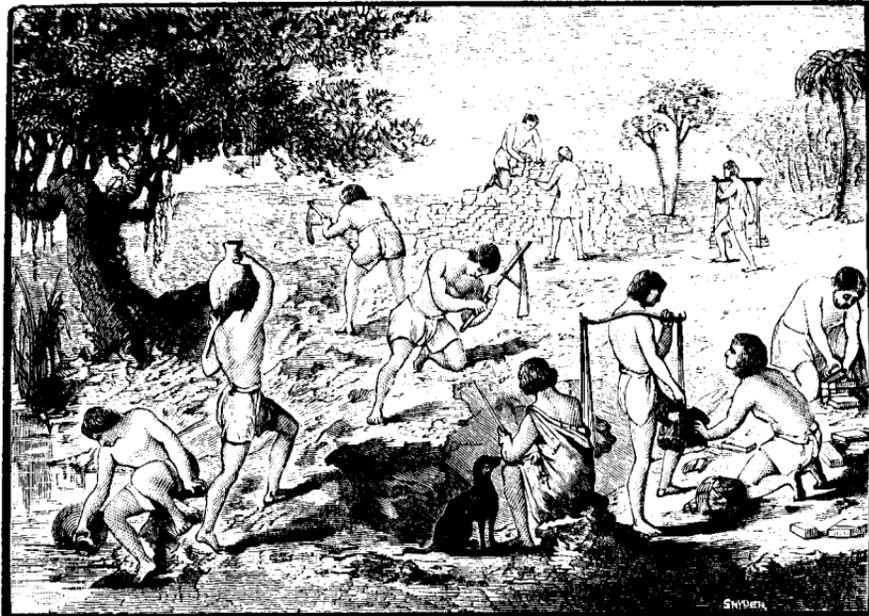
knew, even better than his daughter, the intense love which Shafre must have possessed for Tirzah thus to approach her. For an Egyptian, of honorable family, of good name, with the promise of a noble career, to love an Israelite, would be considered by the people as an incomprehensible degradation. In the blindness of his admiration for the beautiful Tirzah, Shafre surely must have forgotten this deep-seated national prejudice. As he laid his heart at her feet, she was touched by the beauty and purity of his love. For a moment she wavered beneath the spell of his eloquence. It was only for a moment, and then the spirit of her race rose within her, and she turned away from his proffer. She knew that the children of Israel were as proud as the Egyptians, and that with them marriage was a holy ordinance, upon which the blessing of God was asked. The tribal sentiment, too, was strong, and each one sought a companion in his own tribe; for to depart from this custom would be disloyalty to the traditions of the fathers. Tirzah, therefore, could not think of surrendering the fellowship of her people. The reward would come; for God had promised great blessings to Israel. Faithful to the teachings of her father, Tirzah closed her ears to the proposal of Shafre, and turned the more earnestly to her own people.

Then came the punishment of the priests. Tirzah

in the home of her mistress was first laden with the reproaches of the Egyptians, and then driven forth with the charge never to return again. She who could shake the faith of the priests was too dangerous to be allowed in the cities. And Tirzah returned home. With tears she sorrowed over the fate of her friends. The aged Uriel only increased her anguish by his vivid portrayal of the awful severity of Egyptian wrath.

Near by sat the two stalwart sons of Uriel. They had just returned from the brickyards, where, in company with thousands of other sons of Israel, they had been employed in making bricks for the new treasure house of Pharaoh. They had many things to tell of the great works the king was planning, and urging with all haste to be built; for he purposed to make his reign the most brilliant ever known in Egypt. But the workmen were well-nigh driven to death. Every day some fell exhausted, and were left to lie where they fell, until, darkness coming on, their comrades carried them home to be buried. The taskmasters were cruel in their exactions, and the lash was freely applied. Simeon, Uriel's eldest son, had received the lash upon his back that very day, for stopping a moment to aid a companion in suffering. Turning to his father, he said:

“When will the arm of the Lord be stretched forth



Amal.

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to save? Behold, we are dying in pain and woe, but no signs of deliverance are yet seen."

At this moment the door of the cottage opened, and there entered a young man, whose well-knit frame and brave countenance bespoke the possession of strength and courage. As he entered they all rose to receive him, and the aged Uriel called down upon him the blessings of the God of Israel; while Tirzah, with bright smiles and ready hands, gave him a seat, and welcomed him to their home.

Neariah answered with smiles; for he was as happy to be with them as they were to receive him. From earliest childhood he had been their companion; and as he entered man's estate, and Tirzah approached womanhood, they loved, and gave themselves to each other. Their love was the pure tribal sentiment; and the hope of their national progress threw about them a halo of glory, which was felt in every act of life. It was love for Neariah which enabled Tirzah to escape from the spell of Shafre's affection, and it was being with him that thoroughly reconciled her to the loss of all the Egyptian comfort she had suddenly been compelled to part with. She listened with eager interest to his words, for he had been instructed by the aged Aaron, and from his lips had learned more fully the traditions of the fathers, and the mysterious dealings of God with Moses.

On entering the house, Neariah had heard Simeon's words; and after their salutations were over, he asked him if his faith had become dim. As Simeon replied: "Yea; I hardly have any faith at all; the strokes of the lash have killed my faith," Neariah rose, and in quick, indignant tones, asked:

"What! hast thou, too, been lashed?"

In reply, Simeon bared his back, and showed the broad, purple strokes, which more plainly told the story of his suffering.

For a moment Neariah gazed upon the sufferer, then, in kindly tones, said:

"Simeon, the day is coming in which thou wilt be proud of those strokes upon thy back; for deliverance is at hand. I have seen Aaron."

"Hast thou, indeed?" the aged Uriel asked. "When did he return, and whom did he see?"

"Yea," Neariah replied, "I have seen him. He returned only this morning; but his heart is full of joy. He has brought Moses with him; and the arm of the Lord will soon be stretched forth."

"Bless the Lord, O my soul," cried Uriel, as he lifted his eyes toward heaven, while all in the cottage were filled with wonder at the news.

"Do not breathe a word of this," Neariah said. "Be careful lest the walls should speak. No one has yet seen Moses; he is hidden until the day arrives to

come forth, and but few know of Aaron's mission. In due time it will be made known—when the Lord indicates the day ; until then we must be patient.”

The following day was the gladdest of the year. It was the harvest feast, and a holiday to all the workers of Israel, who now went forth to reap the abundant harvests from their own rich fields. The men from the brickyards gathered the grain, while the maidens from their service in the cities prepared the feast. Then, as the new moon coursed its way among the stars, the lovers spoke their binding words beneath the tall palms, and were happy as they looked hopefully towards a brighter future.

But the elders were unusually active ; they had many words to say to each other. Neariah was observed to leave the youths with whom he generally passed the day and go from elder to elder, receiving from each one the most careful attention. It was all a mystery to the multitudes who, careless of the future, spent the day in feasting, dancing, and song.

CHAPTER X.

ANTICIPATED DELIVERANCE.

THE organization of the children of Israel had never been broken ; the records of the families had ever been carefully kept. The customs of honoring the elders was a part of their religion ; for, to a certain extent, the father was the priest and king of his household, and when he died, the eldest son took his place. Marriage was observed by all, and to remain childless was deemed a great misfortune. Each son of Israel aspired to be the head of a house, and the honor of the family was handed down from generation to generation.

There were twelve tribes of Israel, each tribe living in its own part of Goshen, and preserving its tribal integrity by intermarriage and proximity of location. Their occupations differed according to their location. Those near the city of On would be filled more with the spirit of temple service ; those nearest the treasure city would be the more expert builders ; those bordering the Nile would be the better farmers ; those along the canal and the highway, the better in traffic ; while those towards the broad grazing lands would be

the shepherds. Thus thoroughly experienced men for the various occupations of a nation could be selected out of Israel.

Their political organization was not that of separate tribes, but tribes combined, and represented by their princes and elders in a general gathering. They were all the children of promise, and by birth were accorded equal rights. Throughout all Goshen a spirit of anxiety and restlessness was observed by the watchful taskmaster; but the Israelite overseers were reticent, and the Egyptians could gain no clue to the exciting cause. But every household knew of the purposes of the elders, and in strained silence were waiting for the revelation to be made known. Since the honored and aged Aaron, the prince of the house of Levi, had journeyed to the mountains of Sinai to find the deliverer of Israel, and had returned to his home, wonderful stories were whispered of this deliverer, reaching back as far as the memories of the oldest could carry them. Their stories portrayed the long-continued and awful cruelty of the Pharaohs, the sufferings of the Israelites, and the uncertainty of Israel's fate while dwelling in the land of Goshen, subject to the whims of Pharaoh. Mothers told their children of the babe saved in the pitched basket of bulrushes; fathers told their sons of the prince of Egypt, mighty in words and deeds; while

the elders told of the wonderful knowledge of this mysterious prince versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. It was whispered with awe that this mighty man still lived, having been hidden by the hand of God in the distant mountains until the day of deliverance; that, the time having come, Aaron had found him there and had brought him into Goshen to do his mighty work. The elders urged that the greatest care should be exercised lest the taskmasters learn of their intentions, and the armies of Pharaoh be sent to crush them before the time for their deliverance. Neariah, as Aaron's deputy, was sent throughout Goshen to announce to the princes of Israel the time and place to meet Moses and learn his will.

After the harvest festival the maidens returned to their service; the men to their brickyards. The Hebrew overseers filled their tale of bricks, and the Egyptian taskmasters exacted the full tale as before. The sun still moved on its course through the heavens as of old, the birds sang, the breezes blew, the flowers bloomed, and the harvests were gathered into the barns. The place of gathering had been selected out among the sheepfolds far from the fields of the toilers, and beyond the lines of travel, where the eye of the taskmaster or the ear of the traveler would not detect them, where they would not need the darkness of night to hide their assemblage.

The days quickly passed, while Neariah performed his mission of summoning the elders and directing them by secret paths to the place of meeting. It was a notable gathering; and when all had assembled, and the scouts were stationed to prevent a surprise by the approach of foes, Aaron arose, and while they earnestly listened, made known to them in tones of fervid eloquence the object of their coming together. He recounted the story of their ancestors, the promises given to Abraham, the glory of Joseph, the circumstances which led the children of Jacob to settle in Egypt, and the wonderful way in which God had caused them to multiply. Then he spoke of the sufferings of their people. The death of the babes, the preservation of Moses, and God's providence in this, as well as in other ways, showing to them that the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not unmeaning words, but promises to be completely fulfilled. He recounted the story of God's preservation of the infant Hebrew, and of his having him reared in the king's palace, amongst princes, mighty statesmen, and great generals, thus fitting him for the leadership of his people. He told them of the desert preparation, in which, by the gradual ripening of his character, his judgment, and his faith, he was all the more thoroughly qualified to lead the children of God, in obedience to his will.

When they were fully aroused by the description of their leader, Aaron ended by presenting Moses to them. As Moses arose and stood before the elders of his people, there were loud expressions of thanks to God, with smiles, and tears, and fervent congratulations. As he raised his hand, they became silent, and listened eagerly to the words he spoke.

He stood before them for a moment in silence, and it was a moment of glowing consciousness of the value of his life to his enthralled people. The majesty of eighty years rested on his brow, but his form was as erect as half a century before when, as the crown prince, he had led the army of Egypt to glorious victories. His eyes were as clear and sparkling as in the days when Pharaoh's daughter fondled him as her son; his mind as bright and powerful as when he became master of all the learning that the wisest teachers and magicians in Egypt could communicate; while through all beamed the glow of a heart filled with love for his people, and of faith in the only living God. Then he spoke to them, and told them more fully than Aaron had done how God had called him to deliver them from their bondage. Many of the elders, with unreserved faith, were ready at once to move forward; but there were others whose faith was weak, and when the first flush of enthusiasm had passed away, they began to urge objections. They

doubted the expediency of so bold a movement. They pleaded the weakness of Israel, their lack of warlike qualities, and even spoke of the many comforts they possessed in Goshen. They could not deny the story of the early life of Moses; but some of them were not willing to see the tribe of Levi assume the headship of Israel, and plunge all the people into terrible distresses, without a clearer revelation from the Lord God of their fathers than had yet been given.

They knew Abraham had received promises from God which were unfulfilled; they knew also that Joseph had spoken of their going back into the land that was promised when he commanded them to carry his bones with them; and were willing to obey this command when the voice of the Lord said "forward!" But what were the evidences, beyond his own testimony, of the right of Moses to command Israel? Was not he reared as an Egyptian? and during his entire life, as known to them, had he not associated with the Egyptian people? Perhaps, wearied now with the quiet life of his desert seclusion, and filled with ambitious designs, he sought by a bold stroke to embroil Israel in rebellious acts, and thus give the Egyptians cause for putting to death the bolder number of them. Thus he might solve for Egypt the problem of how to deal with this dangerous people, and as a reward be advanced to high and

great honor. Therefore, before acknowledging his leadership in such an important work, they must have indisputable proofs of his divine calling.

Then Moses again rose before them all, and commanded Aaron to show unto them the sign of the divine calling. When Aaron cast the shepherd's rod upon the ground, it became a serpent, squirming and hissing, darting its head to and fro, with its forked tongue quivering and its bright eyes shining with glittering ferocity. The tail was then caught; and instantly it became the rod again, and was passed around among the elders, that they might handle it and know that it was indeed only a piece of a mountain bush. Many fully believed this sign; but alas! it did not remove the doubts of all. Then Aaron thrust his hand into his bosom, and drawing it forth showed that it was thoroughly leprous. No greater misfortune could have befallen him; for leprosy was beyond all cure. No human skill, no wisdom of physician or magician, no art or device of man, could heal it; only God could effect a cure. But as soon as Aaron thrust his hand again into his bosom and drew it forth, it was free from its leprosy, and clean and soft as the other. This sign moved many hearts. Many of the doubters now believed, but still not all.

Then he displayed the final token. One of the elders had said: "The soil of Egypt is saturated with

the blood of the children of Israel, and it ceases not to call unto God for vengeance." Going down to the Nile, which flowed near their gathering place, Aaron dipped a gourd into the river, and held it before them filled with the water of the river. Then, pouring this out, as the drops touched the ground they became blood, and congealed in thickened clots as if dropped from the body of a man.

This amazing spectacle banished the last lingering doubts, and with one voice the elders cried :

"Truly, the Lord hath visited his children, and hath looked upon their afflictions."

Their souls were stirred within them. They now saw more clearly than ever before the providence of God concerning them, and in the humility of believing souls prostrated themselves before the Lord, and devoutly worshiped. As this was all that could then be done, the conference broke up, and as secretly as they had come the people returned to their homes. The spirit of emigration was now aroused. As the story of the tokens of the Lord's presence was told throughout the tribes, and the assurance was given that he was about to lead them out of their distresses into the land of liberty and plenty, the hopeful minds of the people became imbued with glowing fancies concerning that promised state. They thought of their present condition as one of unutterable misery

and want, while the life in the promised land seemed to promise the fullest happiness, and was absolutely free from all the ills of the present. They were indeed children in understanding, and the very brightness of their faith led them to exaggerate the contrast of the change. With some, however, benefits of freedom, of self-government, and of a life under the direct control of the Lord were feebly understood.

From this time the preparations were steadily pressed forward until all Goshen awaited the summons to move. The approaching change was the theme of their conversations, and in their trading this was the basis of their calculations; for their labor in the fields and brickyards might cease at any time, and the joyful march toward the promised land be begun. But as days passed on, questionings arose: "When will it begin?" "Which way shall we go?" "What delays the coming of the glorious day of our departure?"

The royal court of Pharaoh was not far away. Sometimes he held court in the splendid city at the place where the great canal entered the northern sea, just at the borders of Goshen toward the northeast. At other times in the splendid City of the Sun, just at the southwest corner of Goshen. He could also be approached while traveling through to Goshen on his way going from one city to the other. If he was at

his permanent residence further up the Nile, it was but a few days' journey thither, and he might be easily seen by Moses and Aaron on the national reception days.

At length the time came when all seemed ready, and these two representatives of the people were about to visit Pharaoh. It was not their purpose to go alone, but to take with them the most distinguished elders of the twelve tribes; and then, approaching Pharaoh, lay their petition at his feet.

No doubt was entertained by the people as to the result of this mission, and before it was undertaken all Israel strove to be ready to go out of Egypt on their way to freedom.

Time was needed for the gathering of the daughters of Israel out of every city, and to arrange properly their possessions for the journey.

While there was great excitement in every household in Goshen, on the surface all seemed quiet; and the Egyptians were unaware of the great secret movement that was stirring the spirit of their bondmen.

At length, when the time of the appeal to Pharaoh had come, Moses, Aaron, and the elders, possessing the confidence, and receiving the blessing of the hosts of Israel, began their journey down the Nile to the magnificent city of Tsan, intending there, in the name

of Jehovah, to demand the rights to which their people were entitled.

Keturah was looking for this day with great anxiety, for after Hagar had succeeded in her mission to Feiran, Timna had come into Egypt. It was true, she came too late to prevent the beginning of the movement, but it was not impossible for her to do great mischief, and retard it. Keturah was therefore troubled with apprehension of what Timna with her keen, malignant spirit might accomplish.

CHAPTER XI.

MOSES STANDS BEFORE PHARAOH.

THE most favorable time to obtain from Pharaoh a grant or privilege was when his heart was filled with satisfaction in his greatness—when the favor of his gods was upon him, blessing him by victories in battle, and a prosperous commerce at home. On such occasions he passed with great parade along the principal street of his royal city to the door of the sanctuary, which was never opened except by himself, and entering, performed his vows, then came forth to shower favors on his waiting people. This was the day Timna chose to obtain favor by revealing the purpose of Moses against Pharaoh, and with this intention she awaited his coming in the broad colonnade before the sanctuary to cast herself at his feet.

This too was the day when Keturah hoped to behold Pharaoh in all his glory, and his royal city in its holiday decorations. With her companions, dressed as elaborately as Midianite wealth and taste allowed, she proceeded at an early hour to the city of Tsan to gaze upon the marvelous kingly glory.

This too was the appropriate time for the greatest

event of all—the re-entering into the royal city of the prince who had been driven from it forty years before. The river was swarming with boats—not only boats for traffic, but pleasure boats, gayly decked and carrying the people who thus sought access to the city.

Early in the day a barge, distinguished above all other barges by its peculiar occupants, came swiftly down the river. It was rowed by stalwart Israelites, who as one man bent to their oars, and with even stroke swiftly propelled it. Upon seven seats above the rowers sat fourteen men. Old men they were, with silvery white beards flowing over their broad chests, and clothed in the official robes of elders of the tribes of Israel—all save one; and he, with a majesty superior to them all, clothed as a shepherd prince, carried in his hand, as a symbol of his authority, a long shepherd rod, cut from a common acacia bush. With this he pointed the way for the chief of the rowers, who directed the rudder. In and out among the boats they glided until they came to the foot of the magnificent flight of steps by which Pharaoh and his court, as well as the people, ascended from the Nile to the royal city. The company of majestic elders ascended the steps, and upon the platform at the top rested a moment and surveyed the scene before them. On one side they saw a flat, verdant stretch of open country, extending as far as the eye could

reach, dotted here and there with villages, and with groves of palms or sycamores. Toward the north was a line of clouds, revealing the location of the great sea. They saw the course of the Nile, with its hundreds of boats going to and fro, and the hosts of people coming to the city to behold the king in his glorious festive robes. Before them were the walls of the city, and a paved roadway stretching between the landing-place and the huge gateway. Over the walls they saw a forest of tapering obelisks, the majestic massive temple walls, and above everything else the glittering image of Rameses II., standing erect in sublime majesty as the guardian of the city and its temple.¹

It was with deep emotion Moses beheld this splendor; but, recovering his composure, he walked with his companions over the white-paved way toward the city. On their right hand and left were couchant sphinxes; passing these they came to two colossal statues of Rameses II., cut out of red granite, and placed here in the posture of sentinels, guarding the way. After these were more sphinxes, and another similar pair of sentinels; then they came to the great double-towered gateway, through which they passed. This brought them to the base of the greatest colossus ever erected by man—the crowning splendor of Rameses'

¹ See article by Amelia B. Edwards, *Harper's Magazine*, October, 1886.

reign. This was placed at the side of an immense courtyard. His attitude was as if he were walking and about to step forward. In his right hand he held a short truncheon, in his left a massive staff of state; upon his brow he carried the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The top of this crown above the pavement was twenty-two times the height of a man. The image, which was fourteen times the height of a man, had been cut out of a single block of stone—the precious red granite of Syene, in the extreme farther end of Egypt, and had been brought the entire length of the land down the river Nile to this city on great floats, and here erected as the greatest of its kind.

Again the thoughts of Moses and the elders were carried back to the day when, with festivals, parades, and rejoicings, this work of Rameses II. had been done. They walked through the courtyard before the colossus, and through the colonnade by which it was surrounded, into an avenue of stone columns, each thirty-six feet high, and standing alone. Then, passing through another gateway, they entered upon the sacred way of Tsan. It was three hundred and seventy-five feet long, but its entire length was crowded with obelisks of red granite, colossi of yellow sandstone, red, black, and gray granite statues, shrines, sphinxes, and images of alabaster, serpentine, and other rare stones, all arranged to impress the beholder

by the marvelous combination of colors. Here were the red granite sphinxes of the ancient Egyptian kings, and the black granite sculptures of the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, and colossi of the ancient Pharaohs, transferred from the temples in which they had originally been placed to decorate this way, while in profusion among them were the works of art erected by Rameses II.

As the Israelites advanced they beheld multitudes of people, all in holiday attire and carrying choicest flowers, crowding the avenues to see Pharaoh and cast their flowers at his feet. The air was redolent with perfume from the ointments used by the hosts of maidens in dressing their luxuriant hair.

At length the strains of music and the shouts of the multitudes in the distance proclaimed Pharaoh's approach. A glittering phalanx of very handsomely-dressed guards preceded him; then came the officiating priest of the temple, walking backwards, so as always to face the king, and burning incense before him. Next came Pharaoh, followed by his household and guards. His loose robe, of the finest linen in the world, was girdled by a string of jewels. On his head he wore a helmet of softest leopard skin; his neck and arms were decorated with collars and bracelets glittering with costliest gems. He stood in his chariot, holding in his left hand his bow, and in his

right his curved sword. By the side of his chariot walked his tame lion, and following him, in a splendor almost equal to that of his father, came the heir to the throne, his brilliant son.

At the temple door he was received by the priest. Stepping from his chariot, he entered, laid his gifts upon the altar, and returned to bestow his favors upon the people and receive their applause. He stood in the midst of the splendor of all Egyptian history, almost in the shadow of the great colossus of Rameses II. Before him the people came with their requests. On the one hand, the crowd was giving way to a company of Amalekites, which was preceded by one whose beauty attracted the attention of all. She was clothed in richest Chaldean robes, cut in Amalekite fashion. Her long, raven-black hair hung loosely down her back, and was decorated with the choicest emeralds and turquoises of her peninsula home. Her arms and neck were bare, save for the golden bands which encircled them; and the brilliancy of her glance caused the spectators to quail from before her.

She was about to advance to cast herself at Pharaoh's feet, when the crowd surged before her, blocking up the way, and she saw that the king's attention was attracted by a company of old men. The color left her cheek, as she beheld leading this company the venerable Moses. She drew back and gazed upon the face of

the monarch as it flushed with surprise. She was about to press forward again toward Pharaoh to warn him, when close by her side she heard a mocking laugh; and, turning, saw the face of Keturah wreathed in triumphant smiles, who, catching her surprised stare, said:

“The steeds of Amalek are not swift enough; they do not come on the wings of the wind. Timna is before Pharaoh; but Moses has begun his work, and Timna cannot now prevent it.”

The hatred and revenge now manifested on the face of the baffled Amalekite froze the laughter of the Midianite, who shuddered at the intensity of her enemy's glance. But they could notice each other no longer; for Moses and the elders of Israel were approaching Pharaoh. As they came near the monarch, he beheld the man whose history was now well known to him with deep interest. Pharaoh was not only curious to see his face, but anxious to gaze upon his expression. He knew that the return of Moses to Egypt was the threatening of a rebellion, such as would bring disaster upon all his plans; for without the labor of the Israelites, the contemplated public buildings could not be erected, and the glory of the present reign would be inferior to that of the preceding, and he would go down to history as unequal to his predecessors. Moses, Aaron, and the elders,

with a dignity natural to their age and the cause they represented, saluted Pharaoh, and in a few words stated their mission. They said they were the servants of Jehovah, and while doing faithful service to Pharaoh, they must not fail to obey their God; and he had commanded them, in his name, to say to Pharaoh:

“Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”

But Pharaoh, who had been trained in the religion of the Egyptians, and had a knowledge of its mysteries, and looked upon the religion of the Israelites as beneath his notice, contemptuously asked:

“Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.”

To this the aged men quietly and respectfully responded:

“The God of the Hebrews hath met us. Let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.”

This appeal in the name of religion, and the expression of belief in the visible control of these elements of nature by their God, did not touch the heart of the king. Such faith might move the illiterate; but being trained in the higher forms of the Egyptian



Amal.

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religion, and knowing its lack of spiritual reality, he had no such faith. Nor did he fear the gods. Probably he thought Moses and Aaron did not trust in them any more than himself, but were duping the people, who were superstitious, with their pretended mission from the gods. Hence he angrily replied:

“Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens. Behold the people of the land are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.”

The taskmasters had seen the demoralization of their workmen brought about by the words of Moses and Aaron, and had hastened to inform Pharaoh; and he saw some of these now waiting an audience with their complaints. As he beheld the aged men before him, he remembered that they were only laborers, and utterly unskilled in war. What could they do in the presence of the brilliant warriors surrounding his throne? And now, having heard their plea, and having answered it with disdain, he turned his face from them to receive other petitioners.

Moses and his retinue at once left the place, and proceeding out of the great courtyard, continued on through the gates of the city to the river, to report in Goshen the results of their interview with the king.

As Timna sought to pass through the great crowd of people, who, with eager gaze, were observing

Pharaoh, she was followed by one who had been closely watching her movements. He was one of the chamberlains of Pharaoh's palace. He had been attracted by the graceful style and glowing beauty of the Amalekite; and he perceived that she was just the type of a woman pleasing to the eye of his master. As he observed her attempt to approach Pharaoh, he was attracted by the elaborate splendor of her dress and ornaments, and concluded that by offering suitable bribes he might secure her for his master. As Timna pressed her way through the crowd, unaware that she was being followed, she veiled her features, and covered her charms. The sense of failure heavily oppressed her, and her great desire for the time was to get away from the observing eyes of the multitude. Passing through the gates of the city, she found her escort, who brought her camel, and mounting, she began her journey to Succoth. But the chamberlain, riding upon one of the swiftest horses of the king's stables, overtaking her, saluted her in the name of Pharaoh, and requested her immediate return to Pharaoh's palace to be favored with an interview.

Surprised, and unaware of his real designs, and hopeful of yet accomplishing her revenge, she obeyed, and was soon again within the city gates. They passed through many streets, and at length halted before a palace of only ordinary dimensions, which

her quick glance at once assured her was not the palace of Egypt's king. At the command of her guide she dismounted. Slaves took possession of their beasts, while other slaves ushered them into the palace.

Here refreshments were served her; and after she had rested, the chamberlain began to converse with her concerning her desire to see Pharaoh. At length he informed her that his purpose was to present her to Pharaoh, who would clothe her with luxury, as he would delight in her charms. Horror seized her, as she now realized the danger of her position. Her cheeks grew pallid with fear, and her eyes were wild with terror; but in a moment she recovered her composure, her keen Amalekite nature asserted itself, and she began to plan a way of escape. She knew that she was in the power of the chamberlain. Strong walls enclosed her; many slaves were ready to do his bidding. The light of day had faded, and darkness shrouded the city; the brilliantly-lighted palace court only added to his appearance of power. There was no friend near; no arm that could defend her; and she realized that unless she speedily escaped her beloved kinsman in the vale of Feiran would know her no more.

She had observed the way of her entrance into the palace; and now, while all about her were reclining in

ease, she leaped from the cushion on which she was resting, sprang into the aisle, and before master or slave could stop her had gained the vestibule, had thrown open the door and rushed into the dark street of the city.

In a moment the chamberlain and his servants with torches and swords were in pursuit. But she sped on, fleet of foot than they, until coming to a group of persons who were spending the night at the foot of a huge colossus, she begged to be protected from her pursuers.

The group, instantly aroused, drew their weapons to defend her; and, to her amazement, one of them called her by name, threw his cloak over her, to hide her, and with his sword beset the chamberlain, who was now at hand. Fierce was the struggle; but the servants of the chamberlain were put to flight, and he sank to the ground with his heart pierced by the sword of his opponent.

The guards of the city, roused by the noise, now came upon them, and noticing that they were strangers, and thinking that they had been fighting among themselves, thrust them out of the city. As the gate closed against them, Timna approached her deliverer, and with tones trembling with emotion thanked him for her life; then urged them all to flee before the guard should return to put them

to death for slaying the chamberlain of Pharaoh's palace.

As she spoke, Amal—for he was her deliverer—realizing the danger, ordered his followers to mount their camels, and immediately they swept down the broad highway toward the fields of Goshen. Hour after hour, until the streaks of dawn began to illumine the horizon, they sped on their way; then they paused for rest. They had reached a place in which their pursuers could not find them; for they were in the pasture fields of the Israelite herdsmen, far from the cities, the highways, and the rivers, where their pursuers would not think of looking for them.

The Egyptians soon discovered that the chamberlain had been killed. The guards were immediately sent in pursuit; but no one knew who the murderers were. The guards hastened along the highway; they searched Succoth, but found no trace of the murderer, and at length returned to the city; and the funeral cortege of the dead chamberlain, with the dark pall of the tomb thrown over his mummy, with low wailing music and the shrieks of the hired mourners, passed slowly up the Nile, to deposit the mummy in the tomb of his ancestors.

For many days the fugitives remained in their retreat; and during this time Timna employed all

her charms to win the heart of the man who had so gallantly rescued her. The courage he had displayed had completely dissipated her anger, and she loved him again, as in the day when he climbed Serbal. And Amal wavered. He felt the spell of her beauty, the force of her spirit, and the natural attraction to one whom he had saved. She felt her growing power, and left him not until he had pledged his word that in seven days he would safely convey her home to her father's tent. All danger now being over, his band took her to the Amalekite quarters in Succoth, and Amal returned to his newly-found friends in the village of Goshen, to arrange for his return to Sinai.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHANGED RODS.

THE fearlessness displayed by Moses, and the commanding manner with which he placed his claims before Pharaoh, irritated the monarch, who was not accustomed to be approached with so much serenity. He now realized that such a man, working on the prejudices of the bondmen, would probably be able to foment a troublesome rebellion ; and he determined to prevent the people from attending public gatherings by increasing their burdens, and exercising greater severity in case of a failure to meet his demands. Thus far the taskmasters had provided the straw that was mixed with the clay in making the bricks. Now the taskmasters were commanded to exact the same tale as before, and to require the Israelites to supply themselves with the straw needed.

This plan of preventing them from meeting together in idleness, and talking of revolutions, promised to be effectual, because it was within the power of the taskmaster to whip to death any one who should become contumacious or negligent. The Israelites previously had all the work they thought it possible to do ; but

with it all they maintained a bold spirit. Pharaoh now attempted to crush this spirit by the weight of these additional and grievous burdens.

The taskmasters were answerable with their lives for their obedience to his commands. Trained to their work, and filled with the usual Egyptian pride, they had no feeling of pity or commiseration for the overworked bondmen; and when they knew of complaints being made to Pharaoh, felt insulted by the presumption of the miserable toilers. They drove the Israelites the harder in their work, and allowed no excuse for a failure to return a full tale of bricks, and when they knew not the man who was derelict, they cruelly beat the overseer.

Bela and Amal spent many days in the midst of Goshen; for soon tiring with the splendor of the templed cities, they found the familiar courtesies of home on the sheep lands of the Israelites. Aaron gave them in charge of loyal escorts, who showed them the thousands of toilers in the brick fields.

It was here that they witnessed a taskmaster strike down an aged overseer. Some one in the gang of laborers had been unable to fill his tale. No one pointed out the offender, and upon the back of the aged overseer, whose age and feebleness rendered him incapable of making bricks, the strokes of wrath fell. The father in Israel was borne to one side, and there

left alone to live or die, while the gang was driven back to work.

Amal's fiery spirit would have led him to punish the tyrannical taskmaster; but Bela restrained him, knowing that such an act would cause his instant death by the Egyptian guards. Instead, they went to the aged man, and, wrapping his scant garment about him, carried him to his home. Wailing and woe greeted them on the threshold, and they saw that within that toiler's home there was poverty of the deepest kind; on every hand was misery. Organized bands sought everywhere for straw. Wives, mothers, and children became searchers; but all together could not supply the demand, and they began to despair. From every brick field the cry arose, but no relief was granted. Moses and Aaron did not give them the help they needed; and at last, in sheer desperation, the overseers in a body sought audience with Pharaoh, and humbly cried to him for relief. But they received no satisfaction. They were accused of being idle and restless, deliverance was withheld from them, and they departed from the king's presence with the clouds of gloom thickly gathering about them.

As they came out of the palace of the king, they met Moses and Aaron, who stood by the roadside, awaiting their report. In the bitterness of their woe, they forgot the tokens of the divine command given

by these two aged leaders, and, oppressed by their inability to escape from the taskmasters, said :

“The Lord look upon you and judge ; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.”

Then they went their way to render their dismal report to their brethren. Moses was not indifferent to their accusations. The distress of his brethren had deeply affected his soul, and with sorrow weighing upon his heart he beheld the additional burdens placed upon them, after his effort to have them released, instead of the freedom which he had expected. He turned from the highway, and sought a solitary place where he could pour out his prayer before God. Wondering at the woeful state of affairs in Goshen, his faith staggering beneath the deepening distress of those he came to release, and humbled by his weakness, he presented himself before the Lord as a child questioning the meaning of this singular and unexpected providence. He said :

“Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people ? why is it that thou has sent me ? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.”

The Lord was moved by this cry of his servant,

and while Moses was prostrate before him, answered him, saying :

“Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh ; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.”

Then silence prevailed for a while, when as Moses continued prostrate before the Lord, the voice of the Lord continued :

“I am Jehovah ; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty ; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments, and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God ; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ; I will give it you for an heritage ; I am Jehovah.” (Ex. 6 : 3-8.)

Strengthened by these assurances, Moses now arose, and sought the elders of Israel. They assembled at

his call; but silence, the silence of great disappointment, oppressed them. Their former conference had lifted high the expectations of all the dwellers in Goshen; but now the cry of oppressed and beaten fathers, brothers, and sons, rose from all the brick-yards, and sadness brooded over the land.

Moses and Aaron declared to them the new commission, with its assurances and promises, but the people could not trust it. They saw no ray of light. They knew not the Lord as did Aaron and Moses, and they left the conference without giving the brothers a pledge of their confidence. Moses felt that an abyss had opened between him and his people Israel. Burdened with anguish, again he prostrated himself before the Lord. When he received the command:

“Go in, speak unto Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

Once more the modesty of Moses asserted itself, and he humbly plead his inability. But the Lord strengthened him, and commanded him again as to his position toward Aaron, and assured him of the inevitable result.

Moses and Aaron now stood alone. They knew that Pharaoh hated them, and that the people of Israel distrusted them. Pharaoh was to be driven into allowing the people to go, and the people were to

be driven into an effort for their own emancipation. But God was with these noble men, and their trust that the Lord would not fail to bring it all thoroughly to pass was growing.

Again the news went forth that Moses and Aaron were to approach Pharaoh to plead for Israel. The children of Israel could not, however, wait for the results of the interviews; for they were compelled to furnish their tale of bricks, or be lashed by the unmerciful taskmaster.

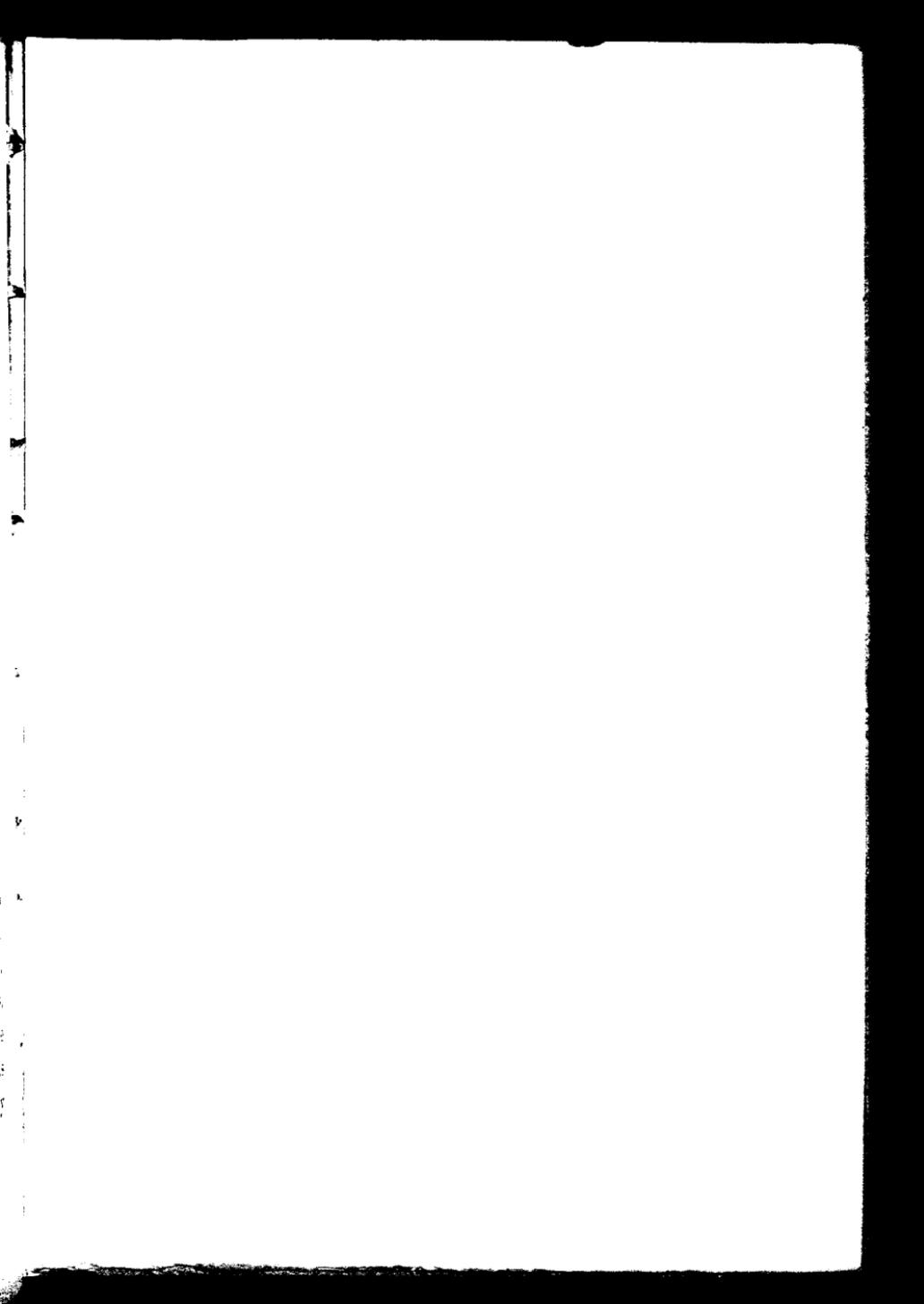
The court of the king was filled with the great men of Egypt, who saw that the bearing of Moses and Aaron had changed from that of supplication to that of demand.

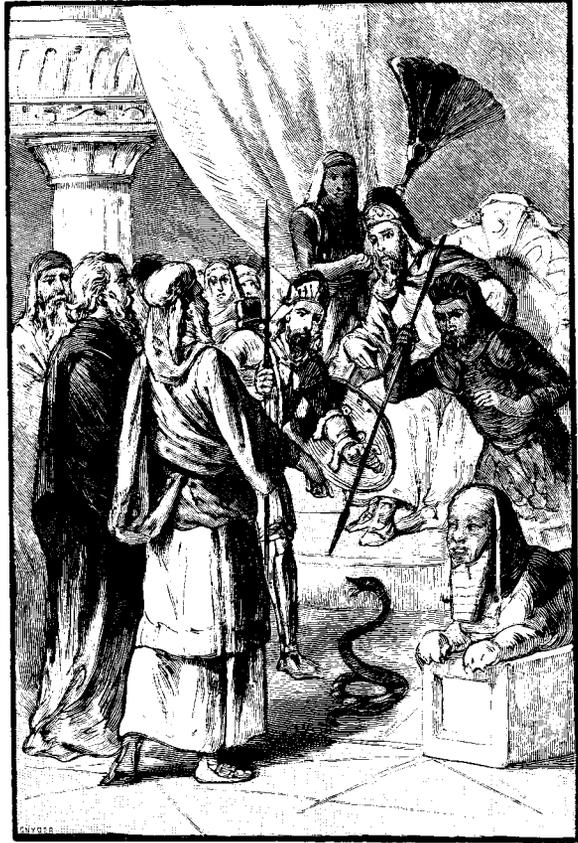
Strange reports had spread as to a mysterious spiritual power which these men possessed. It was known that Moses had lifted the controversy out of a merely political question into that of the existence and personal rule of the God of Israel. And the conflict was the honor of God against the deities of Egypt. With this feeling Moses and Aaron sought the presence of the great ruler of the land and entered into the magnificent throne room of his palace.

The throne room of the Pharaohs was radiant with beauty, and impressive in its magnificence. The skill of Egypt's most gifted workmen had been

lavished upon it to make it enchanting to priests, lords, and scholars, as well as to the people. The walls and pillars supporting the splendid ceiling were decorated with pictures of the battles, the victories, and the conquests of the Pharaohs who had ruled from that room. The ceilings were emblazoned with gorgeous colorings—blue and gold intermingled. The approach to the throne was along an aisle bordered on both sides by sculptured forms of various guardian divinities, while the throne itself was of ivory, and splendidly decorated with the most valuable precious stones which the whole world produced. On every hand, throughout the immense room, in elaborate dress, and in proper station, stood the officers of the king's household, his aged counselors, and the captains of his well-disciplined army.

As Moses and Aaron entered, the proper officers of the court led them before Pharaoh, who was seated upon the throne, with the entire body of his courtiers about him, who, in silence, beheld with amazement the things enacted before them. Moses demanded, in the name of Jehovah, permission for the Israelites to go into the wilderness to sacrifice to their Lord. Pharaoh, with a contemptuous smile upon his lips, asked for their credentials. If they assumed to come to him as the representative of a power beyond his realm, or superior to himself within his realm, they





Amal.

must show their official credentials, or he would not receive them.

In answer, Moses directed Aaron to approach the throne and cast his rod upon the granite pavement before the king. Aaron, taking the shepherd's rod from Moses' hand, advanced in the sight of all, cast the rod upon the pavement, and it immediately became a serpent, which, with elevated head, gracefully moved over the pavement, then with angry flash in its eyes, and with quick darting of the tongue, swayed its head to and fro, and in close folds prepared itself to resist attack. The guards, startled by the ferocity of its expression, rushed to the protection of the king; but Moses motioned them back, for no harm would be done the monarch by the serpent.

Pharaoh had often seen the tricks of the magicians; and he was not greatly surprised at the success of Moses in this act. He knew the power that charmers possessed over serpents, and why should not this man Moses, who knew the arts of the magicians, be able to deceive the less knowing? He therefore quickly sent a messenger to the house of the magicians, who brought two of them, Jannes and Jambres, who, learning what had been done, with contemptuous scowls at the new magician, as they supposed Moses to be, cast their rods on the pavement, and they too became living serpents and slowly moved along before them all. Although

Pharaoh knew that these rods of the magicians were serpents stiffened by strangulation, returning to consciousness when the pressure upon them was removed, he thought they were the same as Moses' rod ; then he contrived to doubt the reality of the miracle by Moses, and a sneer of derision marked his features, and he would have cast them from his presence, but that a strange encounter took place before them all. The serpent which came of Moses' rod, with angry hisses darted upon the serpents of the magicians, and while they vainly attempted to escape, crushed them in its powerful folds and swallowed them, so that it was the only serpent before the king ; and while they were all amazed at this spectacle, Aaron advanced, and taking hold of the tail of the serpent, lifted it up, and it instantly became a rod again in his hand.

The rod was now looked upon with the greatest wonder ; for all could see that it did not resemble the skin nor the color of the serpent that had been on the floor—nor had it eyes, mouth, or tapering tail. There were no rings by which it could move along, neither the warmth of a creature with life, nor the cold even of a creature dead. It was simply a piece of wood, an ordinary shepherd's rod ; and it so appeared before king, magician, and courtier. It could not be disputed. But Pharaoh was not convinced. His heart was contrary to the Israelites, and he had resolved

to compel them to do his bidding ; and this bold man who had so greatly aroused them should feel the royal wrath in due time.

Pharaoh, therefore, arrogantly denied the requests of the prophets of Jehovah, and ordered them to leave his presence. They retired, not forgetting to salute the monarch properly as they went out. They could be patient ; for their hearts were filled with the confidence that in his own time the Lord would bring the liberation of his people to pass.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAGUES.

THE time was now at hand for the release of the oppressed people. Moses and Aaron had gone out from the court of the king to prepare for showing him and all the people the sovereignty of Jehovah. The following morning, as Pharaoh with his courtiers and priests came down from his palace to offer the usual sacrifices to the Nile, Moses and Aaron stood on the river bank, close to the edge of the waters, as if about to engage in the service conducted by the king. Moses stood directly in the king's path, holding in his hand the rod which had already attracted so much attention. His attitude was that of a monarch superior to the approaching king, and the majesty of true greatness crowned his aged brow. His appearance awed the guards of the king. They drew back from before him, unable even to warn him to retire from before the coming procession led by the king. Nor did all the power Pharaoh possessed relieve him from the severe threatenings of these two old men who came out of the enslaved nation.

As Pharaoh drew near the water's edge, Moses, looking into his face with stern majesty, said :

"The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness : and, behold, hitherto thou wouldst not hear. Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord : Behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood, and the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink : and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river."

The king angrily frowned as this threat was pronounced ; but seized with fear which he did not comprehend, he dared not arrest him, as he spake for the nation of Israel, but refused the request, and turned to accomplish his purpose of worshipping the Nile. Moses then handed his rod to Aaron, saying, as he did so, in tones which thrilled the hearts of the followers of Pharaoh with fear :

"Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood, and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and of stone."

Aaron took the rod, and while Pharaoh and all his

servants gazed upon him, smote the river with it, and immediately the water changed from a light greenish color to the color of blood, and it flowed thick like blood, until nothing could live in it; the fish came to the surface and died, while serpents and other reptiles, turtles and alligators, hastily sought escape from the death that threatened them by crawling upon the land. The people were filled with horror as they gazed upon the marvelous transformation, and Pharaoh, trembling with fear and rage, turned from the river to return to his palace, where the news was brought to him that the water was seen to be in the same condition everywhere. There was blood in the artificial lakes in the midst of the flower gardens; blood spouting from their fountains; blood in all their drinking vessels; blood everywhere. Jannes and Jambres, the magicians, dug pools, and in them produced blood; but they were not able to change a single drop of blood caused by the rod of Moses. So it continued for seven days, until all Egypt was alarmed for its life, and the distress of the people, rich and poor, noble and slave, was almost beyond endurance. Thus the Lord answered Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?"

But Pharaoh would not let Israel go. When nature had resumed her former state, and the river,

which gave fertility and life to Egypt, was flowing in color and clearness as before, Moses and Aaron again appeared before Pharaoh, and with unchanged dignity Moses said to him :

“ Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go that they may serve me.” Pharaoh again frowned at the presumption of this bondman, but Moses threatened : “ And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs ; and the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bed chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs ; and the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.”

This threat was against one of the gods of Egypt ; for the frogs were held sacred, because they were thought to feed on the poisons in the river and marshes, thus keeping the waters pure ; and offerings were given and libations poured out before a colossal sphinx having a frog's head, in a temple dedicated to the sacred frogs. Moses awaited the response of the king, but seeing his countenance gathering anger, the man of Jehovah said to Aaron :

“ Stretch forth thine hand, with thy rod over the stream, over the rivers, and over the ponds ; and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.”

Aaron did so, and the frogs began coming in great armies, climbing the river banks, and advancing farther and farther over the land; they came, with hoppings and croakings, all slimy and shining, out of the Nile and the marshes. In the daytime the people saw them hopping steadily forward, and in the night the noise of their croakings drowned all other sounds. The people could not go to bed because of the frogs; even the servants of Pharaoh were not able to keep the frogs out of the royal couch, much less the people of the land whose houses were not guarded by troops of attendants. The frogs came as thick as courtiers before the throne; they got into the folds of Pharaoh's robes. If a servant handed him any article, a slimy frog leaped upon it; even when he went to the table, frogs spoiled the food, and in the midst of his own distresses the cry from the people of Egypt came to him, because of the irrepressible frogs.

Again the services of the magicians were called into requisition, and with great parade they, too, brought frogs up; but they could not drive them back, and after their failure Pharaoh, unable to endure the loathsome plague and the pleadings of his people any longer, sent for Moses and Aaron, and said:

“Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the

frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord."

Moses listened to this request with joy, and replied:

"Have thou this glory over me: against what time shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, that the frogs be destroyed from thee and thy house, and remain in the river only?"

Pharaoh knew, since his magicians had utterly failed, that no human power could move the frogs; and so terrible was the affliction that he made the time as short as possible. He answered:

"Against to-morrow."

"Be it according to thy word," Moses replied, "that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God; and the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only."

Then Moses and Aaron again went out from the presence of Pharaoh to pray to the Lord to grant the destruction of the frogs.

The frogs did not go back to the river, and no more came out of the river; but wherever they were, they died, until all over the land there were such quantities that they were shoveled up into great heaps and carted away. Then every house had to be cleaned;

every garment and curtain and piece of bed-clothing had to be washed ; every well, pond, and fountain had to be cleansed ; every street, road, garden, and field had to be searched and cleared of the dead frogs. Thus a season of arduous labor was required, and all over Egypt the services of the Hebrew women were rewarded with large wages to assist in this work, which every one desired to be done immediately, and all were willing to pay the most liberal wages for haste therein.

When all Egypt was again cleansed, Moses approached Pharaoh to receive the royal command for Israel to go ; but Pharaoh, with the coming of relief, withdrew his pledges and refused his consent.

Moses, moved with contempt for the false ruler, went out of his presence, and without warning him as he had done heretofore, commanded Aaron to stretch out the rod and smite the earth, that it might become lice, or fleas, or sand flies, throughout all the land of Egypt.

Then came a scourge that closed all the temples and ended all the sacrifices in Egypt, for no man could offer sacrifices unless absolutely free from vermin ; and now the sand seemed to become alive ; and every man and every beast, even the high priests in the temple, and the sacred oxen, Pharaoh and his lowest subject were distressed and tortured by swarms of

these troublesome pests. The magicians tried to do the same, but could not ; all the wisdom and skill of the mightiest magicians in Egypt could not produce a single flea, or louse, small as one of them was ; and with humble confession they gave up the struggle, saying :

“ This is the finger of God.”

But Pharaoh became the more desperate. He had violated his promise ; and, having lost his kingly honor, his heart was becoming hardened. According to the word of God, the following morning, as Pharaoh, stricken with torturings of the flesh, was going down to the water to escape in his galley from the land to some pleasant island of the Nile, Moses met him and said :

“ Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, upon thy servants, upon thy people, and into thy houses ; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there ; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division—a sign of deliverance—between thy people and my people. By to-morrow shall this sign be.”

Pharaoh refused to heed this message, and scornfully entered his galley, and the rowers swiftly conveyed him from the place on which the man of God stood. But this did not prevent the falling of the curse. Moses returned to his home; the night passed away; with the morning the plague came. Swarms of flies came down upon the land. They entered into all the houses; they drowned all other noises by their buzzing; they stung the people, the horses, the cattle; they made every living creature almost frantic; they swooped down upon the tenderest places, the eyes, ears, and wherever the skin was broken or there was a sore. The Egyptians called aloud to their gods to deliver them; but there was no deliverance for them, except by an appeal to Moses; and this Pharaoh put off as long as possible. He did not wish to humble himself before the man who was even now awaiting the fulfillment of the king's pledge.

But he could endure it no longer, for his servants could not protect him from the flies; and calling Moses and Aaron into his presence, he said to them:

“Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

But Moses answered:

“It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We

will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us."

These continued signs of the wrath of God against Egypt had profoundly affected the people of other nations, who for business or pleasure were temporarily in the land; and as they realized the gravity of the case, they made hasty preparations to return to their own lands, until the wrath of offended Deity was appeased.

Gradually the full significance of these events was made apparent. On the one side was the strength and wisdom of Egypt, with its magnificent temples and its invincible armies; on the other side was a nation of bondmen, worn down by severe exactions, increasing rapidly in number only to increase in misery, possessing a national spirit that bound them together in strictest loyalty, and a heritage of brilliant promises given to their ancestors, who were princes and kings. These promises were for the future, and held before them a condition of life as a nation which would be superior to that of all other nations, so that not from Egypt, but from themselves, all the nations of the earth were to be blest. Egypt depended upon them to open out her resources, and enable the sons of Egyptians to become her soldiers. To be in the army was to hold a position of honor; the labor was

to be done by the bondmen. To reverse this would be a complete social upheaval, that should not be accomplished if the force of arms could prevent it. Yet this was what the aged Moses now demanded of Pharaoh.

Six hundred thousand men left their places of toil, withdrew into their homes, and demanded freedom. Six hundred thousand women, who were strong and experienced in all manner of housework, left the palaces of Egypt, the kitchens and the laundries, the ovens and the sewing rooms, went to their homes, and demanded freedom. Twelve hundred thousand children, the workers for the next generation of Egyptians, sat in their parents' huts, and learned the traditions of their fathers concerning freedom, and learned to hate the labor which was driving their parents prematurely to their graves. And now the time had come to settle this gigantic labor problem.

"It must be settled at one stroke," says Moses. "And the masters are to be the sufferers. All the gain is to be to those who have suffered oppression."

But Pharaoh and all Egypt said:

"No; this shall not be. The Israelites shall not go free."

Succoth became a place of great activity, for the merchants with their caravans were departing. They could not endure the stinging of the flies. They

nearly died with disgust when they had only blood to drink. They were filled with dismay when the frogs came upon their food. When the lice infested all their surroundings, they were ashamed to look one another in the face. When they learned that the troubles were only beginning, "Away to the desert!" was their cry. The camels were collected; the men made the best bargains they could, and the caravan began the journey to the distant East to spread everywhere the news of what God was doing for the Israelites. Some waited, many departed; and before the Israelites went out of Egypt the story of their deliverance was known throughout the East, wherever caravans carried the merchandise of Egypt.

When the sign of deliverance was given to Israel, and the assurance that no more distresses were to come upon Goshen, Bela departed, and returned to Sinai to tell Jethro that the dawn of freedom for the oppressed was near at hand; and Keturah, having accomplished her mission, returned home, under his vigilant watch care. She had seen much of the life of the Israelites, and her heart had been moved by the distresses which they endured. She had heard from Bela's lips of the brave defense by which Amal had rescued Timna, and she had also learned how Amal turned from his associates in Goshen, under the spell of her entreaties to return with her to Feiran.

She felt dismay at the thought of Timna winning him from her; and she knew that all the Amalekite tribal influences were employed to accomplish this result. Long after they had departed, Keturah pondered these events, with a growing dissatisfaction at the course they had taken; but Bela ardently hoped that Timna would be victor. Why should a Midianite princess forsake her own people to cleave unto a stranger? Tenderly he guarded Keturah; he gratified her every wish, and at length was able to lead her into her father's tent as free from trouble or stain as when she so valiantly left it to save her lover's life.

CHAPTER XIV.

TREACHEROUS PHARAOH.

PHARAOH discovered that, in the estimation of the Lord of heaven, he was no better than the poorest menial in the nation, and that these plagues were sent to punish the strong, and not to oppress the feeble. He had been trained to believe that there was no one to dispute his will, or to alter his commands. He had his servants to convey him on land or on water, wherever he might choose to go; he could vary his life by dwelling in this palace or in that; he could worship at one temple or at another; he could spend his time upon one of the beautiful islands of the Nile, or in one of his treasure cities. Thousands of soldiers attended him as guards, and thousands of servants hastened to do his bidding. Wise princes relieved him of the routine cares of government, and eager priests attended to satisfying the claims of the gods upon him.

Suddenly this supreme control of his surroundings is obstructed, and he is commanded to be obedient to a power heretofore unknown. A man from the desert appeared, who, with only a shepherd's rod as his

symbol of authority, and without a single soldier or slave to attend him, demanded that he should sacrifice the foundations of his prosperity; and, because he refused, arrayed against him forces which guards, magicians, priests, and armies could not resist, and which followed him into his most secret chambers, inflicting upon him the greatest misery. He was able to endure his sufferings without having his haughty will subdued, until the flies pursued him and stung him; then, greatly humbled, he yielded to Moses, and said:

“I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away; entreat for me.”

Moses was pleased with his submission, and promised to entreat the Lord to remove the flies by the morrow; then cautioned him against dealing deceitfully again. The Lord heard Moses' prayer, and took away the flies; but Pharaoh refused to do as he had promised, and hardened his heart as soon as his afflictions were removed.

Then Moses sought his presence again, and more severely than before warned him of the sure judgment of God. Once more Pharaoh haughtily ignored the warnings, and the judgments speedily followed. This time the hand of pestilence was stretched out upon their cattle—a vital stroke at the religion of the

Egyptians. The Egyptians tended their sacred cattle with the utmost care. The death of one of them was universally deplored; the body was embalmed, and then the most careful search was made for another bearing the required sacred marks to exalt it as a successor. Great temples were built for the worship of these animals, in which the most learned body of men in the nation conducted the services in their honor.

The curse of God now fell heavily upon them. Murrain seized the sacred ox Mnevis, and he fell dead in the presence of his horror-stricken attendants. The sacred bull Apis also received the stroke, and died. The herds of young cattle in which sacred marks had been detected, and which were kept for the purpose of replacing those that died, were also stricken with death. Throughout all Egypt concerning the herds of both rich and poor, the same sad cry went forth—"Our cattle are dying with murrain." The disease also affected their horses, asses, camels, goats, and sheep. It destroyed a great part of the wealth of the people, and brought disappointment and poverty to thousands of homes.

In the land of Goshen, however, all was serene. The cattle and flocks and herds of the Israelites were safely grazing, free from disease. There was no sign of murrain among them.

The people saw the difference, and the officers of the king and servants of the temple, who were seeking cattle with sacred marks, saw it, and could not be ignorant of the cause. But Pharaoh sunk into a state of obstinacy which could not be broken by the public distress; he no longer allowed reason to exercise control over his judgment; he hardened his heart, and said the children of Israel should not go.

The Israelites were toiling again in the quarries and brickyards. The taskmasters, infuriated by the continued persecutions which fell upon Pharaoh and the land—for thus they deemed the works of Moses—drove the Israelites the more cruelly to their tasks.

Pharaoh watched the progress of his splendid palace rising beneath the labor of thousands of stalwart bondmen. The great walls of brick and columns of finest marble—showing both the strength and beauty of the structure—indicated that it would be one of the glories of his reign. He was surrounded by his usual military escort in glittering armor, which attended him now wherever he went. There were hundreds of officers, gorgeously decorated and brilliantly armed, and troops of magicians to keep up his courage by continually complimenting his designs. They were near the lime-kilns, where the mortar was prepared to set fast the bricks in the wall of the new structure, when suddenly, from out of the

crowd which was watching the royal procession, Moses and Aaron appeared. The Israelites went down to the nearest lime-kiln, and filled their hands with the fine dust of the furnace, and carrying this, walked through the crowd of soldiers and courtiers, until they stood immediately in front of Pharaoh.

As Moses looked into Pharaoh's face, he saw that mercy found no resting place there. The glitter of the king's eyes was hard and relentless; there was no use to urge an appeal. Without uttering a word, but with an expression of awful majesty upon his brow, Moses raised his hands heavenward, opened them, and allowed the fine soot of the furnace—almost imperceptible in its fineness—to spread itself through the air until it seemed to be a light cloud gradually becoming thinner as it expanded. Slowly it moved toward the king and his escort, then it enveloped them. Neither armor, fine robes, veils, nor fans could stay its progress; and wherever it touched them painful boils arose on their skin. Thus it spread over all Egypt.

With shrieks of dismay the king and his escort fled from the place, and sought the services of their physicians. The distress was so keen, that the people flocked to the royal palace, and before its gates gave vent to their cries.

They could not go to their temples, for such

sufferers were not allowed to worship ; they could not work in their fields, for the pain was too great ; they could not serve in the army, for they were unable to bear the weight of their armor ; all that they could do was to suffer, and cry out because of their pain.

The plague had lasted many days, when, early in the morning, Moses came before Pharaoh with the same words as before :

“Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go that they may serve me.”

These words were always followed by some terrible disaster. Moses now more plainly revealed God's purpose in not cutting Pharaoh off at one stroke, but in making him a spectacle, in whom all the world could see how the glory and power of the greatest of kings was subject to the divine will. Moses warned the king that he was about to send a great and grievous hail upon the land, and whosoever would not seek protection should die ; but whosoever believed the word of the Lord and sought protection should live. Then as Moses stretched forth his hand and lifted his rod toward heaven, the priests began their prayers to Isis, to whom they attributed the control of the seasons, the clouds, and the weather.

Such a thing as hail was utterly unknown in Egypt, and for any kind of a storm to break upon them, except the wind storms from the desert, filled the

people with consternation. The warning Moses gave quickly spread ; for by this time the slightest word he uttered affected the people as the word of a god. All over Egypt people hastened to places of shelter, though thousands under the control of the king, or of the priests, showed their contempt of Israel's God, by continuing at their employment.

At length the storm was seen approaching from the north. It passed over the land of Goshen, far up above the earth, gathering force as it advanced, rolling in great heavy masses, and yet not a single bolt of fire or piece of ice was cast upon Goshen. The people who were fleeing for safety toward the homes of the Israelites seemed to be rushing into the face of the storm, but they knew that there, and only there, was safety to be found. When the rolling cloud came near the City of the Sun it appeared to break, and out of it the ice, in pieces like coarse gravel, fell to the earth.

The hail dropped with terrible effect upon man, beast, and vegetation, cutting into pieces everything in its way. The darkness of the storm was illuminated by incessant flashes of light from the streaks of fire which came down with the hail, and to the frightened people it seemed as if all the elements had conspired against them.

From his lofty palace windows Pharaoh beheld the storm advancing. He watched it as it twisted, up-

rooted, and cut into pieces the most aged as well as the youngest of the trees in field and garden. He saw how in a moment a sheet of storm bursting upon a field utterly destroyed all life upon it, and that even the sheds in which workmen found shelter from the usual fierce noonday heat were dashed to the earth completely wrecked. He saw that the gods of Egypt were unable to interpose to protect the people, and that the magicians had fled for safety, no longer able to work their miracles nor cheer the hearts of the suffering ones.

Then Pharaoh remembered the words of Moses, that God should send this storm because he had exalted himself against the children of God; and, being touched with remorse and fear, he sent for Moses and Aaron, and prostrated himself humbly before them, saying :

“I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord: for there have been enough of these mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.”

Although Moses knew that Pharaoh would not keep his word, he went forth, and spreading his hands before him, prayed to God; and in answer to the prayer the storm ceased.

What a sight then appeared as the people, seeing

the storm cease, the clouds drift away, and the sun shining, went into the streets of their cities and out into their fields! The flax was all destroyed; there would be no work for a year to give the workers in linen, and this source of vast revenue to Egypt was thus cut off. This would seriously cripple the caravan trade. The barley was destroyed, so that food would be scarce, and there would be poverty and distress. No work for the laborer, and the price of bread increased; this was the penalty they must pay for keeping Israel in bondage contrary to the command of God.

Again Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh to declare God's anger toward him, and to threaten him with a still greater disaster. Since the hail storm the earth had again been clothed in beauty; the wheat and spelt¹ had come up, watered by the melting ice that had covered the fields; the trees had put forth new leaves; the ruins had been removed; and the land had partially, at least, assumed its former appearance.

Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh:

“Thus saith the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold,

¹ Spelt is the same as our rye.

to-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border; and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one shall not be able to see the earth; and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field: and thy houses shall be filled, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; as neither thy fathers nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day."

Then they went out of Pharaoh's presence.

But the courtiers in attendance on the king, who had encouraged him to refuse to let the Israelites go, when the sunshine had come after the last plague, were now alarmed more than ever, and begged him to let them go. Influenced by them, he recalled Moses and Aaron, and said to them:

"Go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go?"

"We will go," Moses boldly replied, "with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters; with our flocks and with our herds will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord."

The authoritative manner in which Moses declared his purpose angered the king, and he fiercely replied:

"So be the Lord with you, as I will let you go, and

your little ones. Look to it, for evil is before you. Not so; go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire."

Then, calling his guards, he ordered them to thrust Moses and Aaron out of the palace.

CHAPTER XV.

FAREWELL TO GOSHEN.

THE monarch of the richest country under the sun; the commander of an army that had held in awe all the nations on its borders, and before whom priests and magicians bowed their heads, awakened to the spirit which had filled the Pharaohs who had preceded him. With surprise he contemplated his condescension, so long protracted in his bearing toward these aged Israelites. His gentleness toward them had only made them bolder in their demands. At his call was his brave army; why had he not used it? Before his throne stood hundreds of beautifully-clothed servants, and guards with shining weapons. He had only to lift his finger in command, and every one of them would die to serve him. He was still Pharaoh, and he would no longer submit to the dictatorial address of these bond slaves.

Upon his call the guards advanced; they dared not disobey their king, and taking hold of Moses and Aaron, walked them down the court of the palace to the outer gates, and there thrust them out. The aged men immediately left the palace, and went to the

place where they had before stretched forth the rod, and then Moses stretched forth his rod again. As he did so, a strong east wind began to blow. All night it blew, and when the morning came the people saw a huge black cloud, moving rapidly, with a great noise toward their homes. The light of the morning faded into a darkness like that of the night; for this cloud covered all the land of Egypt. The locusts alighted on the land; they made a clean sweep of everything they touched; they devoured the wheat, the spelt, the blossoms, the fruit; and, still hungry, by creeping and flying, sought to enter the houses in search of more substance to feed upon.

The terribly afflicted people cried loudly to their god Serapis—the god whom they worshiped with a gorgeous system of services as a protector against such creatures as locusts; but Serapis was silent.

It was the God of the Hebrews that was controlling the affairs of the land.

Pharaoh was now more alarmed than ever. He feared his beautiful kingdom would become as bare and desolate as the desert. Again he sent for Moses and Aaron in haste, and confessing his sin asked forgiveness, praying that this affliction might be removed.

Moses prayed, and a strong wind came from the west and drove all the locusts back into the Sea of Reeds.

Then Pharaoh began to quibble again, and failed to give the command for the children of Israel to go.

Moses did not warn him of the next plague. Every time the sun had resumed its power, after the cessation of a plague, Pharaoh hardened his heart.

The splendid City of the Sun, illuminated by the smile of Osiris, was Pharaoh's delight, and he rendered unto Osiris his most faithful service, as the all-powerful deity.

Now Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and the power of Osiris was shown to be of no account. The rays of light failed; dense darkness crept over all the land. Between Israel and Egypt the line of division extended: all light in Israel, all darkness in Egypt. The people dared not move out of their places; they could not use any of their household articles nor search for absent ones. Each one was enveloped as in the pall of death. It was terrifying to them. Pharaoh called to Moses—he could not send to him, even though Moses was near. Pharaoh still desired to compromise.

“The people can go, all of them, but their flocks must remain behind,” he said.

But Moses would not consent to this.

As the darkness lifted, Pharaoh resumed his arrogance, and said to Moses, “Get thee from me, take

heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die."

Then Moses answered, with all the dignity of his nature aroused, and conscious that the hour of departure was at hand:

"Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more. Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of cattle. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there hath been none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out."

After these words, so full of fearful meaning, Moses went out of the presence of Pharaoh and entered into the land of Goshen, and there at once called into his presence all the elders of Israel.

While Egypt had been suffering from these strokes

of the Almighty, the children of Israel had been enjoying prosperity. Their fields were rich in harvests, their flocks in young, their households in health, and their hope of deliverance was growing. Many Egyptians and slaves, so varied as to comprise a mixed multitude, gradually came to them to be under the protection of their God, and they carefully observed the Israelites, to do exactly as they did, that they might not be condemned by the destroyer of the disobedient. The people of Egypt were now anxious that the Israelites should go. They brought to them jewels, raiment, gifts of many kinds, whatever would hasten their departure or express the desire of favor from Israel's God.

Before this time the Egyptians had bestowed their gifts upon the altars of their gods, in their temples, or to their priests; but they had learned that all the gods of Egypt were powerless to avert disaster, and that the children of Israel were favored as priests by their great God. Hence they brought gifts in abundance to these favored people, even despoiling themselves that the consciousness of sacrifice might be the more satisfactory.

For a long time the children of Israel had been organizing, and making preparations for their departure. They believed that the hour to begin the march was not far distant, and out of all Egypt the members

of their households had been gathered. The children had come to their father's hearthstones; the tribes were all in order, and waiting. And as Moses each time went unto Pharaoh, they prayed and sang praises to their God, looking for the signal to move. Like a skillful general, Moses had left nothing unattended to, and as he saw the day approaching, he gathered near him the elders of Israel, that each one in his own tribe might see that his commands were faithfully carried into execution.

At length the word was given that the time was at hand. It was the month Abib, and was to be henceforth counted as the first month of the year. The Israelites were commanded to prepare thoroughly for the great event, and on the tenth day of the month to select a male lamb without blemish, either a sheep or a goat of the first year. They were to keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, and then publicly put it to death, take its blood, and sprinkle it on their door posts. They were to have all their flocks and possessions in readiness for departing; their dough was to be mixed without leaven, and their dough troughs were to be bound upon their shoulders. On the tenth day of the month every household in Israel selected its lamb for sacrifice, and while the terrible darkness was spreading over Egypt the commands of Moses were obeyed.

While Egypt was in its awful gloom, the preparations for departure were consummated. When the fourteenth day came, all the hosts of Israel, arranged in military order, came together; they held a holy convocation, worshipping the Lord. They brought out from their burial place the bones of Joseph, who had foretold this day, and had commanded that his bones should be taken with them, and they then awaited the return of their leader from his final conference with Pharaoh.

At length Moses came, with stern determination marked upon his brow. He called the elders together, and commanded the sacrifice of the lambs, emphasizing the necessity of strict obedience to all the words he had commanded them; at the same time warning them to retire into their houses, to continue in readiness, to eat the lamb roasted with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and when the morning's light came to cast into the fire all of the lamb which they had not eaten. They were to stand with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and with staff in hand; they were to eat with haste, and then, when the trumpets sounded, every family should at once leave its home, go out into its proper place in the assembly, and begin the march to freedom.

That was a night of intense anxiety. Every house in Israel was marked by the blood of the slain lamb.

Every household in Egypt was quivering with fear. In the houses of Israel all were engaged in hastily feasting. When the midnight hour came, a great cry rose from all the dwellings of Egypt. The words of Moses had come true! Instantly, struck by an invisible force, the eldest born in each house that was found unmarked by the blood of the slain lamb died.

Pharaoh beheld the death of his own son, and heir to the throne. The courtiers who had encouraged the king to resist Moses saw their eldest sons die; the streets were filled with crowds wailing and crying unto Pharaoh to let Israel go; for death had come upon their houses. Pharaoh, unable to repress his terror, called for Moses and Aaron, and commanded them to go. Messengers soon found Moses, and the words of Pharaoh were told him. Great crowds of Egyptians also rushed up to the Israelites, with jewels and gold, and begged them to depart at once. Then Moses lifted up his rod. The trumpeters saw the sign; they blew upon their trumpets; in the distance the sound was taken up, and in a few moments the great march had begun. All Israel, with their flocks and herds, were wending their way to the gathering place appointed to begin the Exodus.

While with joyful songs and happy congratulations the children of Israel were marching toward Succoth,

a very different body of people was marching out of the cities of the Egyptians.

Egypt was filled with funeral processions. The keenest distress was felt by many, because there were not embalmers enough to care for the dead, nor grave clothes sufficient to enwrap them. Cries of deepest woe were heard before every temple, and the pride of the people was laid low. The river Nile was crowded with boats carrying the dead to the tombs.

As the royal barge moved on with its grief-stricken master, instead of the regrets of the people, Pharaoh received only their curses. The city of the dead was crowded. The odor from the bodies that could not be cared for filled the air, and every heart quivered with the intense anguish of blasted hopes and misplaced trust in their false gods. The grief and sadness of the Egyptians was as great as the gladness of the Israelites, and every household in Egypt now knew that the only living God was the God of Israel.

CHAPTER XVI.

GOING OUT FROM EGYPT.

THE general rendezvous of the Israelites was the well-known camping ground, or place of tents, near Lake Timsah, on the eastern border of Egypt. Here, beyond the cities of Egypt, near a plentiful supply of fresh water, the caravans traveling to and from Egypt halted and prepared for their further journey. This place, called Succoth, well-known to every Israelite, was to be their first resting-place, where the more perfect order of march could be arranged, and suitable provision for their flocks could be secured.

For several days the hosts were gathering. The tribes were assigned their stations, the families uniting their possessions; the bread troughs were unslung; and the first feast of fresh unleavened bread partaken of by the enthusiastic travelers. Then, when all was ready, they looked to Moses for the signal to advance. As they looked up they beheld a sign in the heavens, indicating the presence and the guidance of God. Over the camp rested a huge cloud, to shelter them by day from the fierce heat of the sun, and by night

to cast streams of light upon them. The cloud seemed to be lifted higher above them, at the same time the trumpets from before the tent of Moses sounded the call to move forward. The tribes immediately took their places, and following the movement of the cloud, the host passed eastward of Lake Tim-sah, toward the northeast corner of Egypt, where the Philistine road led from Egypt to the borders of the promised land. They continued to advance until they came to Etham, the extreme limit of Egyptian territory, just beyond the canal, inside of the great wall.

Here the cloud rested, and the Israelites encamped again within the borders of Egypt. Before them were the defenses of Egypt. The canal connecting the Red Sea with the great sea of the north, and the wall, with its huge towers and fortified gateways, through which they could pass only by authority from Pharaoh. Moses had this authority. The watchmen who continually kept guard on the wall, protecting its gates against foes, could easily withstand the Israelites, even though they were so great a host; but why fear them? For Pharaoh had sanctioned the departure of the host beyond the wall, and the sign of God's presence was over them! But the gates remained closed; the guards redoubled their vigilance in watching them; and the high walls cast a shadow over the

hearts of the people, who realized they were still in Egyptian thralldom.

The Israelites encamped before the gates; then as the gates did not open, Moses communicated to the princes of the tribes that it was God's purpose to turn them back toward Egypt, instead of at once leading them forcibly through the wall. Then the cloud began to rise, the trumpets were blown, the chieftains gathered their dependents, and the astonished host followed its directing motion down the west side of the canal, within the walled border of the land toward the south, so as to pass out of the land by the way of the desert and the Sea of Reeds.

It required many days to accomplish this, for the host moved slowly. They were not yet accustomed to military order, and there were great flocks to keep separate, and at the same time to be cared for. This turning back seemed to be contrary to the purpose inducing their departure from their homes. But, however mysterious, they could not dispute the commands of Moses, or disobey the leading of the cloud; therefore the immense body of people went onward with unflinching confidence toward the south.

While the Israelites were spending their days in this countermarching, in Egypt the days of mourning for the dead were passing away. In the period of their ceremonial tribute to the dead, the Egyptians

could not attend to the departure of their bondmen. But when these days were over, and the court and army and taskmasters returned to their places, the realization of their loss burst upon them.

On every hand workmen were needed; for the devastated condition of the country strongly appealed to their national pride at once to repair and rebuild the waste places. This the Egyptians themselves could not do. Their sons were in the priesthood, or in the army, or dissipating their time in the feasts and luxuries which had become their fixed habits. The work was too great for the slaves taken in war, or from the upper waters of the Nile. It was the work of the six hundred thousand bondmen who had fled the country intending never to return.

Egyptian pride, avarice, and hate combined to urge Pharaoh, the nobles, and the people to pursue their fleeing bondmen. Their hate was intense. Fathers who had just buried the sons of whom they were the proudest; brothers who could no longer receive the aid and counsel of brothers; companies of troops whose captains had so silently fallen in death by the stroke of the God of Israel—all thirsted for revenge upon the hosts who had thus secured their liberation. When the officers of the king, placed in guard over the gates of the wall, sent messengers to Pharaoh to tell of the deliberate marches of the Israelites inside

the walls, of their travels first to the northeast extremity of the land, then toward the southeast by the Sea of Reeds, he recovered his pride and determined to recall his word given to them, and compel them to return to bondage. He thought, as did the guards of the gates and his courtiers, that the Israelites were confused, and that being left to themselves in their undisciplined state they did not know which way to go, but were becoming entangled in the unfavorable and unknown roads in that part of the land.

Pharaoh thought that, by attacking them with his army, he could destroy the greater number of them, and bring the others back into bondage. Making his arrangements to depart immediately, he commanded his generals to muster at once the army, with all the chariots and horsemen, pursue the host of bondmen, and return them to their tasks. With the speed characterizing the movements of the well-disciplined Egyptian army, through years of service and training, they pursued the Israelites, and came up to them just when they were wedged in a place out of which they could not by any human ingenuity escape. West of them was Migdol, the strong, towering fortress commanding the several roads converging at the lower gate through the wall. It was at all times thoroughly garrisoned, and its frowning battlements grimly threatened the Israelites, who were now in the valley

at the base of the hill on which the fortress stood. East of them were the deep waters of the Sea of Reeds, lashing the shore and rolling up to the very end of the Egyptian wall. North of them was the mountain known as Pi-hahiroth; while south of them was the mountain Gebel Ataquh. Upon the summit of this mountain stood the temple of Baal-Zephon. No wonder that the officers of Pharaoh's army made merry with jests and laughter at the supposed blunders of the Israelites, to allow themselves to be caught in such a trap.

The people of Israel, hearing the shouts of the Egyptians, and seeing their glittering array in pursuit of them, were frightened, and thought that destruction threatened them. They had left their homes openly and boldly, not by stealth, nor in the night, but assured that Pharaoh had given his consent to their departure. They had advanced until they came in sight of the border wall, then followed it to its southern termination at the Sea of Reeds. Everywhere the wall frowned upon them. Its three mighty gates, defended by great fortresses, had remained closed, and thus far they had found that they could leave their homes, but could not go out of the land of Egypt. Terrors were on every side. They were hemmed in by their foes, and nature seemed to be against them.

Baal-Zephon was an Egyptian temple. It was a temple representing a double faith. Baal was the god of their North, and in the worship of the nations from the north Baal took the place of Osiris, or Horus, or Ra, as the great sun god. Zephon or Typhon was the guardian of Lower Egypt, the god of the desert, the emblem of the sea, the controlling deity of foreigners. Thus Baal-Zephon was the deity worshiped by those who clung to the religion of the North, and at the same time to the older Egyptian divinities. Pharaoh honored his shrine, and the Israelites who departed from the faith of their fathers also bowed at this shrine.

As the Israelites stood beneath this lofty and gloomy temple, it seemed as if destruction mocked them, and this temple was the memorial of Pharaoh's triumph. The fortified wall was on their left; mountain ranges were back of them, between which the armies of Pharaoh were rapidly pressing, and the raging sea was in front of them. Despair seized upon them at the thought of being slaughtered beneath the image of the deity representing the false religion of Pharaoh. When the cloud above them removed from the front, and stood motionless over the space between them and the Egyptians, and they beheld the invincible difficulties surrounding them, they lost the spirit of freemen, and groveled like slaves. Then they assem-

bled before the tent of Moses, called him out to them, and with bitter reproaches said:

“Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” (Ex. 14: 11, 12.)

Moses pitied the people, so easily alarmed. He knew that God would give them a mighty deliverance; how, he did not know, but with the courage of his faith he assured them:

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” (Ex. 14: 13, Revised Version.)

Having thus assured them, Moses retired into his tent, and prostrated himself before the Lord. But his praying was interrupted by the voice of the Lord, saying:

“Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward, and lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea,

and divide it : and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them : and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." (Ex. 14 : 15-17.)

Then Moses went forth, and hastened down to the shore. He stretched forth his rod, and while the elders and princes of Israel watched him, pronounced the command of the Lord to the waters, to roll back and open to them a way to the opposite shore. Pharaoh might boast of his wall, but the waters would be a wall to Israel ; and as Israel was forbidden to go through the wall of Egypt, so Pharaoh would not be able to pass through the wall which God would now raise up for his people, Israel. As Moses stretched forth his rod, the wind began to blow from the east. All night long, with terrific force, it moved upon the sea ; and when morning came, the waters, unable to resist the power of the wind, had been driven back, leaving a clear path on the bed of the sea. At the same time, the cloud above them became a protection to Israel. Out of it darted beams of light, showing the wonder which the wind had caused, and making

the way so light that the hosts of Israel could go forward upon a plain path; but to the Egyptians it gave darkness, gloom, and doubt. Israel moved forward steadily, hour after hour, while the wind held the waters back. The Egyptians heard the sound of the moving army; but they were in the cloud, and could not see objects about them. They followed the sound, and step by step kept pace with the rear guard of Israel.

At length the hosts of Israel were safely over the sea. Moses and the elders stood on the shore. The cloud suddenly lifted. With dismay the Egyptians saw that they were in the bed of the sea. They turned to flee from the waters, but their chariot wheels sunk into the sand, the wind ceased to blow, the waters returned, and the magnificent army of Egypt was engulfed in the waves. When the children of Israel beheld this deliverance, they feared the Lord, and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

When the cloud first lifted, the view before the eyes of the princes of Israel was the brightest they were ever permitted to behold. The glory of Egypt was there. The chariots out of the hundred gates of Thebes; chariots from the king's quarters in Memphis; chariots manned by the flower of youth from the City of the Sun; the pride, and pomp, and boast of Tsan, in splendid armor glittering in

its wonderful brightness, were all there in the midst of the sea.

A shout of triumph burst from a hundred thousand throats, as they saw the Israelites so near them. Then a shout of agony burst from a hundred thousand men in despair, as they beheld the waves rushing toward them. Their chariot wheels sunk deep into the sand, their horses became disobedient to bit and bridle, their slaves turned in horror from their duties, and amid the dashing of the waves, and from out the dull roar of the waters, arose the last shriek of agony, as Pharaoh's generals, captains, mighty men, and magnificent soldiers, went to join the hosts of the first-born who had so recently been ushered into the presence of the God of Israel. The blood of the Israelites shed in bondage had cried unto God; and now every drop of blood thus shed was avenged.

The day following this deliverance was spent by the Israelites in rejoicing at the display of the strength of the Lord for their salvation. They were now out of bondage. The king who would not release them had been compelled to let them go; the army they feared was destroyed by the waves of the sea; the great generals and courtiers who had advised Pharaoh to pursue the hosts of Israel, were now dead; and, encased in their brilliant armor, with their horses and chariots, were buried beneath the sea.

Moses wrote a song of triumph, which was taught to the people; and Miriam, filled with the spirit of prophecy, gathered the women of Israel about her, and with timbrels in their hands, and keeping time in dances, sang :

“Sing ye to the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously—
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

The gates of the lower road, through the wall, beneath the shadow of Baal-Zephon, had been opened to allow a troop of Amalekites to pass out of Egypt toward their desert fastnesses. With them was a company of Egyptian soldiers, bound for the mines of Ta Mafka, taking to the mines for perpetual hard labor a number of criminals who had plied their vile trade with bold assiduity, while the strong arm of the law was restrained by the universal mourning affecting the land. But the eye of justice was not asleep, nor was the arm of Pharaoh weakened; and as soon as the days of grief had passed, the law seized hold of the offenders, cast them into prison, and then took them out, loaded them with chains, and sent them under a strong escort to the mines, where life became a curse. The Amalekites had served as an escort for the soldiers, and were now to escort them back again to the mines, serving as guides, providing for every want, and furnishing camels to convey the men and their burdens.

When they passed through the gates, the guards of the wall informed them that the Israelites had but just marched by the gates, and were crowded in a space by the sea, below the temple of Baal-Zephon. The soldiers informed the guards that Pharaoh, with the most thoroughly equipped and the most spirited army that had ever traversed the roads of Egypt, was advancing rapidly, and before the setting of the sun would be upon the fleeing bondmen.

Through the gates the Amalekites and their company passed, and, taking the road toward the desert, advanced to the seven beautiful fountains, with the graceful palms shading and sweetening the flowing water. Here they rested and completed their arrangements for traversing the desert. All through the night they heard in the distance the roaring of the battling winds and waves.

As morning broke, they saw the hosts of Israelites mysteriously appearing on the shores of the sea; leaving the fountains, they crept nearer to the shore, and, as the rays of the sun rose above the horizon, beheld the destruction of the army of Egypt, and then, with the haste of frightened, panic-stricken fugitives, pressed on their way with all the speed their camels were capable of exerting. The soldiers and captives could not long endure this strain, but the Amalekites pressed on the more vigorously, for they saw along

the shores of the sea indications of sand storms and whirlwinds, such as would render life uncertain should they burst upon them.¹ The instinct of self-preservation led the Amalekites to disregard their charge, and they forced their camels forward until they had passed the track of the approaching whirlwinds. Then, turning, they saw the soldiers and captives following with difficulty; then a storm of wind and blowing sand broke upon them, and when the storm had passed there was only to be seen the great stretch of sand, with here and there a rising mound; and they knew that beneath one of these mounds, suffocated by the sand which buried them, the Egyptians and their captives were lying, now equally the captives of death. They saw that the power of the air had been turned against the Egyptians, and once more they pressed on their way to tell the story to their brethren in Feiran.

¹Such storms and destruction of life have often occurred in this locality.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARCHING IN THE DESERT.

THE joy of the Israelites over their escape from the grasp of Pharaoh was not only expressed by song and dances, but by congratulations, in reviewing God's wonderful mercy to them. They encamped upon the plain bordering the Sea of Reeds, the great host of people, with their flocks spread over the country, one part centering about the boiling fountain, Ain Naba, three miles from the sea, while another part of the host was about two miles from Ain Naba, and closer to the sea, at the fountain, which from this time took the name of Ain Musa. It consisted of seven fountains, out of which flowed copious streams of sweet water, the borders of which were adorned with palm trees and productive gardens. Here they rested in the first delights of freedom, and completed their preparations for the march into the desert before them.

The people of Israel continued associated according to their tribes and former occupations. At Ain Musa the standard of the camp was set up, by the tents of Moses, Aaron, and the Twelve Elders of Israel. Here,

too, the princes of the tribes resorted for instructions, according to which they were to direct their followers. They realized that only by organized effort could this immense, heterogeneous body of people be controlled.

In the early morning preceding the starting of the host, the leaders were gathered about Moses and Aaron under the shade of the palm trees by Ain Musa. Hur, the husband of Miriam, was there, as were also the sons of Aaron—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The princes of the tribes sat around their chieftain in solemn meditation on the work before them. They were Nahshon, of the tribe of Judah; Nethaneel, of Issachar; Eliab, of Zebulun; Elizur, of Reuben; Shelumiel, of Simeon; Eliasaph, of Gad; Elishama, of Ephraim; Gamaliel, of Manasseh; Abidan, of Benjamin; Ahiezer, of Dan; Pagiel, of Asher; and Ahira, of Naphtali. Beyond these, standing waiting for the commands of their princes, were a number of young men, commanders of thousands, amongst whom were Caleb, of Judah, and Joshua, of Ephraim. Immediately back of Moses and Aaron sat the seventy Elders of Israel, with whom Moses counseled frequently in regard to the arrangement of the host. All about this body in council were the tents of Israel, the hosts, and their flocks and herds. The songs of the women, the shouts of the children, the lowing of cattle, and the bleating

of sheep mingled in unison. The bleating of the animals showed the greatness of their flocks, while the songs of the people showed the liveliness of the freed bondmen. Suddenly the blast of a trumpet was heard, and the people, looking above them, saw the cloud rising and stretching toward the south. As the Israelites beheld it, they immediately began preparations for the march to which it called them. Tents were folded up, bread troughs packed, oxen laden, water vessels filled, and flour carefully secured. The division trumpets sounded, calling the people to their stations, and as the banner of Moses was carried in advance the host began the journey. The recently trained men of the host marched at the head, the families, consisting of old men, women, children, and burden bearers, came next. After these came the shepherds and herdsmen with their flocks and herds, and bringing up the rear a mixed multitude of people out of Egypt—native Egyptians, Ethiopian slaves, the poor and destitute, and many of even better positions in life, who had been influenced by the supernatural signs which God gave of his favor to the children of Israel. The people began this march with the brightest hope and confidence in the continuation of the blessings of a life of freedom and divine sustentation.

There was a strangeness in the country about them, as there was also in the emotions within them. Free-

dom was strange, and in a kind of curious energy they moved around in their new experience. The land of Goshen, where they had always lived, was very fertile and well watered. Now, for the first time, they tread desert wastes, and there was an utter absence of all forms of life on every side. To their left stretched the bare ridge **Er Rahah**. It was a long mountain range appearing like a great wall, rising to a height of four thousand feet, its summit broken by only a single peak at the southeast. This ridge was fifteen miles distant, and between it and the sea lay the terrible desert waste, naked and burnt by the hot rays of the sun.

As the people looked forward they saw a succession of low barren sand-hills stretching as far as the eye could see. Onward moved the host over a succession of these hills of sand; then they entered upon a gravelly track which extended for many miles, broken here and there by shallow depressions, showing where water-courses had made their way when the floods were raging among the neighboring mountains. All along the plain they met sand drifts, showing how strong at times the wind swept from the sea to the mountain, causing sand storms so furious as to bury both man and camel, and adding terror to the crossing of the desert.

“For two days the company dragged themselves along over the hard surface of these level, gravelly

tracts and the shallow depressions and drifts of sand ; their hearts, notwithstanding the new freedom, beginning to take the melancholy aspect of everything around them, and their bodies parched with thirst. On the third morning they entered among hills, or banks of sand and pebbles, succeeded presently by hills of limestone blackened with flint ; and, winding among these, the view had varied, at last, by a lofty, isolated mountain, *Jebel Hūmmâm*, by the seaside. But although of a picturesque outline, the mountain was black and desolate ; indeed, by this time, the whole company had little heart to observe anything ; for they had only one sensation—a burning, consuming thirst. Their thoughts were continually turning back to the Nile shores, where the waters are so proverbially delicious. And now, as those weary people went palpitating among the hills, where gray rock was varied by black flint, or in the shallows by drift sand, many of them were ready to barter freedom for a single long draught ; for they were on the point of perishing from thirst.”¹

Terrible as it seemed to them, God had stripped it of its severest features in mercy to their weakness. He withheld the winds from engulfing them in storms of drifting sands. He interposed the cloud, so that while the fierce heat of the sun beat upon the desert about them—and they could see the effects of its fierce

¹ *Life Scenes of the Old Testament.* By Jones. Page 333.

glow—the cloud sheltered them, and kept them together. They could not turn back, nor to the right or left, without the sure fate of being destroyed by the fierce heat of the sun. Suffering with thirst, and with increasing discontent in their hearts, they still followed the advancing cloud.

At length the cry came from the front that they were nearing water. The word aroused hope, and the host was stimulated to press forward more vigorously. Every eye gleamed with expectation, and the advance guard rushed up to the fountain, tasted of the water, and with a cry of despair, dashed it to the earth. Quickly the word “*Marah!*” or “*bitterness,*” passed from mouth to mouth, until the entire host had heard it. Then there arose a cry against Moses. Despair had driven hope from their hearts. The people were about to die of thirst, and the flocks and herds could no longer be sustained. It was a *time of weeping and regretting their leaving the well-watered vales of beautiful, verdant Goshen.* They cried :

“*Better be bondmen and live, than be freemen and die in the desert of thirst.*”

They came to Moses, and savagely cried to him :

“*What shall we drink ?*”

Moses knew not what to do. He was following the cloud ; walking by faith, he beheld their distress

and sorrowed for them; but he trusted that God would open a way by which they might be preserved. He answered their cry by prostrating himself before the Lord, and telling him of the distress of the people. In answer, God directed him to take a tree, which he showed him, and cast it into the waters, and the bitterness would be taken away.

The people gathered about the fountain, waiting to see how the blessing of God would be given them. The fountain was six or eight feet in diameter, and about two feet deep. It formed a basin in the summit of a large mound, which could be easily seen by multitudes of the people. The elders were close by the fountain, as witnesses of the miraculous efficacy of the act of faith. Moses cast the tree into the fountain, and immediately the water became sweet as the water of the Nile, or as the water in the lakes eastward of Goshen. The people crowded to the stream which the fountain supplied. The flocks were led to it, until all the host, both man and beast, were refreshed by the sweet and wholesome water. Thus their mourning was turned into joy.

This gave Moses the opportunity of again calling their attention to the covenant that God had made with them. After they had been refreshed by the water, he said to them:

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of

the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Ex. 15: 26.)

After making a short stay at this place, they passed on eight miles further, and came to Elim, where they rested for many days. Here they found abundance, and in the luxury of plenty recovered their joyfulness again. In this broad valley there were twelve fountains and seventy palm trees. Along the watercourses were luxuriant pastures, sufficient for their herds and flocks to graze in for a long time, and recover from the leanness caused by the lack of water pasture in their dreary desert journey. The bread troughs were unpacked, and the families once more were furnished with fresh bread, as they rested beneath the tents which now so plentifully covered the valley bordering the stream from the fountains.

There was an impending danger in this feasting at Elim, because the provisions which they had brought with them from Goshen were almost exhausted, and it would be necessary for them to obtain a fresh supply at once, or suffering would ensue. Where this supply was to come from no one could tell; but so long as the flowers bloomed by the watercourses, and the palms

waved above them, they would not worry over threatening destitution.

This was a notable resting-place, because it was at the western extremity of the base line of the Sinaitic peninsula. Until within the past few days the life of the Israelites had been in the midst of well-watered fields, of luxuriant foliage, of architectural grandeur. Now they were in the midst of a waste desert, with the impassable deep blue waves of the Sea of Reeds on the one side, and gigantic mountains thrusting bare precipices of rocks in their pathway on the other side. At a glance they comprehended that, to cross these mountain ranges, and walk along the edge of these precipices, would require an energy and caution such as had never been called into action in the level plains of fertile Egypt.

Elim was their oasis, and their lively, hopeful courage soon transformed the verdant beauty of the place into a scene of festive enjoyment. The various families engaged in sports and games with those they had formerly known as friends and companions in Goshen. In the weird stillness of the beautiful moonlight nights they rejoiced in the peace of their surroundings, and in freedom's sweet rest. As their fatigue from the journey over the desert at last wore away, and their hope became stronger, they took up their musical instruments, and in merry

groups, making melody as they sang, filled the air with praises.

This time of rest for the multitude was, however, no time of rest for Moses. In his knowledge of the road they must travel, he realized that the trials of the journey were only for a moment laid aside. There were foes that he dreaded; suspicions of treachery disturbed his peace, and, unless he should be met at these fountains by representatives of the desert tribes, he could only infer enmity on their part toward the oppressed people whom he was leading.

Let us look for a moment into the vale of Feiran. Some great occasion has given to the vale an unusual degree of life. On every hand are the tents of the chiefs of Amalek. In a beautiful grove of lofty palms, in the broadest part of the valley, an assembly of notable princes is gathered. From all parts of their territories they have come. The chiefs who control the lines of travel, those who possess vast herds, those whose wealth excites the admiration of their brethren, those famous in war, and those honored for their wise counsels—all now gathered in grave deliberation to consider the safety of Amalek.

As silence prevails in the council, an aged chieftain rises and recites before them the glory of Amalek. He sings of their ancestors, of their valor in war, their heroism in trial, their successes, and their hopes

of the future. Then he pictures before them the duplicity of the enemies of Amalek, their lack of courage, and their treachery through many defeats. He arouses the tribal spirit of his brethren, and resumes his seat in the circle of the elders. Another arises and speaks of their neighbors, the Midianites, their rivals in the desert and upon the great lines of travel. Then he speaks of Moses, the man of war, coming out of Egypt and joining himself to the Midianites, and dwelling with them until he had won their hearts, and had gained a knowledge of all the fountains and fertile places in the desert, after which he had stirred the hearts of the Midianites into an ambition to become masters of the desert. Then he tells the story of Moses going back to Egypt, with the connivance of the Midianites, to command his brethren, and lead them out of Egypt into the fairest spot on the earth, and to wrench this from its possessors and make it a home for themselves. He pictures the purpose of Moses in uniting Israel with Midian, all being the children of Abraham, and himself becoming a second Abraham to gather all of that blood together and overthrow the other nations and tribes on the earth.

By this time the Amalekites were roused to a degree of frenzy almost irrepressible, and the orator resumed his seat in the circle.

A younger chieftain now rises, with the dust of travel on his garment, and excitement moving every gesture and utterance, who speaks of his career as a guide through the desert, and the wonderful things he had beheld. But in all his life he had neither seen nor heard of anything so wonderful as had marked his last journey. He tells of his escorting Egyptians from the mines to Egypt and their return, just as the Israelites and Egyptians were approaching a conflict near the temple of Baal-Zephon. He relates the story of their halt at the seven fountains, the destruction of the army of Egypt, and the Israelites beginning their march toward Sinai. He tells of the destruction of those he was escorting, and asserts that the Israelites, controlling the winds and the sea, were now on the way toward Feiran, vast as a cloud of locusts, before whom their luxuriant verdure would shrink away, and their tribes would surely perish. He resumes his seat, and the aged chieftain of the Amalekites rises and asks: "What will ye, O Amaleks?" The response is shouted from all parts of the circle: "War!" "War!"

Suddenly there leaped up from the midst of the princes one whose eyes blazed with indignation and whose voice trembled with suppressed wrath. In a moment every other voice is hushed, and every eye directed on the speaker, whom they recognize as Amal,

the son of their most powerful prince, and the one in blood covenant with the Midianites. Amal, as one of the younger men, had sat in silence listening to the speeches of the elders, hoping that from some of those who were at the covenant feast a different sentiment might be proclaimed; but when all remained silent, he felt that he must speak the truth in vindication of his friend Moses. With fervid eloquence he tells of the purity and sincerity of Moses as a man, and affirms that his object and that of the tribes of Midian is not to destroy or even to interfere with the prosperity of Amalek, but to drive the Egyptians out of Sinai, and free an oppressed nation from bondage. He draws touching pictures of the curse of bondage, as he had seen it, and declares that his own heart had been moved to favor these poor afflicted people. He denies that they purposed dwelling in Sinai, but said that they intended to go into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites, and there establish their homes, leaving Amalek in peaceful possession of the desert. Therefore he protested against opposing or injuring a people whom the powers of heaven so manifestly favored, as was seen when God led them through the sea, and in that same sea destroyed their enemies.

Amal could say no more, for a shout of rage bursts from the lips of many, in which the intense hatred of the people toward Israel is plainly declared. As the

confusion subsides a man arises to answer Amal. He is also one of the princes of the Amalekites, and is dressed in the brilliant garb of the favored son of the house of Jebel, the head of a large and influential following. He speaks with deep emotion, and the people are silent as they behold him; for he is recognized as Amal's rival in seeking the leadership of Amalek. With bitter sarcasm he tells how Amal had forsaken the daughters of Amalek, and had fallen at the feet of a Midianite maid, who plucked from his heart all that was noble and heroic, and made him a traitor to his tribe, and that they—the princes of Amalek—had just heard how devoid his soul had become of the ancient spirit of their race. Moreover, for the sake of a high position under Moses, he was ready to sell his father's house, his own honor, and the home of his people, the fairest vale on the earth.

Amal listens to his words thus far, but can remain quiet no longer. Leaping to his feet, he rushes toward the speaker, shouting "Liar! traitor! coward!" and deals him a blow with his naked fist, which sends him spinning to the earth.

The utmost confusion prevails. Many lay hold of Amal to restrain him, while others lay hold of the son of Jebel, some claiming that Amal was justified because his honor had been assailed, and some claiming that the son of Jebel was right, because Amal had

despised his sister, the pride of Jebel's tent. In the midst of the confusion the elders retire for deliberation, to announce in a few moments their decision that Amalek will war to the death with Israel.

Beneath the palms of Elim the youths of Israel were walking in the sweet delights of social confidences. Here and there a couple lingered long to gaze over the desert, or by the edge of the line of trees to watch the brilliant stars in the sky. Neariah and Tirzah were thus spending the evening until the lateness of the hour warned the lover to return the maiden to her father's tent. Then absorbed in sweet reflections, as he recalled the thrilling words spoken, he slowly approached his own tent.

He had passed near the outskirts of the camp, when he was suddenly confronted by a stranger who handed him a piece of bark upon which certain characters were inscribed, after which the man disappeared as suddenly as he came. Not a word had been spoken, and in a moment not a sound was heard. The strangeness was appalling. With the bark in his hand Neariah hastened to his tent, and called Joshua, the captain of the guards, to whom he related the circumstance. By the light from their camp fire they studied the inscriptions, which they interpreted to be a warning against the Amalekites, who were massing their tribes to oppose the march of the Israelites, and

were seeking to destroy them. Thoroughly alarmed, they proceeded to Moses' tent and handed him the strange missive. With the quick comprehension of one acquainted with the manner of expression among the desert tribes, he saw its importance as a warning, and attributed it to the friendly feelings of Amal.

Without an hour's delay he selected scouts to run before the host, to spy out dangers and to warn him in time, and thus save the people from the snares set before them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOST SUSTAINED.

THE danger that threatened the host from the desert rovers was concealed from the Israelites as much as possible. They knew nothing of war, and while their pride was excited by being called soldiers—for they remembered how greatly the Egyptians honored their soldiers—to be at once thrust into battle against a strong and well-fortified enemy, and suffer the calamities of strife, would daunt their zeal and lead them to despair.

Joshua, the commander of the guards, with the true soldierly instinct, kept them in constant readiness for whatever emergency might arise. Feasting by the waters of Elim, and resting under the seventy palms, did much toward restoring the courage of the host; although, knowing that Elim was only a resting station on their great march, they shrank from a renewal of their desert experience.

The morning after the mysterious warning the cloud above the host rose and lengthened in the direction of their onward march. At the same time Moses commanded the trumpeter to sound the call to the

tribes, to take down and pack their tents, gather their families and possessions together, and laden the burden bearers.

Shouting as they labored, the people got ready as quickly as possible; the families took their places in the line, and the host moved forward, following the cloud. They first ascended the low ridge between the two fertile wadies, Ghurundel and Useit; then they advanced across Useit and over the ridges from one wady to another, until they entered the wady Taiyibeh, down which they moved in a westerly direction until they reached the sea.

The children of Israel now entered the mountain region, and huge cliffs of sandstone, striped with horizontal bands of color, which the declining sun lighted up marvelously, were on every hand. These were varied only by the luxuriant caper plant, which, like spots of glistening green thrown on here and there, formed festoons from each cranny, and attractively decorated the great cliffs. As the wady Taiyibeh was the only course by which the Israelites could reach the sea from Elim, Moses probably chose this course to approach Sinai, because in it the Israelites would be spared from the awful precipices of the more northern route, and also from coming in contact with the aroused and vigilant Egyptian soldiers, located at the turquoise mines. This wady was

enclosed by abrupt rocks, shut in on the north by a high promontory, while on the south a lofty headland projected toward the sea, which could only be passed at low water, unless they should choose to climb over its rough summit.

When they came to the sea, they found it bordered with a sandy plain, here and there dotted with clumps of shrubs. Passing around the lower headland at low tide, they entered upon a sandy plain, from two to four miles in width, which stretched for a hundred miles to the extreme southern end of the peninsula. This was the Desert of Sin.

When they turned from Elim, a spot most refreshing to their souls, and entered into the bare and rugged valleys, they soon began to complain of the roughness and desolation of the way. When, at length, they crossed the intervening headland, and saw back of them a high mountain, before them a desert, such as had previously nearly consumed them; on the right, the impassable sea; on the left, the naked, frowning cliffs of the mountain wall; on every hand desolation and difficulty, they lost all courage and loudly murmured. To add to their distress, their stock of food, of which they were so improvident at Elim, was exhausted. Their bread troughs were empty, and there was no evidence to be seen in any direction of the possibility of renewing their supply.

Fathers, filled with terror, could not look upon their children without bitter anguish, as they heard them ask for food, when there was no food to be given them. In silent grief friend wept with friend, as the dismal feeling of despair crept from tent to tent. When they saw the direction of the cloud they could not understand why it should still lead them into the dreary waste of sand. Moses followed the cloud without hesitation. His trust was profound. He walked by faith, and not by sight; and in his sublime confidence did not question the love or the wisdom of the divine leading.

At length the distress of the people reached the point where their faith entirely failed, and the whole camp was filled with murmurings and threatenings. The immediate circle of followers under the eye of Moses, such as Aaron, Joshua, Hur, Miriam, Nephthali, Tizrah, and their households, still leaned upon him, knowing that the Lord was with him; but the circle was small, and the dread of famine made it still smaller. When the princes, captains, elders, and heads of families joined the multitude of murmurers, their expressions of discontent and reproaches increased, until the noise of their complainings was louder than the murmur of the waves as they rolled upon the sandy shore.

Moses stood in front of his tent, beneath the banner

of the host, gazing upon the crowd so madly approaching him. As they surged about him, the elder acting as their spokesman, said:

“Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Moses was not indifferent to their sufferings, and could weep with them in their troubles. He sought to comfort them by his own sublime faith. He knew that God would not let them perish there, but would open a way of escape. Trusting wholly in the promises of God, he entered his tent to commune with him, while the multitudes, calmed by this act, awaited respectfully his return.

At length he came forth, and Aaron commanded the people to give heed while Moses spake to them the words of God. Looking upon them with tenderest compassion, he said:

“At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord: for that he heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.” (Ex. 16: 6, 7. Rev. Ver.)

Then Moses commanded Aaron to summon the entire host, and say to them :

“Come near before the Lord : for he hath heard your murmurings.”

The people were not slow to obey this command, but gathered at the head of the camp, and following the example of Moses and Aaron, gazed toward the cloud, which hung motionless above them, like a great mountain of snow, full of soft beauty. Suddenly its appearance changed, and it was like a mountain of fire, with a splendor such as nothing earthly could surpass. Again it changed, and with the rapidity of lightning the colors of the bow of promise began to play among the cloud masses, so that its beauty, its brightness, its intense glory, overwhelmed the entire host with awe, and the people fell on their faces in humiliation and penitence. Then out of the midst of the brightness, from the very fountain of the seven colors, a voice proceeded, addressing Moses, saying :

“I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel : speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.”

Then the brightness of the cloud faded ; and when the people looked up, it appeared just as it had been since the day they followed it out of Egypt. Eagerly they waited for the evening, marking the decline of

the sun with secret joy. As they saw the last rays dawning on the waves of the sea, they heard a rumbling noise, and, looking toward the wilderness, beheld what at first seemed to be a low cloud; but, as it drew nearer they saw that it was an immense flock of desert partridges, or quails, which seemed to be unable to rise far above the earth, or to control their course. As the flock came nearer, the men of Israel rushed out of their camp, and, with whatever they could lay hold of, knocked down the quails, until every household was supplied with an abundance. The women and children gathered sticks, fires were lighted, cooking vessels were placed over the embers, and savory dishes were soon smoking before them all. Men, women, and children feasted that night with a relish they had never before known. The tender, delicious food tasted all the better because for so long a time they had been deprived of flesh food; and in partaking of it they realized that the flesh-pots which God provided in the desert were sweeter than the flesh-pots of Egypt. That night no one of all the multitude went to sleep hungry. They saw that God fed them, and by it learned that he could provide sustenance for those who trust him, even when man could see no source of relief.

When the morning's light came, the camp was enveloped in an impenetrable mist, which gradually

rose, and as it ascended the people saw upon the ground, as if it had been transformed from the dew, a white substance such as they had never before seen. Those who first noticed it looked at it, and then at each other, and said: "Manna!" that is, "What is it?" And as the people rose and went out of their tents they repeated the question, until all over the camp the people—men, women and children—were uttering to each other the word, "manna!" The parents could not tell their children, nor the elders their families, nor the princes their thousands. They had received the promise that in the morning they should be filled with bread. Could this be what was meant? Then, when none of the people could answer the questions one asked of the other, Moses sounded the trumpet, calling them before him, and said to them:

"This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

Shouts of joy rang through the air when its use was explained to them, and every one in the host began to gather it.

It was in small white hard grains, of the size of coriander seeds, and was pleasant to the taste. When the people learned how sweet it was they were still further pleased, and thanked Moses for the assurance that God would continue it to them day by day. They were commanded to obey carefully the following

directions regarding it, for disobedience would be severely punished. Each household was to gather its own portion, and no one was to make merchandise of it. No one was to lay any of it up in store; for if it was so used it would breed worms, smell offensively, and thus proclaim the guilt of the covetous one. What they did not need was to be left on the ground, and it would silently disappear beneath the rays of the noonday sun. Each household was to gather daily an omer of it for every man; but on the day before the Sabbath a double quantity was to be gathered, and God would preserve its sweetness during the day.

What wonderful provision this was! Great as was the host of Israel, there was no lack of food. The amount supplied them was about fifteen million pounds a week, and the supply was not affected by the season or the part of the country they were in. It continued until they reached the promised land. It was not all eaten the same way, but was prepared to be eaten like the grain which they had raised in Goshen. They gathered it, ground it in mills or beat it in a mortar, baked it in pans, made cakes of it, and then ate it; and they found that, instead of being dry and unpleasant, its taste was like that of fresh oil. Thus, again, they witnessed God's gracious power displayed in supplying their needs, and they felt fresh courage in doing as he commanded.

Coupled with the giving of the manna was the reiteration of the law of the Sabbath day, and any violation of that day was severely condemned. They had no cause to violate God's commands, because of his special provision, and only depravity within their souls would lead them to do so.

The first Sabbath which they spent between the mountains and the sea, the desert stretching before them, was a glorious occasion for rejoicing. That long stretch of sand had been a terror to their souls; but where could they better be taught the bountiful supplies of grace than just where their difficulties seemed to be the greatest?

What a boon the Sabbath was to them! It was God's day, sacred and holy, a day in which they did no work, but came together to worship and praise, in a holy convocation. What a sublime picture to contemplate! The millions of the host of Israel, on the seaside, below the mountain cliffs, in solemn adoration praising God, from whom all their support came. He had given them sweet water to drink, luscious flesh to eat, and wholesome bread, completely satisfying their hunger. Yet in that host there were some who, on the sacred day, went forth to gather manna, and upon them fell in swift severity his righteous indignation. Disobedience was punished by death.

CHAPTER XIX.

ISRAELITES TOILING UP THE MOUNTAINS.

BY the mercy of God the desert had become a place of feasting to the great host. They were aroused from their pleasures by the blast of a trumpet. They looked up and beheld the cloud above them stretching toward the lofty mountain north of the encampment. The trumpet sounded the call of preparation; the scouts were sent forward; the herdsmen gathered the flocks and herds close to the armed host, and the march was begun. The people were warned to keep together; for enemies lurked in the steep, narrow ravines that intersected the wady through which they must ascend the mountain. The bed of the wady in some places was almost as steep as stairways of rocks, and this made the traveling very difficult for the encumbered hosts. In other places their path lay through dry torrent beds, scarred on every side by the raging floods of the past, but now utterly dry and desolate.

Hour after hour they marched, at every step of the way becoming more weary, and, as their skins of water were soon exhausted, thirst was added to the

fatigue of the journey, until their anguish was as great as it had been before God fed them with quails and manna. They anxiously looked in every direction for some sign of flowing water, but everything that met their gaze seemed dry and blistered with the intense heat of the sun, and they saw no prospect of relief. Before them were still higher mountains, dry and desolate, and their pathway was hedged in with great out-jutting crags.

Their thoughts now turned to the contrast between this and the sweet waters of Egypt—the river Nile, the fresh water canal, the artificial lakes, the verdant fields, the plentiful harvests, the fertile plain, the vine-covered cottages; and they lamented the cost of the freedom they were seeking. A great fear also began to trouble them. Sometimes weary or careless ones, neglecting the prudent counsels of the guards, loitered behind the host, or straggled up some of the intersecting wadies, and were cut off by desert rovers, who sprang upon them from places of concealment. Extra relays of men were ordered to guard the flocks, and, although the people pressed closely together, the narrow valley for a long distance was filled with them. Then they began to murmur, and the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, and the cries of the people united in proclaiming their need of water.

The fear of death also assailed them; and, without

a ray of hope, they bitterly reproached Moses for leading them here. If he had let them alone, they would be enjoying plenty in Egypt. Moses heard the cry of the people; he saw their misery; he knew they were suffering from thirst, but his faith in God was unwavering. If they would only be patient a little while longer, they would enter the most beautiful and fertile spot in all Sinai, and God would give them strength if they would only believe. Moses knew their need was great, yet they were borrowing trouble; they could endure it a little while longer, and then relief would come. But the patience of the people was exhausted. They were in a valley filled with fragments of rocks, and with the impetuosity of despair they picked up stones and, holding them in their hands, rushed to the place where Moses stood and threatened his life as they said:

“Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?” (Ex. 17: 3.)

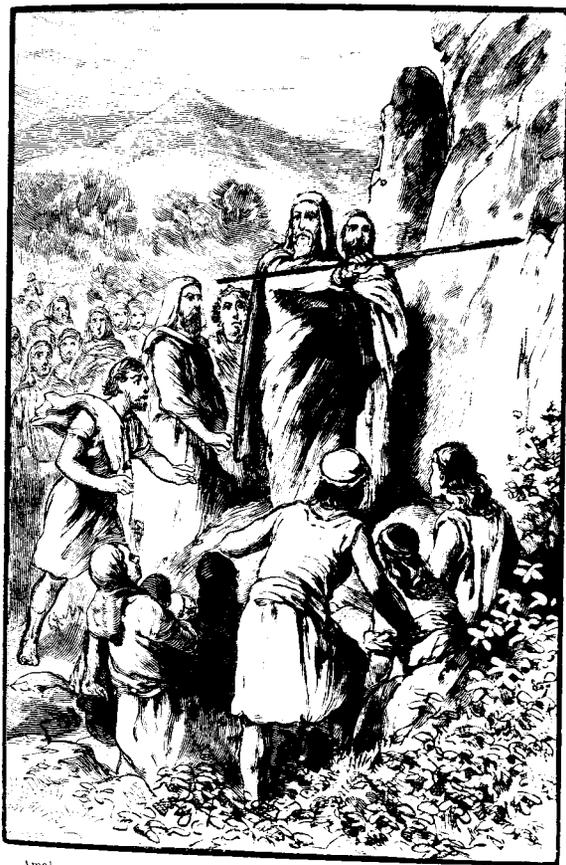
Moses turned from them to ask counsel of God. The people understood his object as he entered the tent reserved for his devotions, and they waited to know what God would say to him, while among them arose discussions as to whether or not in reality the Lord was with them.

At length Moses came out of the tent, his counte-

nance radiant from communing with the Lord. In his hand he carried the wonderful rod with which he had parted the waters of the sea. He called to him all the elders of Israel, and accompanied by them went before the host until they came to the most prominent rock in the valley. The people gazed upon the procession of the elders in silence and increasing awe. The cloud above them was in strange motion, and a part of it rapidly descended until it rested upon the rock at the base of which Moses and the elders halted.

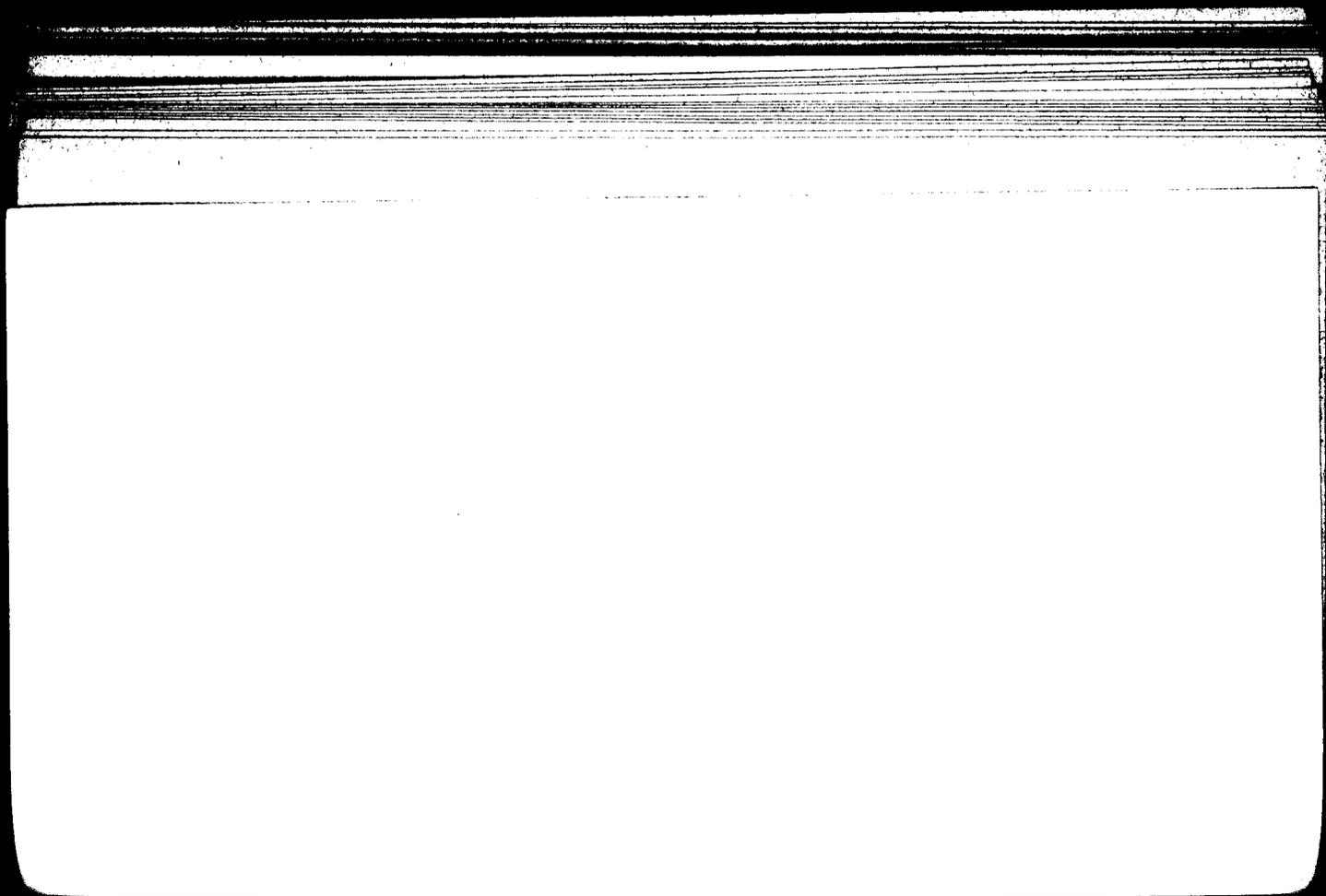
From this spot Moses addressed the people, and told them of the wickedness of their unbelief, and their forgetfulness of the many signs by which the Lord had assured them of his presence and his protecting care. Henceforth, this great rock should be a memorial of their wicked spirit, and should be called Massah and Meribah—that is, Temptation and Strife.

As the people bowed their heads in acknowledgment of the reproof, Moses lifted the rod toward the cloud and, calling upon God, struck the rock, and immediately a strong torrent of water gushed out of the spot he had struck, and in a broad stream flowed down the valley through the midst of the host. The sight of the water as it dashed and tumbled over the rocky course of the torrent bed reanimated the people with hope and courage. And they wondered that by



Amel.

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one stroke of a slender acacia rod, so much comfort could be given them, and they were ashamed that they had doubted the Lord. As they refreshed themselves, they were told that only a short distance before them was the fairest place in all the world. A place of wonderful fertility, with gushing springs, capacious fountains, a broad stream of sweetest water, hundreds of lofty palms, great gnarled tamarisks, groves of fruit-bearing trees, luxuriant meadows, and flowers in abundance, and that Moses was leading them to it.

But their joy was changed to apprehension; for out of the intersecting wadies, armed bodies of Amalekites watched their opportunities, and rushed upon the flocks, and killed the shepherds, or carried them prisoners into their mysterious hiding places. The rear of the host was constantly harassed by the foe, who eluded the sharpest vigilance of the guards. To add to the trouble, the guards were called to the front of the host, and also all the men who could bear arms; for Israel was then beset by the Amalekites, who forbade their further advance.

The cry of war passed through the entire host, and the men prepared to battle for life and the right to advance. In the midst of Israel's hosts the tents of the families of the princes were set up, and the entire valley was filled with the families and flocks of the

tribes. In this hour of uncertainty and alarm, the nobler women, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, comforted and cheered those who in their weakness leaned upon them. Miriam and the maidens of her court sought to sustain the courageous spirit of all, and, as best they could, attend to the sick, the wounded, and the sorrowing. Tirzah, in this hour of trial was the comforter of many, as she went from tent to tent speaking words of encouragement, and reminding them of the help that God had given them in every trouble. All over the camp faithful maidens were similarly engaged, and the frightened ones felt the power of their faith and devotion.

But the flanks of the host were in the greatest trepidation; for here and there, the rovers of the enemy were making their onslaughts and were meeting only feeble resistance. Tirzah, hearing the cries of the people about her, and their shrieks of alarm, looked toward the mountain side so near her, and turned pale with fear as she saw a troop of Amalekites, with the speed of the wind rushing toward the spot on which she was standing. Before she could recover from her fright, they had come up to her; and one of them, grasping her girdle, lifted her beside him upon his horse, and as quickly as they had come rushed back into the precipitous ravine.

The capture of one so honored by the leaders of

the host, and so generous in helping others, filled the people with dismay; and before a guard could be gathered to resist or pursue the rovers, they had conveyed their captive out of sight among the cliffs of the mountain. Word was at once sent to Miriam, whose soul was filled with anguish at the tidings Moses gave her as an escort a body of guards commanded by Neariah, who had pleaded for the privilege of seeking his beloved, and they had come to the part of the way from which the maiden had been abducted. For a short distance they could follow the track of the retreating rovers, but in the rocky winding way of the wady it was lost.

While intently searching for it, Neariah saw the robe of a maiden fluttering by the side of a great rock in front of them, and then disappear. They all rushed to the spot, but it was gone. Then it was seen further on among the high rocks, but again their search was fruitless. In the hope that they might be able to come up to the enemy, Neariah and his men went through the entire ravine; but all their searching was in vain, and they saw the garment no more.

Moses had specially warned Neariah of the danger of his men becoming separated in any of these wadies, for the Amalekites, knowing every secret spot, could appear and disappear at their pleasure, and the men straggling from the others would lose their lives for

their folly. Neariah therefore kept his men all the time in one compact body. A shout from the camp attracted their attention; and, looking in that direction, they saw some Amalekites on the very border of the camp. Sure of capturing them, the guards rushed forward. At the same time a number of men from the camp sought to surround them; but they suddenly disappeared. No one could tell which way they escaped, and the wady was as silent as the grave; and although every man sought for them, the most careful searching failed to reveal their way of escape.

In the deepest distress Neariah returned to the front of the host, and informed Moses of his failure to rescue the maiden. Moses knew that the Amalekites were thoroughly acquainted with every wady in the mountains, and that from their life-long training they were able to defeat large opposing bands of the Israelites by a few rovers. He deeply regretted the loss of the attractive Tirzah; but more serious danger in front of them called for the use of all his resources. His scouts were bringing him information of the continued massing of Amalekites in the vale of Feiran, and they were boasting in loud shouts of soon filling the wilderness before Feiran with the carcasses of the Israelites. Their warriors, thoroughly armed, were coming from a thousand camp fires, and with fierce hatred were awaiting Israel's approach. Hence no

thought further could be now given to Tirzah, and no man spared to search for her. She was in the hands of God. And God only could deliver any of them from the bloodthirsty Amalekites surrounding them.

CHAPTER XX.

AMAL SAVES THE MAIDENS.

THE rough manner in which Tirzah was handled by her Amalekite captor at first prevented her from noticing the way she was taken; and besides, soon he placed a bandage over her eyes, so that she could not see. At length their leader called a halt, and she was gently dropped on a soft green sward, and the bandage and cords by which she had been bound were removed. Looking around, a great contrast greeted her amazed sight. When captured, she was in the midst of desolate, rugged mountains, everything dry and parched by the hot rays of the sun; now she was in a small valley shut in by lofty peaks—peaks bare only toward their summits, and bordered along their sides with great rocks which had fallen from above. In the midst of the valley was a strong flowing fountain of water; around the fountain was a grassy plat, and over it were a few graceful palm trees. It was a wonderfully beautiful spot, and the men were now lazily reclining on the grass and, as if indifferent to her presence, chatting to one another over their adventure.

Suddenly they were aroused by the sound of a low whistle. In an instant they were in possession of their weapons, ready to meet whoever might come. In another moment a troop of men came from behind some rocks, bringing a prisoner. They were received with a hearty welcome, and their prisoner was placed by the side of Tirzah. As the two bands of Amalekites sat down together and began to relate their adventures, the captives looked into each other's faces, and then with glad cries of recognition were clasped in loving embrace. The new captive was Keturah, the beautiful Midianite whom Tirzah had seen with Moses in Goshen, before the plagues had fallen upon Egypt. She was now the victim of Timna's revenge.

The men rested until the sun was nearly out of sight behind the mountains. Then the captain gave his commands; and, with the exception of four, they left the valley to join the Amalekite army and battle at the gates of Feiran. When the men had departed, the captives were again bandaged, and each of them was taken by two of the men. The captain led the way, and they passed out of the valley—whither, the maidens could not discern. They seemed to leave the grassy plat, and enter the narrow gorge along which the stream from the fountain flowed. It was evident to them that for some distance they walked by this stream, for they noticed the sound of a multitude of

cascades along its course. Then the men waded in the stream, which now seemed to be shut in by high walls of rock; the waters grew deeper; the men were up to their waists in the current; the walls of rock approached the closer, until they met overhead, and the light of day was extinguished. The captain now carried a torch in front of the men, and through the long narrow tunnel they slowly waded. After thus traveling several yards, the rocks above them opened again, the current of the stream turned toward the left, the men passed toward the right, ascended a steep narrow rugged road, halted, laid their captives on the rocks, removed the bandages from their eyes, and then withdrew from the place. The maidens clung to each other as they gazed about them, and with astonishment beheld their prison house.

They were in a huge cavern in the cliffs with high walls and roof of rocks. Below them was the narrow path leading to the stream by which they had come; but the mouth of the cavern was in the face of an immense precipice, and the wall of the rock was perpendicular below them for about two thousand feet. In front of them were mountains piled against mountains, with valleys, some broad and many narrow; but all the valleys were far beneath them. The shades of night were rapidly falling; the valleys were becoming wrapped in gloom; only the peaks of the highest

mountains were still bathed in the rays of the setting sun. When from this scene the maidens turned they saw the ferocious threatening glare of the eyes of the Amalekite fastened upon them. With mock courtesy he invited them into his cavern; with words of love he sought to entice them. He made gallant speeches, coaxed and even threatened them; and at length, seeing that they drew as far from him as was possible, he advanced angrily toward them to compel their obedience. Tirzah was overwhelmed with fear, but Keturah, lifting above her a dagger which she had concealed, threatened his life if he came a step nearer. The brutal fellow paused, looked in her eyes for a moment, and then with curses disappeared from their sight.

In fear and wakefulness the maidens watched all the night through. How beautiful the mountains and deep distant valleys appeared in the moonlight! How terrible the height of the precipice seemed! And the maidens resolved that, if need should be, they would plunge into the depths below, clasped in each others arms.

Slowly the hours of the morning came, and the maidens watched the sun gilding the mountain tops, and casting beams of beauty along the valleys. In the distance flocks were seen, which Keturah knew belonged to her tribesmen, but no voice nor sign could

reach those tending the flocks. Suddenly the Amalekite again appeared before them, clothed in all the richness of the war costume of his tribe. As he sat near them and glared upon them their hearts quivered with terror.

He laughed as he saw the alarm in their faces, and called them by pet names; and then he began to upbraid Keturah for stealing the heart of Timna's lover. As he spoke, his face was distorted by the wrath he could not suppress, and he declared himself to be the mortal enemy of Amal, and all that Amal loved. He then arose as if to strike Keturah to the ground, when a loud voice called out:

"Thou son of Jebel, here is thy enemy, a man of war, and not that feeble maiden! Strike here!"

Surprised, the Amalekite turned to meet the intruder; while, with a cry of joy, Keturah, followed by Tirzah, rushed to his side, for she recognized the voice, then the face of Amal. He, too, was surprised. He called the maidens by name, and wondering, asked how they came in that place. Keturah rapidly gave him the account of their capture; and as she did so, her captor, foaming with rage, uttered the most savage curses upon Amal, and dared him to immediate conflict.

With his quick Amalekite passion fully aroused, Amal flung himself upon the son of Jebel, to settle

once and forever the strife between them. Terrible was the struggle; and the maidens, appalled, watched it, knowing that to them it meant life or death. The men were about equal in age and size, and both fought with all the skill and strength that they possessed. At length with one strong blow Amal felled his antagonist to the ground, and before he could recover himself, grasped him and flung him over the face of the cliff. With a cry of despair the man fell down, down, down, and was horribly mangled on the jagged rocks below.

For a moment Amal stood looking into the abyss, then, staggering backwards, sunk to the ground. The maidens hastened to his support, when they saw that his garments were stained with blood. He had been wounded, and was suffering from the loss of blood. With all his skill he had not been able to parry all the thrusts of the knife in the hands of his antagonist. Now the maidens saw why the son of Jebel was so ready to fight with him, and how brave he was to risk all for their sakes. A few moments more and Amal would have been the victim, and they would have been lost. In this crisis, the courage of the maidens did not relax. Tirzah carefully removed the blood-stained clothing from the wounds, while Keturah hurried down the path to the rippling stream and obtained water to bathe the wounds and moisten the

warrior's lips. Tenderly they thus attempted to stop the flow of blood, and when they had done all they could sat down by his side, to pray and cheer each other with words of hope while awaiting his return to consciousness.

Slowly the evening deepened into the night, and the night gave way to the morning, and yet Amal still slept. Gradually his breathing had become easier, and he moved more frequently. At length he awoke, and with a startled look gazed upon them, and asked how they came to be there. Keturah, sitting by his side, took his hand and stroked it gently as she told him of their strange experience. He then directed his gaze toward Tirzah, and smiled as he recognized the maiden whom he first came to know in Goshen. But the shadows again crossed his brow when he remembered how he had praised Tirzah in the presence of Timna, thus leading Timna to plot, through jealousy, Tirzah's destruction. For a few moments he seemed to be struggling with his emotions; then again looking at Tirzah, he said:

"How pleasant was thy home in Goshen! How happy the maidens seemed to be, as they went so gayly into the harvest fields! But now how terrible are the dangers by which they are beset! But freedom is worth the sacrifice it demands." Looking at his bandaged limbs, he continued: "In my heart there

is cherished peace with Israel ; for God is with them, and their cause is just ; but I dare not desert the call of my tribesmen, and now I clearly see that the blood of my people must water the roots of the prosperity of the Israelites. They are God's chosen people, and all who oppose them must fall."

Again he was silent in thought, then said :

"Kenkenes, Bela, and myself, were watching for thee to protect thee ; for we knew the danger threatening thy life, from the jealousy of the vindictive Timna, who will not endure the existence of one who wins praises equal to those bestowed upon her. We would have found thee and warned thee, but were separated ; and when the call of the prince of our tribes sounded throughout our vales, I dared not disobey, but was compelled, through loyalty to my people and my religion, to rush to the rendezvous. In Feiran, beneath the hundreds of lofty palms, I beheld the gathering of our warriors. They were all thirsting for blood and plunder. By our gods they swore the destruction of the host of Israel. They came dressed in their gayest garments, and carrying their choicest weapons. They crowded to the gates of the valley, and shouted their shrill cries for blood. Moses heard the shouts. He well knew what it meant, and sent messengers pleading for peace. He said he had no desire to molest or war with the tribes

of the desert; but our chieftains would not listen to his entreaties. All the bad blood, the selfishness, the love of plunder, inherent in our natures was aroused, and the war-cry was yelled the louder and the fiercer. I, too, took my place with my father's house. I did not desire the battle—I honored Moses, and longed for peace; but my father commanded, and cursed be he who dishonors his father by disobedience. So, with our thousands, we went into the battle.

“What a strange sight it was! Our soldiers were moved by the wildest enthusiasm; we had our chosen position; we waited the coming of the children of Israel. Before us we saw them—the great host of women, children, old men, and flocks, filling all the space between the rugged mountains.

“In the front their young men advanced as soldiers. We saw they were untrained, and we despised them; but nobleness was written on their brows, and they trusted their leader. We knew that in his early manhood Moses had been a great warrior; but now he was not leading the host; it was a young man, whom they called Joshua, a man of great strength and valor. Just as we were about to begin the battle, we saw a flash of brilliant light pass over the host, and looking to the spot from whence it came, saw on a lofty rock commanding a view of both armies the venerable Moses standing with hands stretched toward heaven,

holding his rod in his hand and praying; by his side stood Aaron and Hur. Then fear entered my heart; for it was that rod which had brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, had driven back the waters of the sea, and given the people food and water in the desert.

“But I was faithful to my father’s commands, and battled valiantly. How fiercely the battle raged! We fought desperately. When the rod seemed to fall we advanced; but Aaron and Hur held up the arms of Moses—as we could plainly see—and then our troops were terribly slaughtered. I fought on until my father, brothers, kinsmen, and companions were all slain, and myself wounded, then I withdrew from the battlefield, and sought this secret retreat to recover; and here I unexpectedly found you.”

With great difficulty Amal finished his narration, and then relaxed into a state of lethargy. The maidens ran to the brook, and, obtaining water, bathed his brow and moistened his lips; for they saw that his fever and inflammation were increasing, and feared that unless these were checked he would die. They now felt the pangs of hunger, and the question rose to their lips, “Shall we starve in sight of plenty?” What could they do to save his life and their own? They searched every place that seemed to be an outlet, but found no way by which they could go. The

stream seemed to come out of the rock and go into the rock. They dared not try it, for fear of being swept away in its mysterious course.

As Keturah saw in the distance what seemed to be moving bands of men, she remembered the danger-signal used in extreme cases by her tribesmen, and at once taking her outer garment, she folded it into the proper shape, and then hanging it over the face of the cliff, waited, praying and hoping that some one might see it and rescue them from their peril. It was a weary waiting, so far above the habitations of men, so secret in its seclusion, and the pangs of hunger now grievously tormenting them, and the form of their unconscious defender still breathing heavily before them. In his sleep Amal often mentioned the name Keturah, and this led her to tell Tirzah the story of their first meeting, and of the rapid ripening of their love, and the anger of Timna because of their affection. With deep interest Tirzah listened to the story of the blood covenant feast, and when Keturah spoke of Kenkenes, she told the story of the forlorn love of the Egyptian priest. In a soft and thrilling voice she described the gatherings in the house of the cultured Egyptian lady; with eyes aflame she spoke of the noble character and virtues of these youthful priests; and her tears flowed freely as she recalled the terrible anger of the high priest. Keturah asked, as she listened:

“Could you not, indeed, love the infatuated Shafre?”

Without directly replying, Tirzah spoke of Israel's cherished hope of a national integrity which would present to the world a people specially called out from the nations of the earth as the chosen people of God. They were, indeed, divided into twelve tribes, but as a body they were one; and for an Israelite maiden to turn from the sons of Israel to receive the love of others would be equal to a blotting out of her name from the book of life. She did, indeed, love Shafre, just as Keturah loved Bela, with a tender and sympathetic affection; but it was not the love which the bride gave to the bridegroom, the love which led to a life union. No; her life would only be bound up with a son of Israel, and he was ready to receive her as his own when the host reached their permanent encampment in their wilderness home.

Thus, in mutual confessions, in telling over the joys and hopes of their lives, the maidens watched by the sick warrior, and waited for deliverance.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESCUED FROM THE CLIFFS.

THE heartless cruelty which had influenced the Amalekites in their strife with their neighbors throughout their entire history was now manifested toward the Israelites. In this hour of peril to those escaping from bondage, when every hindrance to their march was a blow against women and children as well as against men, God was especially near his people. His ear was open to their cry, and his hand was stretched out to deliver. He who gave to his people the running stream, the shower of flesh, and the daily food from heaven, was also able to give courage to their hearts, and skill and strength to their arms. The consciousness of their audacity, in view of what God had done for Israel, made the Amalekites the more desperate in the course of the awful struggle into which they were entering, than if they were only battling with their desert neighbors.

When the host of Israel encamped, Joshua, Moses' attendant, was commanded to select such men of Israel as were qualified for battle, to take them with him, and drive the armed Amalekites from the gates

of Feiran. It was the first battle in which the children of Israel had ever engaged. They had no definite knowledge of war, and although they had beheld the movements of the Egyptian soldiers in the plains, they knew nothing of warfare in the mountains. Hence, all the advantages of a contest seemed to be with the foe; but God was with Israel. The Amalekites were in the highest spirits; for their most brilliant chieftains had answered the summons and come to the defense of Feiran. As they moved about, glittering in the splendor of their martial array, the hearts of their women grew strong, and they intensified the zeal of the men by songs of war and victory. The eyes of the young men lit up with brightness as the maidens sung of the spoils they would take; for all knew that the Israelites were laden with jewels, fine raiment, gold, silver, copper, and precious stones, which the wealthy Egyptians had pressed upon them. The maidens buckled the quivers to the backs of their lovers; and with all the ardor of her soul, Timna did this service to Amal, whom she continued to love in spite of the wrath of her father and brother; and with pride she sent him forth to the battle.

As the Amalekites posted themselves by the narrow, rocky entrance to their valley, and saw the undisciplined multitude that presumed to offer battle, they raised a shout of derision, and furiously as-

saulted them. The Israelites were silent. They had no confidence in themselves, trusting entirely in God, and determined to die in the place their leader assigned them. The discipline and courage of the Amalekites promised a short and easy conquest. Their aged chieftains moved at the head of their tribes with the agility of youth, while the young warriors, brilliantly decked with ornaments, flung themselves recklessly upon the opposing host.

The spears of the Amalekites were long, and, when flung, sped with great force to their destination; but the swords of the Israelites were keen, and the muscles hardened by toil wielded them so as to knock the spears aside, and with a dexterity given by their Lord prevent the Amalekite from regaining his weapon. When the Amalekites learned the secret of the strength of the Israelites, they began to fear; then, as the day declined, lost their hope, and as the sun went down were filled with dismay, and in broken detachments fled out of Feiran, seeking safety in the wadies leading northward.

As the victorious hosts of Israel entered Feiran, they beheld the altar which Moses had commanded to be built, which was called "Jehovah-Nissi"—that is, "The Lord my banner." It was to remain as a memorial of this great victory, and to perpetuate the judgment of the Lord. Because of the treachery of

Amalek, Israel was never to make peace with him, but to utterly destroy him. God also commanded Moses to preserve the memorial of this event, by writing the whole story of it in a book, and to rehearse it in the ears of Joshua that, in time to come, the people might fully know the justice of this command for extermination.

The last barrier now having been removed, the host of Israel marched into Feiran. How beautiful it was to their eyes after the long, tedious, desolate march they had endured! How like home! It was indeed a paradise; and along the flowing stream, in the grassy banks and under the lofty palm trees their tents were stretched, and they rested themselves in the sweet luxuriance of ease and plenty. They drank from a hundred fountains; they gathered their manna every morning and ate of the fruits which in their season were hanging ripe before them.

When Amal left Bela and Kenkenes to return to his people, the two sought the shortest way toward the Midianite encampment. As they came near, they observed the greatest commotion prevailing. The story of the warlike attitude of the Amalekites had created surprise, and had led to a more complete severance of the two tribes; but when the report of the capture of one of the choicest daughters of Midian by the Amalekites was received, the fury of the

warriors knew no bounds. Hagar was especially aroused. All the force of her nature asserted itself, and in eloquent tones she called on the warriors of Midian to vindicate their power to protect the daughter of their tribe.

It was just at this season of excited feeling that Bela and Kenkenes arrived. When they heard the report, their astonishment knew no bounds. Bela saw that it was useless to seek a battle except with those who had abducted the maiden. He told the excited people that all the loyal Amalekites were in Feiran battling against Israel, and that if they at once set out in small bands searching the valleys and the familiar haunts of the Amalekites they would no doubt find Keturah temporarily detained by some fountain.

Searching parties were at once instituted, who sought all day long, but not a trace of the maiden could be discovered. They returned to the camp, and the next day continued the search. In the mean time it was made known that the Amalekites had been defeated, and that all the survivors in one body were moving rapidly toward the mountains of the north. At length a shout of joy rang out from one of the bands of searchers who, having penetrated the valley by the great precipices, had discovered the danger signal, and had climbed up one of the neighboring

peaks near enough to catch a glimpse of the maidens in their lofty cavern. They returned to the camp and with joy announced their discovery; then the question arose, "How can they be rescued?" Who knew the way up to the cavern? For to ascend the face of the cliff was utterly impossible; the boldest climber in all Midian could not scale the height. It was known as a secret Amalekite stronghold, and access to it had been carefully hidden from the knowledge of the Midianites.

But while waiting to find a guide to it, the tribe entered the valley below it, and there encamped to encourage the maidens by their presence, should they be able to distinguish them at so great a distance. The most careful efforts were put forth to find a way around the mountains, and to discover the path that led to their place of confinement. As one of their bands was exploring the mountain gulleys toward the north, it met a troop of Israelites which with equal ardor was beating the mountains for some trace of the abducted Tirzah.

It was Neariah and his band of young men, who, as soon as the battle with the Amalekites was over, and victory was assured, had hastened to Moses, and had begged permission to go in quest of his beloved. Moses granted his desire, and with a determination which fatigue or danger could not affect, he had

pressed the search. When the two bands met, and each learned the purpose of the other, each anxiously questioned the other as to their success. Neariah's heart thrilled with joy when he learned that it was probably his beloved who was on that same mountain imprisoned with Keturah; but thus far the most careful scrutiny had failed to open up a way by which they might be rescued. The two bands continued together the search, and by noontide had found the fountain in the palm-shaded vale, where they encamped to rest themselves and partake of nourishment; for their labor had been extremely exhausting. As they sat by the fountain, the keen eyes of a Midianite scout detected a shining object lying in the grass. He picked it up, and handed it to Neariah, who instantly recognized it as the framework of a jewel which he had often seen worn by Tirzah on her bosom. This indicated that she had probably been at this very fountain, and that they were on her track. Searching the valley carefully, they found that there was but one way, to all appearances, by which one could enter or leave it, and that was the way by which they themselves had entered. But the scouts reported that the maidens were in the opposite direction from this entrance, and there must be a way to reach them.

Again they searched the valley, but always with

the same result—the rock walls of the valley came together beneath high and impassable cliffs, and the stream of water from the fountain was lost in a cleft of the rock. They sat down upon the extreme point of passable rock, just where the water flowed in, to deliberate as to the next step to be taken. As they sat and talked, one of the Midianites noticed a bird, such as he had seen in the valley on the other side of the mountain, fly out of the cleft of the rock, over the current of the stream. From whence did it come? Suddenly the thought flashed into his mind: “The way to the secret cavern is hidden by the stream.”

With the enthusiasm of a discoverer he told the others of his thoughts, and quickly following him, they entered the stream, and with torches lighting up the way, went boldly into the narrow, dark, and dangerous cleft of the rock.

It soon became frightfully gloomy, but the quiet current of the stream indicated a smooth bed, and the pure atmosphere told them of a continuous space between the water and the overreaching rocks. Soon a glimmer of light appeared before them, the way became wider, the rocks opened above them, they saw the wonderful valley appear. With a cry of joy, the two maidens sprang toward them; and, as Tirzah was tenderly folded to Neariah's heart, Keturah, laughing and crying with joy, found herself in the loving

embrace of Bela. The appearance of the numerous party in the cavern was observed by those in the valley below, and they raised a shout which came up to those amidst the rocks, who answered back with all the force of their gladdened hearts.

Amal was still lingering between life and death; but the wisest of the Midianites took charge of him, and by the aid of roots and leaves whose efficacy they well knew soon broke the fever, drove away the inflammation, and gave promise of restoring him to his usual strength.

The Israelites found the Amalekites' paradise to be all they could wish. But wailings of sorrow went up from many hearts as they buried those who had been slain at the entrance of the valley. Many tents were closed from the joys of the multitude; for the sacrifice had been great. True, they had conquered, but this awful experience of war had terrified them by its irreparable desolation.

When Neariah returned with his brave companions, leading Tirzah, all beaming with happiness, and accompanied with a troop of the Midianites, among whom were Bela and Keturah, the maidens of Miriam's household, and many other of the maidens went forth to meet them, and with songs, dances, and the clashing of musical instruments welcomed them to the camp.

But Amal would not enter Feiran. It was his home, out of which his kindred had been driven by those who now occupied it. Elsewhere he might meet them in peace, but not there. He could not forget that at the entrance to the valley his father, brothers, and kinsmen had fallen, to save it from the possession of Israel. With his people he could not go. They thought he was dead, and sung his name as that of a hero who had valiantly died at the gates of Feiran. He was too weak to follow their retreat, and show that he did not die a martyr to their cause.

As soon as he had sufficiently recovered his strength, he went with the Midianites to their camp, where his defense of the maidens was made known, and all were ready to do him honor. Keturah smiled upon him, and with all the tenderness of her loving heart daily yielded more and more to the infatuation which at the first had seized her, until it seemed as if his smile was to her heart brighter than the health-giving glow of the noonday sun.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHAFRE ESCAPES FROM THE MINES.

THE Egyptians placed a large estimate upon the value of their mines in Sinai, which for many centuries were diligently worked for emeralds and turquoises. As Shafre went to the quarries from his low stone hut, where he found shelter with many others during the storm season, he noticed many inscriptions erected in prominent places by various superintendents of the mines, whose vanity as well as attainments were thus commemorated. One of them said :

“ If your faces fail, the goddess Hathor will give you her arms to aid you in the work. Behold me, how I tarried there after I had left Egypt ; my face sweated, my blood grew hot. I ordered the workmen working daily, and said unto them : There is still turquoise in the mine, and the vein will be found in time. And it was so ; the vein was found at last, and the mine yielded well. When I came to this land, aided by the king’s genii, I began to labor strenuously. The troops came and entirely occupied it, so that none escaped therefrom. My face grew not

frightened at the work. I toiled cheerfully. I brought abundance, yea, abundance of turquoises, and obtained yet more by my search. I did not miss a single vein."¹

The miners were the most wretched of slaves, as their masters did not value their lives, nor care to treat them as human beings. The temple of Hathor, which received so much reverence in Sinai, was the shrine of the masters, whose religion did not lead them to be tender toward humanity, but to pray for success in their search after the precious stones. Hathor was supposed to be the deity holding possession of the wealth of the mines; and it was just as necessary for gifts to be strewed on that altar to win success, as it was to have men with strong arms and well-made bronze tools. So, with a whip in one hand to drive the workmen, and a gift in the other hand to propitiate the deity, the overseer went forth to his daily search.

Shafre's life became more wretched every day. His strength was slowly slipping away, and the loss of his friend had removed the bulwark of his hope and joy. But he toiled on, knowing that the least failure to do his work would bring upon his already blistered shoulders the stinging lash. His body was bent, his skin hardened and darkened by exposure,

¹ Picturesque Palestine, p. 273, vol. 4.

his hair unkempt, and, to all appearance, he was not different from the most ignorant and wretched of the slaves at the mines. As thus he fell into the slough of despond, he attracted less attention from his guards, who did not know that the poor, miserable slave was in reality a noble Egyptian scholar. Along the precipitous sides of lofty hills he searched for the handsome turquoises, sometimes wondering why he did not cast himself into the depths of some of the immense chasms along his pathway, and thus end his misery; for he saw the bones of many men bleaching where they had fallen. Not even burial was given them. The vultures soon stripped their bones of flesh, and what they left the wild beasts fed upon. There were hundreds of slaves hopelessly toiling in their weary work, but some of them so hardened and brutalized that they had neither hope nor ambition, and their daily food became their only desire.

Sometimes Shafre feared that he too might fall into such a state. Whenever he thought of escape, he became apprehensive of the soldiers, who, with a cruel vigilance, seemed to anticipate such desires in the toilers. But his courage revived when he thought of Tirzah and Kenkenes. The guards had reported that Kenkenes had fallen from a cliff and died, but he would not believe it; he trusted that Kenkenes still lived, and this trust made him more hopeful. In

his dreams he saw Tirzah. Sleep was sweet to him because of his visions. Then he lived his old life of prosperity, happiness, and love over again. Even his stiffened and chilled limbs, and his hunger and nakedness could not deprive him of this luxury and mental stimulant. The bracing air of the mountains was also exhilarating, and as hope revived in his soul, it helped to make him strong again, and to arouse the energies so long dormant, until, utterly unperceived by the guards, their captive was growing into the fullness of his old manhood again. With every sense alert, he was watching for a way of escape from the terrible thralldom to which he had been condemned.

When the charcoal supply for the furnaces began to shorten, the Amalekite chiefs were sent for to replenish the stores. The Amalekites were fond of Egyptian gold, and they came frequently into the great camp to bargain with much ceremony and carefulness for these coveted rewards. It was one of these groups that went about the mining camp for several days, as if to know the whole process of finding the precious gems. Their childish curiosity and astonishment at the success of the Egyptians aroused the mirth and laughter of the guards; but suddenly Shafre was startled, for one of them, elaborately clothed as a chief, looked in his eyes, and in a low tone, whispered, "Help is at hand." Shafre went on

with his work, giving no sign that he had been spoken to, but his heart was in a tumult, for he had recognized in the Amalekite chief his own friend Kenkenes in disguise. As the eyes of the guard turned toward the toiler, he seemed to be more stupid than ever, for he had learned wisdom through his sufferings.

Listening to the conversations of the guards, he learned that all Egypt was in a state of commotion. The Israelites had risen in rebellion against Pharaoh, and wonderful signs were happening, spreading terror throughout the land. Then came the news of the emigration of the Israelites, the death of the officers of the king and the destruction of the army in the sea; and this was followed by the report that the Israelites were coming to capture these mines. The vigilance of the guards was redoubled, and they endeavored to keep all these reports from the toilers. But Shafre, catching now and then a word, was able to follow the information they received quite closely, and his joy increased in proportion; for in the coming of the Israelites he hoped—unless the guards should kill the prisoners—to find his liberty, and at the same time his beloved. Hope now filled his soul. He wondered that he did not hear from Kenkenes again, but he knew that the furnaces were abundantly supplied with coal, and that there was no further occasion

for the Amalekites to visit the mines again. To have entered otherwise would have been impossible, for the number of guards was doubled; all the soldiers were put into extra training; and, with the true Egyptian courage, they prepared to resist whatever attacks might be made upon their mines. Scouts were sent out, to return and report at stated times, and Amalekites were employed to watch the progress of the host of Israel. The Egyptians also used their influence to excite discontent among the Amalekites at the invasion of their territory by so great a body of people. Thus they hoped to make the desert rovers their allies in turning the Israelites back to bondage. Suddenly, however, the excitement subsided, and the extra guards were given a release from active duty. The Israelites had passed the roads leading to the mines, and were going into the lower roads of the peninsula. This would enable them to avoid all interference or conflict with the soldiers. But Shafre, who had observed with satisfaction the activity of the soldiers, because it seemed to promise the opportunity of escape, now felt an equally great revulsion of feeling at the confidence the soldiers displayed; for, so far as they were concerned, all danger was past. The guards continued their strict watch over the slaves, and Shafre wearily labored on, still hoping, however, that in some moment he might slip his chains,

work his way through the mountains, and join the mixed multitude that followed the fortunes of Israel. As the excitement among the Egyptians decreased, the spirit of the Amalekites seemed to be the more fully aroused. Their chiefs, goaded on by the Egyptians, were becoming very active. In the wadies south of the mines, from the charcoal beds, and out of all their pastures, the young and old were busy preparing for war, and when equipped hurried toward the south. The flashing of hate gleamed in every eye; the sound of every voice seemed muffled in rage; the sternest maledictions were uttered—for the word had spread among them that the Israelites were forcing their way toward Feiran, their paradise of palms and fountains. They determined to destroy the invading host by cutting them off from the fountains. It would be impossible for men and animals to live if they could obtain no water in the desert. The fountains all along the march from the sea to Horeb were already in possession of the Amalekites, and they could hold these by putting additional guards about them, and thus insure the destruction of the host even before they came to the entrance of Feiran.

Then came the news of the swarming march of the great host, crowding along in the choicest valleys, rushing upon the best fountains, and with unfading zeal reaching out toward Feiran.

But the wells were guarded, and the hour for the destruction of Israel, as Amalek had supposed, had come. The cry of the suffering host reached the ears of the Amalekites, and they were glad; but their mirth was soon ended, for God's hand pointed Moses to the rock, and the rock poured out an abundant stream of water for the thirsting host.

Thus baffled, the Amalekites knew no other course save to battle for Feiran; and for this battle every man of their tribes was called from the forests, the mines, the valleys, and the pastures; and then the struggle began. During that day no work was carried on at the mines. The soldiers were anxious to see the great contest, and from every hilltop commanding a view of the entrance to Feiran the Egyptians stationed themselves to watch the progress of the battle, and witness the massacre of the invaders. As the day wore on, the guards remaining at the mines relaxed their vigilance. Strange reports came to them from the watchers of the obstinate advance of the Israelites, and the hearts of the Amalekites seemed to be failing them. Shafre and the gang to which he was chained were shut in a stone hut, and there, barred and fastened, were left for a while by the guards, who rushed to the mountain top to see the course of the battle. Now hope beamed the more brightly upon Shafre. He knew, as none of the

others knew, the significance of this conflict, and with rapid thought decided that the time had come for him to attempt to regain his liberty. His preparations had long been made. With a stroke of a stone he broke the almost severed chain that bound his ankle to that of another toiler. With a desperate effort, putting forth such strength as no one supposed him to possess, he moved a piece of the thatched roof of the hut, and to the astonishment of his companions bade them farewell, climbed out of the hole in the roof that he had made, leaped to the ground, and at once left the valley by the least-guarded road.

But in those mountains a stranger would soon be bewildered, and Shafre, when once out of sight of the peaks known to him in the valley, prayerfully put his trust in the watchcare of a higher power to lead him aright. As long as the day lasted, and then by the position of the stars, he threaded his way through ravines, along cliffs and around gigantic crags, toward the place where he supposed the Israelites might be found. As the hours of the night passed away, he heard the tramping of men and beasts, and, hiding himself among the rocks, saw in wild flight the survivors of the Amalekites as they hurried toward the secluded wadies of the north. He heard their wailings over the slain, their maledictions upon their enemies, their exhortations to one another to hasten their flight,

their expressions of consternation at the fact that the power of heaven worked against them.

All night long they passed, going in the same direction toward the north. When they had passed, Shafre came out from his refuge. He saw upon the ground the possessions which the Amalekites had dropped in their flight. He turned into the way along which they had come, and with cheerful hope pursued his way, knowing that it led into the vale where Israel was shouting and rejoicing. From the road he picked up clothing, weapons, and ornaments, in which he dressed and decked himself until he appeared to be a veritable Amalekite; and, thus provided for, went on his way the more boldly.

When the guards returned and learned of his escape, they were filled with alarm; for if the news of their neglect of duty came to the knowledge of the commander, they were certain to be severely punished. They therefore divided their forces, two of them remaining to guard the other toilers, while two started in pursuit of Shafre. They discovered no trace of his flight, but hoped to be able to find him concealed in some of the mountain wadies. They came into one of the valleys that led toward the north, about noon of the following day, and sat down in the shade of an overhanging rock to eat the food which they had brought with them. While thus engaged they

beheld a man approach, whom at first they thought to be an Amalekite; but, as he drew nearer, they discovered that it was the refugee whom they were seeking. Waiting until he came near to them, they suddenly shouted to him to surrender, and leaped towards him to take him by force.

But wonderful was the change they beheld; for not only was he clothed in new garments, and armed with good strong weapons, but he also manifested a noble, defiant spirit, and threatened them with the weapons he brandished. With shouts of laughter at his audacity, they pressed upon him with the skill of trained soldiers; but he resisted with the strength of newly-obtained freedom, and for a while they were utterly unable to withstand the fury of his strokes. He wounded them, and then they attempted to take his life. Fiercely the combat raged, and no one can tell what the issue would have been if there had not just at that time come upon them a body of Israelites, who were pursuing some fleeing Amalekites. Seeing the armor of Egyptian soldiers they rushed upon them, and would have soon despatched them if they had not taken refuge in flight. Shafre prostrated himself at the feet of the Israelites, and begged to be taken to the camp of Israel. They received him with cordial good-feeling, and after traveling a few hours arrived at the vale of Feiran.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AMAL'S PURPOSES OF REVENGE.

THE Israelites were jubilant because of the wonderful deliverance that God had given them. With success came the spirit of war, and it seemed probable that they would soon be transformed into brave soldiers. Amalek had been so terribly beaten, that the few survivors who had not gone with the host toward the north remained concealed in their dens among the rocks.

As Shafre walked along with the Israelites, he heard from them the account of the battle, and the manner in which the hand of the Lord had overthrown the power of their enemies. He also listened to the story of the young friend of Moses, the youthful Neariah, who, for gallantry and devotion to his religion, was not excelled by any in the host. The story of his brilliant contests with the Amalekites, hurried on as he was by his religion, his fidelity to Israel, and his desire for revenge because of the loss of his beloved, were all told in so graphic a manner, that Shafre seemed to see the events passing before his eyes. But when the story of the capture of Neariah's

beloved was told, and her name was mentioned, Shafre was filled with the most painful emotion. Was it his beloved? Did she indeed love the brilliant Israelite? Was she spared by her captors? Could she be recovered? were questions that hurriedly flashed through his mind. As if in sympathy with the praises of their hero, he asked them to lead him into the presence of their captain when they reached the camp. At length they came to the entrance of Feiran, guarded now by hundreds of the brave Israelites, who were watchful that no foe should attack them. From the entrance, as far as the eye could see, the vale presented the appearance of a great festival in the midst of an immense garden, in which all the people were joyfully delighting in the abundance about them. In the centre of the valley was the tent of Moses, surrounded by the tents of the elders of Israel, and then the tents of the commander's body-guard. Beyond these were the tents of the people, according to their tribes, families, and households, and beyond these, toward the gates of the valley, were the tents of the soldiers guarding the host.

The attention of Shafre and his escort was particularly attracted to one place, in which the spirit of festivity seemed to concentrate. There a large number of men and women, clothed in their gayest attire, were dancing to the accompaniment of many musical

instruments. Alternately the maidens sang and the men shouted in chorus, as their merriment increased. From the earnestness of their sport, it was evident that they were celebrating some very happy occasion. In the midst of the group stood Joshua, he who was the leader of the host in the battle, but now in the habit of peace. By his side stood Neariah, with happiness beaming in every line of his countenance, his glance following the movements of one of the maidens, around whom the others were dancing. As the guards whispered Neariah's name to Shafre, he gazed in admiration upon his stalwart frame, and noble, expressive countenance; then following the direction of Neariah's gaze, he too saw the honored maiden, but his heart throbbed violently as he perceived that it was his own heart's desire, the beautiful Tirzah. She was very beautiful; and now, as he looked upon her, he realized that she was more beautiful than ever his dreams had pictured her. She was the fairest in all the throng, and the especial recipient of the loving kindness of the most distinguished in the host of Israel. For a while Shafre gazed in the rapture of one who had found the object he had searched for; then, as he again beheld Neariah's glance toward her, and the return she gave, so full of love, delight, and repose, he said to himself:

"Her soul is filled; she thinks not of Shafre; his

captivity in the mines gave her no grief. She loveth one of her own kin, and the Egyptian is to her as one dead."

He was about to turn away, but the quick eyes of Joshua had noticed the stranger clothed in the garb of an Amalekite. Pressing to his side, he recognized in his countenance the development of intellect, and the cultivation of noble thoughts. Seeing that he was *not* a child of the desert, but an Egyptian, he cordially invited him to participate with them in their rejoicings over the return of the captive, the darling of their tribes. Neariah also followed Joshua, and urged the invitation, until, unable further to resist, Shafre went with them and stood in the immediate presence of the rejoicing maidens. The presence of a stranger attracted the attention of all. As they recognized the dress of an Amalekite, the word passed from one to another that Tirzah's deliverer had come to witness her pleasure; and she, hearing these words, turned toward him and observed his Amalekite costume. At that moment his face was turned from her, but she saw that in general appearance, in height, breadth of shoulders, and manner of motion, he was like her deliverer, and she went toward him to welcome and thank him before them all for preserving her life. She came so closely to him that with outstretched hand she might have touched him, when he

turned and looked into her face. As she saw the eager gaze of his expressive countenance, so unexpectedly, she drew back a step, uttered a scream of surprise and alarm, and fell unconscious into the arms of a maiden by her side. In an instant all was confusion. Joshua at once ordered Shafre into arrest, and had him conducted by a number of the young men into a tent near at hand, to be examined as to who and what he was. In a few moments Tirzah had recovered, and calling to her side the venerable Miriam, related to her the story of Kenkenes and Shafre.

When she so suddenly saw the eager gaze of his eyes into her own, it seemed to her as if all the suppressed love of years of absence and suffering were concentrated in that appealing look; and it overcame her. As she grew stronger, she called Neariah, and told him the story of Shafre's love and sufferings; and he, without a thought of jealousy, fully trusting in her love for himself, went to Joshua, told him the history of Shafre, and together they went to the tent, removed the cords from his limbs, took his hand as a brother, and led him into Tirzah's presence.

With sympathetic, sisterly affection and delight, she received him, and, while they all sat before him, had him tell them the story of his captivity and escape. The story of the cruelty the prisoners at the mines endured touched every heart; their hatred of Pha-

raah's government was increased by this vivid narration, and they all sought to show their sympathy for Shafre by the kindness which they now showered upon him. The narration produced great distress in Tirzah's heart, for she knew the primary cause of all this suffering, and she could not reward him for it. She, to whom he looked for the most, was unable to give; for all was given to another. She could only give a sister's love, and this she was glad to bestow.

While they were still talking, a group approached from beyond, and, to the surprise of all, a noble-looking man, who seemed to be known by Joshua and Neariah, for they did not interfere with his actions, sprang toward Shafre, clasped him in his arms, and fondly kissed him upon both cheeks. As Shafre looked into the stranger's face, he returned the embrace as vigorously as it was given, and in the most tender tones uttered the name, "Kenkenes!"

Tirzah's welcome to Kenkenes was intensified by her gratitude for his efforts towards her rescue. As the recollection of her experience in the cavern came to her mind, she most tenderly inquired as to the condition of the Amalekite who had so nearly sacrificed his own life to protect her and her companion. And Keturah! where was she in this time of rejoicing, when the smile of God was so bountifully resting upon them?

Kenkenes gave to Tirzah messages of love from the equally happy Keturah, who came not, for she was nursing back to health the wounded Amal in the distant camp of the Midianites. She would soon be with her, however; for a large number of Midianites, led by the father-in-law of Moses, were coming to bring to the leader of Israel his wife and children, and with them would come Keturah, Hagar, and a number of their young companions. But Kenkenes did not say much about Amal; he avoided the subject before the others, and only when alone with Neariah did he say:

“Beware of Amal! for he has written against your life the cry of blood from his father’s grave.”

It was Neariah’s sword that had spilled the life-blood of the father and brethren of Amal, at the gates of Feiran. And according to their law, Amal was the avenger.

The wonderful successes attending the march of Moses from Egypt to Sinai caused great commotion in Midian. Their old hatred of Egyptian government was now finding satisfaction, although new contingencies had arisen as the host of Israel moved forward. The success of the Egyptians in arousing the Amalekites, and arraying them against Moses, had created a new feeling among the Midianites toward their fellow-desert inhabitants, and the terrible

defeat of the Amalekites had shown them that God was indeed fighting for his people. Moses was one of their own people. He had dwelt with them longer than the lives of their stalwart young men. He had married the favorite daughter of their most honored priest, and the children of Moses were the children of Midian. They could not turn against Israel without denying their own kin. Moses also represented their national idea, and in his success they could not fail to rejoice; therefore, they rejected the offered overtures of Amalek, and prepared to send an embassy to Moses to form an alliance uniting them in closest bonds. Jethro, their priest, was the head of this embassy, with their choicest sons and daughters to accompany him.

Amal, still unable to leave his tent, heard the words of the people about him, and saw how they were determined to reject his people. Sorrow filled his heart; and as he heard the story of the destruction of the greater part of Amalek and the flight of the others, the deep fountains of his soul were opened, and he yearned to see the power and glory of his people restored. In the night seasons he saw visions; and one by one the aged priest of his tribe, his father, his mother, weeping for her slain sons. His brothers and his tribesmen appeared before him, and called on him to avenge them before the keeper of the books of all living. These visions constantly influenced his mind, until he

formed a determined purpose for vengeance, and all that came in his way should be ruthlessly pushed aside. He carefully watched the countenances of his Midianite friends to learn which one of them could become his confidant. Bela was his blood-brother, but Bela from infancy had loved and honored Moses. No; it would be requiring too much from him to betray the pride of their tribe. Kenkenes? Ah! he was entranced with his love for Hagar; and as she directed, so would he go. Besides, he was in sympathy with the Israelites, and had learned to believe thoroughly in their God. No; he had not a sufficient claim upon Kenkenes. And Keturah—the beautiful child of the desert, the unequalled one, whom he loved with all the ardor of his soul—what of her?

But as the days passed by, and he saw her tenderness toward Bela, his spirit of jealousy was awakened and dark passions swept through his soul, and he began to doubt whether his beloved was fully his own.

At length he had recovered sufficiently to leave his tent, and was strong enough to go forth as a warrior again to avenge himself upon his enemies. The maidens of Midian had well repaid him by their careful nursing, for defending their sister, and they rejoiced in his recovery as in that of a dear and honored friend. Keturah had watched over him with

deep solicitude, and, as he had been recovering, had examined the state of her heart toward him. Little by little it had forced itself upon her mind that he was not, and could not be, the one to whom she could commit herself for life.

He had strangely altered since the day when he first appeared in their camp. The innocence of merry youth was gone. Battles, misfortunes, the appeals of his stricken people, and his true Amalekite nature in process of development had all tended to change him, and the dark passions of his soul had come to the surface. Keturah studied her own nature. She wept at the story of Shafre's love, as Kenkenes told it, and prayed for his escape from the mines. She followed every step in the career of Moses with keen delight; for he was her ideal character. She loved contemplation, and dreamed of the sweetness to be found in communion with spiritual beings; and the rough, warlike spirit developing in Amal frightened her. She found that an Amalekite and a Midianite were not of the same stock, and could not harmonize.

Amal sought her presence. Together they went out in the sheep pastures; they sat by the fountain beneath the palms where first they met, and there he asked her final answer. He was honest and hid nothing. He told her of the destruction of his people and his determination to follow them to their new

home, where they would arouse the Canaanites and Hittites against the further progress of the Israelites. He reminded her of his duty as blood-avenger, and that the warrior Neariah should be devoted to sacrifice, and his blood spilled upon the ground to satisfy the spirits of his slain kindred. His own life would be devoted to war, and as a true son of the desert he would make his power felt. But his heart yearned for her. She was the fairest of all the daughters of the earth; she alone could make his tent beautiful; at her feet he would lay the spoils of the chase and the trophies of his victories; she should rule the mightiest of the daughters of Amalek. Thus, with strong assurances, he laid his heart at her feet.

Keturah remembered the first days of their acquaintance, and she was tempted. She recalled the contest between Amal and Bela and how her heart then leaned; but she now thought Bela had grown to be superior to Amal, though neither possessed her heart. She thought of Moses, and her mind decided. No; she could not turn from her friend and the friends of her youth. Much as she admired, even loved, Amal, when put in the scale with the others he did not outweigh them, and she could never be happy if separated in sympathy from all that was dear to them.

She told Amal she could not blame him for determining to go with his people, nor for carrying into

execution his work as blood-avenger, but she could not go with him; and said that when God made him an Amalekite and her a Midianite he placed an impassable barrier between them; and now that loyalty to his people demanded the consecration of his life, they must part, and evermore draw away from each other.

With his soul boiling in the excess of his emotions, and unable to move her purpose, Amal left her, not to yield quietly to her determination, but to return like a whirlwind after he had avenged the blood of his people and carry her away as his captive, a slave if she resisted, his wife if she consented. So he determined in his soul, so he announced to her. Gathering his weapons, and taking a supply of food, he left the tents of Midian never again to enter them in peace.

Keturah had listened to his threats with terror, for she knew the power of his energy, and she knew of no one to call upon to deliver her in her trouble. When she returned to the camp she found visitors awaiting her arrival, and Hagar tripped joyfully to tell her that Kenkenes had returned from Feiran, and had brought with him his Egyptian friend, the noble Shafre, who had escaped from the galling chains of captivity. With the usual courtesy of the Midianites she welcomed her guests, and in listening to their conversations sought to escape from the horrible gloom of Amal's threats.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEATH OF AMAL.

THE Egyptians were welcomed by a feast in which the Midianites sought to rival one another, not only in eating, but also in story telling. After they had exhausted their stock of tales, they called on Shafre to tell them of his captivity and life at the mines. Kenkenes was watching his friend with a feeling of sweetest tranquillity, for he perceived that the noble tendencies of his nature as manifested in the school of Seti were still in active operation. When Shafre began his narration, the Midianites gave him their closest attention; and indeed they could not help doing so, for there had never been a more eloquent talker at their feastings. The few days of liberty had wonderfully transformed his appearance, and once more his eyes flashed with the fire of intellectual enthusiasm.

As memory recalled the various scenes in his career, and his voice changed in sympathy with the scenes, all hearts were melted by the vividness of the descriptions. Keturah watched him with deepening interest. His words awakened her imagination; and, as she seized hold of his story, she wove it into a pattern of suf-

fering and glory of the most beautiful and touching character. The deeply sympathetic nature of the Egyptian aroused her own sympathies, and she first felt for him the most tender pity, then the most glowing admiration.

The feast closed, and the two Egyptians bade the Midianites farewell, as they departed for the Israelite camp in Feiran. What sweet converse they held as they recounted the wonderful experiences that had befallen them! Yet they felt that they were only beginning a career in company with the late bond slaves of Egypt, which would lead them to a comprehension of God's dealings with man, such as would show them how God alone ruled over men.

The following day was drawing to a close when they approached the object of their journey. Before they reached the camp, the mists of evening had settled around them and the people were withdrawing from beside their camp-fires into their tents. Since his captivity, during which he had slept altogether in the open air, Shafre could not rest in the close air of a tent; and now, instead of seeking the shelter of the camp, he sought the shade of an acacia thicket, and cast himself on the ground to sleep, while Kenkenes passed on to the camp to report their presence to the captain of the guard.

Shafre sought slumber in vain, for his mind was too

actively engaged in recalling his troubles to sink into repose. His soul was troubled, for his life desires were appearing to be but dreams, after all. During the long weary months of his captivity, he had not only loved, but had worshiped Tirzah. She was the realization of his ideal woman, and to possess her would afford him supreme happiness; but, in the first moments of his liberty, he discovered that she was possessed by another, who had the right to her, as her kinsman and her choice in love. He could not dispute that right, though it left his own soul utterly desolate. Through Tirzah and Kenkenes he had learned of the true God, whom thus far he had not acknowledged in worship. Now he bowed his face to the ground and called upon God, the God of Israel, for light and help. He surrendered all claim to Tirzah; he no longer even desired to separate her from Neariah; he would hold her no more as the enthroned queen of his life; but, instead, he would consecrate himself to the service of God, to know him and lead others to him.

Suddenly light from God illumined his soul, his sacrifice of self was accepted, and tranquillity filled his soul. As he still bowed upon the ground, in deep silence receiving the Spirit of God, his attention was aroused by the soft tread of a man seeking his way along the narrow path. As the man passed, Shafre heard him muttering vengeance against Neariah for slaying

his kindred at the gates of Feiran. The man held a long spear in his hand, and his manner showed that he was even now on his way to execute the deed. For a moment the thought entered Shafre's mind, "This will rid me of my rival, and I shall then be able to win the fair Tirzah;" but with loathing he cast the thought from him, and, with a facility in stealth learned while a prisoner, he followed the venturesome Amalekite.

The stars were shining above them, but it was dark in the shadows of the trees. The guards of the camp were watching against the coming of a foe, but their attention was given to the distant ends of the vale. Silently the Amalekite crept past them, and as silently the Egyptian followed. As they neared the tents their progress was slower, for the flickering light of the camp-fires threatened to reveal their presence. The Amalekite seemed to know the way to Neariah's tent; and at length he came to it, and noiselessly lifting the curtain saw within the tent Neariah in deep sleep. He raised his spear and carefully poised it so as to strike the heart of his victim; he drew his arm back for the stroke, when his spear was grasped from behind and wrenched from his hand, and at the same instant his assailant clutched his throat with both hands and shouted for the guards. At the shout Neariah sprang up and saw two men fiercely battling

at his tent door; the guards, also startled, rushed upon them, while from a hundred tents the warriors of Israel turned out to know the cause of the disturbance.

Shafre, having mastered his foe, gave him into the charge of the guards, and then explained to Neariah the circumstances of the assault. Neariah was horrified at the communication, and his gratitude at his deliverance was beyond all power of expression. Amal was brought before the princes of the camp, and questioned as to the motives of so great a crime against one whom in former days he had known as a friend.

As Amal stood before Moses and the princes of Israel, his heart was touched with the recollection of former days. His friendship for Moses, his pity for the Israelites in bondage, his convictions as to the justice of their cause, all came up before him, and for a moment he bowed his head in silence and in sorrow. Then there came before him the scene at the gates of Feiran, and once more he beheld the sword of Neariah drinking his father's blood, and he raised his face and glared defiantly about him. Then he began his death song, declaring himself to be the blood avenger of his kindred, who called upon him to account for their blood before the angel of life in the paradise of the immortals. As Amal recited his

career, his hearers were touched with the loyalty toward his people which, in opposition to his feelings, he had manifested; and Neariah said that so noble, so true a man, should not die at his demand; but rather that in return for his saving the life of Tirzah, even at the sacrifice of a fellow-Amalekite, his life should now be given him. His weapons were restored to him, a stock of food given him, and then, forgiven by the chiefs of Israel, he was conducted by the guards out of Feiran and a day's journey on the way taken by the retreating tribes of Amalek. When left alone Amal cast himself upon the ground in anguish of spirit. When he had been faithful to his convictions of right and justice, his people had turned from him and reviled him with sneers and reproaches; when faithful to his tribal covenant, the gods deserted him and failure assailed him on every hand. What to do he knew not, and he felt utterly desolate. But he brushed aside the tears of weakness and aroused the courage of a warrior. He would go to his people, but he would carry with him the object of his affections; he would be true to the oath he had sworn to Keturah, and she should be his bride, if not in life, then in death.

His mind became the more inflamed as he continued thinking about it, and he determined to return at once toward the camp of the Midianites, and carry her

away by force. And now a savage delight in anticipated success filled his soul, and he only waited for the coming of the darkness to start on the way to accomplish this nefarious scheme. He knew every step of the way through all these wadies. He could travel them by night as well as by day, and he knew his course through the most intricate passes in the mountains.

When darkness began to cloud the mountains, he began his return, at a swift pace, but with the most careful scrutiny of all signs or motions along his way. The hosts of Midian were assembled in their principal camping ground east of the great mountain Horeb. They were in the midst of a feast preparatory to the journey of their venerable priest to the camp of the Israelites, and were rejoicing because of the success which had thus far blessed Israel, and in songs and shoutings praised the name and the deeds of their own adopted tribal son, Moses. The wife of Moses was surrounded by the matrons and maids of the tribe. She was happy in the prospect of so soon being with her spouse again. With the most eager interest she had received the messengers as from time to time they came to tell her of his wonderful advance under the direct leading of the Lord of heaven. The certainty that she should be united to him again in the paradise of delight, led her to join in the songs of

rejoicings that stirred the hearts of all at their camp-fire festivities. Keturah and Hagar were by her side, for they were to accompany her as her maids; and clothed in their most beautiful garments, and decked with gorgeous ornaments, received the praises of all about them. Kenkenes and Shafre, who had returned from Feiran with messages from Moses to his wife, joined the men of Midian in their sports with a freedom of spirit which showed how closely they affiliated with the desert people.

On the outskirts of the camp, shielded by the bushes fringing the rocky slopes of the mountain, Amal watched the scene. His heart was lacerated by every shout of joy he heard; for while all was so peaceful in the camp of the Midianites, he realized that his own life was blasted by defeat in every direction. Eagerly he gazed upon the forms of those he had loved, then with awful curses covered his eyes, to shut out the sight of their happiness.

At length his feelings threatened to overcome his prudence, and prompted by a strange freak of mind, he withdrew from his hiding-place to seek the spot in the deep chasm of the rocks whither he had hurled the one enemy over whom he had been enabled to triumph. With a savage frenzy which craved something to gloat over, he rushed along his way. Hour after hour passed, but before the break of dawn he

had reached the spot and was looking for the body of his victim. It was a terribly rugged spot. Above him rose the massive wall of rock, reaching almost to the clouds; about him were huge fragments of granite which in the centuries past had fallen one by one from their lofty heights. Bare and desolate the spot seemed, for the rocks were too close to allow any living thing to grow between them. Amal hastened toward the base of the precipice to see the body of his enemy, if the vultures had not yet devoured it, when his steps were arrested by a sharp, shrill voice commanding him to halt. Surprised at the sudden call, he looked toward the speaker, and beheld standing upon one of the huge rocks the beautiful Timna. Her handsome clothing was hanging to her in tatters; her hair, no longer braided, or decorated with jewels, was loosely floating about her face and shoulders, the sport of every breeze; her face was pallid with suffering, and her brilliant eyes were still more brilliant through the wild spirit that now possessed her.

Amal, appalled at the spectacle, listened to her maledictions, as she pronounced them against him with all the rage of her soul. She had seen her father fall beneath the tread of the Israelites as they entered Feiran; she had heard of her brother being cast from the cliff by her recreant lover; she had left to her

neither kinsman nor possessions, and her lover was the infatuated slave of a maid in the tents of the enemy. With mind distracted by her sufferings, she had fled from the ranks of her retreating countrymen, and by the bones of her brother, stripped bare of flesh as they had been by the vultures, she cried aloud for vengeance upon the head of the Amalekite who was a traitor in love and loyalty.

As she uttered her curses, and laughed with the awful laughter of unseated reason, Amal rushed from the spot until, exhausted, he crept into a crevice in the rocks, and sunk into deep slumber, his weary frame unable longer to endure the strain. For many hours he slept, at first in a stupor, then with horrible dreams disturbing his mind. At length he was wakened by the pangs of hunger, and he arose to seek food to strengthen him. With his returning strength came the recollection of what he had just seen, and the maiden's curses still rung in his ears. But his determination to conquer fate refused to be subdued, and he once more sought the Midianite camp to carry out his designs in regard to Keturah. All tenderness seemed to be eliminated from his soul, and the ferocity of the Amalekite asserted itself. He succeeded in obtaining some fruits, and, partaking of them, again entered the concealed spot from which he observed the closing day of the Midianite feast.

Amal watched until the feast was over, and the people had retired to their tents, and then noiselessly left his watch-station and traveled along the Wady es Sheikh to the place where the Midianites were accustomed to encamp on a day's march from their home. In a spot overlooking this camping-ground he hid himself and slept, knowing that in a few hours the Midianites would be there. When he awoke the sun was declining, and the shadows were casting their dark lines along the wady. In the distance he saw the Midianites approaching. It was a large company, and they were coming in all the splendor they could command. Their camels were decked with jingling ornaments; their robes were the finest ever brought to them from the distant East; and their weapons were shining brightly with the polishing bestowed upon them. It was the first embassy to the Israelites, and they intended to arouse the respect of Israel by the gorgeousness of their appearance.

When they arrived at the camping-ground, Bela, who commanded the company, gave the order to halt; and in a few moments the camels were unpacked, the tents were set up, fires were kindled, and the evening meal was prepared. Then, as the darkness increased, they entered their tents, the curtains were drawn, and silence spread her wings over the scene.

From his hiding place Amal saw the order of the

camp. There was Bela's tent, then Jethro's, then Keturah's, then the Egyptian's—and he gnashed his teeth with rage as he recalled the way in which he had been baffled by the Egyptian. Waiting until the hour when their sleep would be the soundest, he crept down into the camp and approached the tent occupied by his victim. In one hand he carried his spear, in the other his mantle, with which to bind his captive, so that she could not resist him. He crept along slowly, for the least noise might occasion his death. He reached the tent, raised the curtain and entered—an act which of itself would be punished with death if discovered. Before him the maidens Keturah and Hagar were lying in deep slumber. As he gazed upon them his infatuation increased, for never before had they seemed to him so lovely. With a quick motion he covered the lips of his victim, and wrapped her arms and limbs tightly in the folds of the cloth. So quickly was this done, that when she awoke she was frightened and stunned by the strangeness of her situation, and filled with horror as she realized that she was thoroughly bound by her strange assailant. Bearing her in his arms, Amal noiselessly left the tent, dropped its curtains, and sought the darkest path toward the neighboring thicket. In a few seconds, which seemed to be hours, Keturah was enabled to collect her thoughts, and consider her situ-

ation. She recognized Amal. She saw the fierce glare of his countenance, and felt his hot breath upon her cheeks. She remembered his threat, and with the agony of fear of a terrible fate, put forth all her energy in resistance. She was the daughter of a sinewy race, and her free, merry life had given her a degree of strength which almost equaled that of the Amalekite. As she struggled, he was unable to carry her, and as he endeavored to take a new hold of her, she succeeded in loosing an arm; then tearing the bandage from her mouth, with all the frenzy of her terror uttered shriek after shriek, which at once aroused the entire camp, and made Amal's escape with her as his prisoner impossible. For a moment he vainly tried to recover his possession of her, and stop her outcries; and that moment sealed his doom.

Shafre, as usual, had left the tent, and was sleeping beneath the shelter of the thick branches of the acacias. His slumbers were suddenly interrupted by a shriek of agony almost by his side. Leaping to his feet, with his sword in his hand, he rushed toward the spot from whence the sound proceeded, and beheld the struggle between the maiden and her captor. At the same moment Amal beheld him, and recognizing him, dropped his prey, seized his spear, and, poisoning it rushed upon him, hoping at least on him to obtain revenge. Amal knew that no mercy would be shown

him if captured, and his only chance of escape was in the speedy overthrow of the Egyptian. But Shafre, fired with the energy which comes from the thought that assailed innocence is dependent upon his success, pressed upon Amal with such irresistible force that he felt the despair of one who has met his conqueror.

Terrible was the battle, while Keturah, scarcely yet recovered from her fright, and still bound, all but the loosened arm, lay upon the ground gazing upon them with increasing horror, and every nerve quivering as the one or the other made his stroke. Then their attention was directed by the noise of the men of the camp rushing toward them; and Amal seeing that all hope of success and of escape was vain, determined that Keturah should die with him. Suddenly he leaped back from Shafre's stroke, and with a bound was by the side of the maiden. He quickly lifted his spear to plunge it into her heart, but Shafre had divined his purpose, and as the spear was descending struck it with his sword and sent it spinning out of the hand of its master into the bushes by the path. Then, as Amal sought to grasp him, he plunged the sword into his breast, and at the same moment received in his own breast a stroke from Amal's short but sharp hunting knife. Together they fell to the ground, and the blood flowing from them both mingled beneath them in one dark pool.

As thus they fell, the men from the camp came upon them, and by the glare of their torches beheld the awful scene. Keturah had fainted, and lay as if dead, while close by her side the warriors lay with their blood freely flowing to the ground. Jethro, who in this hour of trial seemed to forget his age, preceding the young men, rushed to Keturah, and, releasing her from her cords, sought to restore her to consciousness.

Kenkenes and Bela turned their attention to the warriors, and as they turned them over Kenkenes saw that Shafre was breathing, and that consciousness was returning. Gently he drew him away from the body of his foe, and stretching him upon the sward sought to stop the flow of blood. Bela turned his attention to his blood-covenant brother. But, alas! he saw at once that death had taken him captive; and, although Bela fondly held him in his arms, he gave only a gasp or two, and then his life was gone. With lamentations Bela laid him upon the sward away from the pools of blood, and wept over him with sincere anguish of soul.

As Keturah had recovered consciousness, she told the story of her abduction and the brave battle which Shafre had waged for her, and then, in remembrance of the former friendship for Amal, wept over his body as over a brother slain, until Jethro gently led her away from the scene back to the camp.

They buried Amal where he fell, forgetting in his death the passion of his last days, and remembering the manliness of his youth as when they had first known him. Upon Bela fell the duty of avenging his death, for such was his covenant. But when he saw the blood of the Egyptian in pools on the ground beneath the body of Amal, and that same blood wetting Amal's grave, he felt that he had no duty to perform: Amal had avenged his own death.

Forming a litter, they carried Shafre to the camp, where Keturah and Hagar gave him their closest attention, while the entire troop united in praising his valor. His wound was not serious; and in two days he was able to move forward with the Midianites to the vale of Feiran, borne on a swinging litter, shaded by an awning from the rays of the sun, and carried by the favorite camel of the aged priest.

CHAPTER XXV.

JETHRO'S VISIT TO FEIRAN.

THE scouts went in advance to inform Moses of the approach of those so dear to him. When the news reached Feiran, Moses called together the elders of Israel, and arranged to receive in a becoming manner one so influential in the desert as Jethro. A special tent was erected to receive the aged priest, and tents for his young men and maidens, while Moses' tent was fitted up anew to receive Zipporah, his wife, and Gershom and Eliezer, his sons. The women of Israel also decked themselves in their ornaments, and with musical instruments in their hands awaited Jethro's coming. When Moses was informed that the company was nearing Feiran, with his guards surrounding him, all decked in splendid array, and a company of his chosen friends, the social leaders of his court, he went forth to meet the Midianites and lead them with all honor into the awaiting camp.

As soon as he saw Jethro, he bowed to the earth before him, then saluted him after the desert fashion, and carefully inquired concerning his welfare and the

welfare of his family. Then Jethro kissed him and said :

“Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.”

In the exultation of his heart Jethro prepared to offer thanksgivings unto God, according to the Midianite custom. He had brought with him a number of the finest lambs raised in their mountain pastures, and, commanding his young men to build the altar, he laid these lambs upon the faggots of wood, and offering his prayer unto God slew them with his sacrificial knife, and watched them consume in the smoke and the fire as an offering pleasing to God. Having thus attended to his religious obligations, he announced himself ready to be entertained by his son-in-law.

Moses, knowing the customs of the desert, ordered a feast to be prepared of such things as would be particularly pleasing to the Midianites: choice lambs from the flocks, cheese similar to those that the Israelites had made from the days of their father Jacob, soups and vegetables with seasoning such as the Egyptian princes delighted in having at their feasts, vegetables

produced by the desert oases, which the Midianites prided themselves on their skill in preparing. Thus they wished to show Jethro that the skill of the Midianites in preparing savory dishes was equaled by the cooks in the households of the children of Israel. To this feast the elders and princes of Israel were invited. Here, too, the prominent women of Israel were to meet for the first time in public the wife of their great leader.

The Midianites prepared for the feast by clothing themselves with all the ornaments they possessed, and they fairly sparkled in the beauty of their adornment. The women of Israel also prepared themselves as best they could, and were burdened with the emeralds, onyx stones, turquoises, and diamonds, which had been given them by the Egyptians. Never before had the vale of Feiran been distinguished by such magnificence, and the youths of both Israel and Midian sought to gather from it all the enjoyment it could afford.

Moses gave to his wife a royal reception, as she came to him again from her father's hand. It was cheering to her soul to meet the women of Israel, and receive the cordial welcome which seemed almost to enthrone her as a queen. Miriam the aged, with the glow of her loving heart not yet touched with jealousy, gave her all honor, and the maidens, led by the

gifted Tirzah, bowed before her to honor her as their mother in all that pertained to the glory of the nation. Keturah and Hagar, with their troop of companions, the fairest of the Midianites, rejoiced in the friendship of the Israelites, and a compact of undying affection was entered into between them.

The feast came to an end with the closing of the day, but the friendship it called into existence did not speedily pass away. That generation dwelt in peace. The bitter strife of hate was only awakened in the onward march of the next generation.

The day following this great feast, Moses resumed his labors in rendering judgment to all of his people who came to him. There were so many of these that all the day, from morning until evening, his time was consumed in attending to their wants. He heard them patiently and gave them just counsels, and caused the wrong-doers to restore or repair the wrongs done. Jethro sat by his side, listening, as Moses expounded to them the law concerning their mutual relations, and taught them the way to preserve the peace. Jethro was accustomed to organizing his people, and from long experience knew how to deal with men. He saw that the zeal of Moses was hindering him from successfully accomplishing his work. After carefully examining the plan of Moses, he said to him :

“The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee; for the thing is too heavy for thee: thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice; I will give thee counsel, and God be with thee: be thou for the people to Godward, and bring thou the causes unto God; and thou shalt teach them the statutes and the laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people also shall go to their place in peace.” (Ex. 18: 17-23.)

Moses, convinced of the reasonableness of this method, immediately put it into execution. The Wady Feiran thus became the scene of the systematic organization of the tribes of Israel. Beneath its majestic palms, and by its flowing fountains, a

system of government was set up, which looked to God as the Supreme Ruler, and in which every man had his part to perform. It enabled the people to realize more clearly how God was leading them, and it increased their obedience to the chief whom God had placed over them. Filled with this spirit, they could look back to the pleasant vales of Goshen without rebellion in their hearts, and could contemplate the distresses through which they had passed without murmuring; for here, in the wilderness, they could worship God and trust in him.

When Moses informed them that the Mount of God was a day's march farther on, they unhesitatingly prepared to leave the beautiful vale and enter on the journey that would lead them thither.

Jethro continued with Moses many days, and he saw the administration of justice gradually becoming more systematic under the united judicial labors of the wise elders of the host. This system also won many to a hearty interest in the government who otherwise would have lent no real assistance to their prince.

As the time drew near for the continuation of the march of the Israelites, Jethro announced his intended departure. Once more the pleasant relations existing between the two people were ratified; blessings were invoked by them upon each other, and Jethro and his

household, his guards and servants, his young men and maidens, bade farewell to Feiran, and turned their faces toward their verdant wadies east of mighty Horeb.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ENCAMPED AT SINAI.

THE encampment in Feiran had continued long enough to restore the strength and courage of the Israelites. It also gave opportunity for a better organization of the host, as suggested by Jethro, and entered into by Moses and the elders of the tribes. It had also restored good feeling amongst the people, and the reception given to Jethro had made them feel that in the wilderness were many who would befriend them, and be as brothers to them. The unexpected beauty and fertility of Feiran had also taught them to trust in their leader, who knew where the choicest vales of the desert were situated, and how they could be approached.

The trumpet sounded the call to go forward. The cloud had lifted above the beautiful valley, and was stretching toward the southeast. The tents of the elders were quickly removed by the young men of their households, and already by the morning's light Moses and his household were on the way, having given instructions to the guides to follow with the host as rapidly as their strength would permit. The leaders

had gone on swift camels through the short, narrow, rugged, rock-inclosed pass, called the Nagb Hawa—the Pass of Wind. The host followed by the broader and longer Wady es Sheikh, which was more easily traveled. Some of the bolder men, encamping in the neighboring vales, observed the cloud, and followed the general direction of its course, meeting the host at length in Er Rahah. The place selected for their next encampment was a long day's march for the leaders; but the most active of the host would be able that night to encamp before the Mount of God, while it would be many days before the herdsmen, with their herds and flocks, would be able to join the host in their encampment.

As the people drew near they were astonished at the multitude of immense crags and steep mountains. On every hand the great granite masses rose in cones, pillars, needles, scarred and riven bluffs, shelving slopes, perpendicular faces, overhanging crags, bare and desolate red granite peaks separated by immense chasms, and ridges following ridges as far as the eye could see. Their surroundings were stupendous, and the massiveness of the mountains impressed them with awe, similar to the feeling with which they had first gazed up to the cloud above them.

At length they arrived in the very heart of the mountains; the order was given to arrange their

encampment. In the whole of the great peninsula there was no other spot so suitable for them to pitch their tents. Immediately in front of them was an immense perpendicular mass of rock, rising hundreds of feet above the plain, seemingly inaccessible on the side facing them ; back of it rose a succession of peaks, higher still. In front of this magnificent mountain was a broad plain, with two other plains opening into it, stretching toward the north. One of them, the Nagb Hawa, through which Moses had approached the Mount, and the other, Wady es Sheikh, through which the host had come. The great plain was the Wady er Rahah, in which there was plenty of room for the entire host to encamp. Along the sides of the mountain, extending toward the south, were the Wady el Leja and Wady Shubeib, while south of the loftiest peak was another plain, called by the name Sebaiyeh.

When Moses had attended to the encamping of the people, he went up into the mountain, out of which God called to him, saying :

“ Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel : Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : for all the earth is mine ; and ye

shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Ex. 19 : 4-6.)

When Moses returned to his tent, the trumpets were blown, calling the elders into his presence, and to them he delivered the words of the Lord. The elders went to their tents and called their people before them, and gave them these words; and the people all over the camp answered the same thing, saying: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

When the elders had given their report of the words of the people, Moses again entered into the mountains and told the Lord what the people had promised. Then the Lord said to Moses:

"Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever. Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai, and thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying: Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when

the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." (Ex. 19: 9-13.)

Moses returned to his camp, and again called the elders. By this time the tents of the various households were in their places, but the toil of setting up the tents, with the dust of the journey from Feiran, had soiled their garments and defiled their persons. Cleanliness was demanded of those who served God. Purity of person was required of all who sought purity of heart. At once all over the camp the cleansing began. No defilement was allowed to be about their persons or their tents; and with garments washed and thoughts pure they presented themselves in one mighty host before the Lord on the third day.

The host knew that there was to be a wonderful revelation of the majesty of God, and with profound awe they gazed upon the immense mass of granite before their camp. Early in the morning they were ready in the order of their families for Moses to lead them out of the camp to the foot of the mountain, to behold the glory of God.

The awful majesty of the divine revelation burst upon them. The cloud of the Lord's presence settled down upon the mountain, hiding its lofty summit from their view. Out of the cloud darted lines of lightning, while peal after peal of awful thunder, beginning in the cloud, rolled out over the mountain,

reverberating from peak to peak, and shaking with the mighty rolling the most massive of the mountains. In the midst of this, out of the cloud pealed forth the sound of a trumpet, so loud as to be heard above the rolling of the thunder, startling every one in the camp and awakening within them the deepest reverence. As Moses led the people to the foot of the mountain, almost as if into the jaws of destruction, they saw a flame of fire descending out of the cloud upon the summit of the mountain, and the people knew that in the fire was God. As he touched the mountain, it quaked beneath his tread and sent forth great clouds of smoke, which in swift rolling masses curled upward toward the sky. It appeared as if the fierceness of the splendor of the Lord was consuming the massive mountain. Amidst this splendor the voice of the trumpet pealed louder and louder, and with long-continued sound, as if all the trumpeters on the earth were at once sounding the call to the hosts of men.

Then standing before the people, and looking toward the mount, Moses spoke to God, and God, by a voice as that of a man, answered him, calling him up into the mount. While the people gazed upon him he went forth into the Wady el Leja, and was soon hidden from their further sight, as he went up into the mount, and in the midst of the smoke and the flame met God and talked with him.

Again God sent him down to caution the people against curiosity and defilement, lest by so doing they be destroyed. When Moses returned to the people, he gave them the commands of the Lord, and then all stood in silence as the fire in wondrous majesty and power flamed about the top of the great rock, while out of it came a voice, speaking words which all heard and understood. With fear they listened, for it was God, saying :

“ I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me ; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

“ Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

“ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work : but the

seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

“Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“Thou shalt do no murder.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.” (Ex. 20 : 1-17.)

Then the voice ceased, and the thunderings, the flashes of lightning, the trumpet sounds, and the smoke became greater than they were before. The people trembled, and drew away from the mountain, and said to Moses :

“Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

Moses kindly reassured them by saying :

“Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not.”
(Ex. 20: 19, 20.)

Then Moses once more turned from the people, and drawing near the thick darkness now surrounding the mountain, went up into it, to receive from the Lord the laws by which the children of God were to be governed in the future.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PEACEFUL TIMES FOR ISRAEL.

THE plain Er Rahah was well adapted to the needs of the great host, and the tents were pitched more securely than at any previous camping-place; for in this valley they were to remain until thoroughly organized for the onward march. They were now to be educated in the ways of the Lord, so that, as a chosen nation of redeemed ones, they might show to the whole earth the principles of right, even judgment. Oppression, usury, cruelty, and selfishness were to be repudiated, and they were to be obedient to the law as it had been pronounced by the Most High from Sinai's awful mountain.

Above all, they were to be true in serving the Lord. All idolatry was to be severely punished, and they were to remember that the Lord who led them out of Egypt was their King, and he alone was to be worshiped. But their lives were not clouded in gloom, nor one continual round of self-sacrifice. On the contrary, there was much gladness among them, and their enthusiasm broke out repeatedly in festivities and rejoicings. They were free from bondage;

the rule exercised over them was fatherly in its nature, and everything contributed to their well-being; for they were to grow and become a mighty nation among the nations of the earth.

When their camp became settled, and the people began to learn to do the will of the Lord, Neariah reminded Tirzah of her promise, that when they arrived before the Mount of the Lord they should be given to each other in marriage. There was now no hindrance in the way, and the preparations for the solemn event proceeded under the supervision of the leading ones in Israel. The sacredness, joy, and beauty of the marriage rite in Israel was emphasized in this instance, and the approval of heaven's King was invoked to rest upon it. As a brave captain in the host, Neariah was surrounded by the young men, who, in the gayest uniforms, and with all the parade of their newly-acquired military standing, sought to add importance to the occasion.

They were met by a band of maidens, who were equally delighted in the superior charms of Tirzah among the maidens of Israel, and were only satisfied when they saw her decked for the wedding with jewels and metal ornaments, so as to sparkle with all the colors of the rainbow and to glisten with splendor from head to foot.

With serene dignity the solemn words binding

them together for life were spoken, and then they proceeded to their joyful festivities. In these, all the merriment of their hearts broke forth; and with the sound of musical instruments, with dancings, shoutings, and the presenting of gifts, they held such a festival as astonished the desert people who were in their camps.

The joy of the bridegroom and his bride stirred the hearts of many, and one of them was Shafre. He had no beautiful ornament to bestow upon the bride, nor rings of precious metal for the bridegroom; for when he escaped from the mines he came to the host utterly without possessions. But he called down upon them the blessings and mercies of God out of his wealth of love and prayer. In the consecration of his heart to God, he was enabled calmly to surrender his earthly love, and in giving Tirzah to another he felt the sweet peace of his religion sustaining him. His heart was full of trust, and he realized that in due time the Lord would reveal to him the way in which he should go.

Bela was watching the countenance of the fair Keturah during the solemn ceremony, and as he saw the tears starting from her eyes his own heart leaped in hope. Bela had been true to his blood-covenant brother, and never, by word or deed, had he interposed between Amal and Keturah. He could not

longer suppress the love in his heart. He had restrained himself for months, and now all the force of his pent-up love broke forth. In the hours that followed the festivities he sought Keturah, and beneath the palms of their own quiet vale freely spoke his love. It was at the right time, for the maiden was ready to hear him. She had known him from earliest childhood. In fact, they had never been separated, except when he journeyed with the caravan to the cities of the distant East. She knew the noble, truth-loving nature which he had always displayed, and never more conspicuously than in his relations with Amal at her command. She had always loved him as a brother; but when she saw the mildness fade from the eyes of Amal she began to love Bela with more than a sister's affection. When she beheld the happiness of Tirzah as she stood triumphant in her bridal robes, she yearned for Bela's voice to speak words of love to her; and as he came in his noble, true, manly way and sought her, she could not say nay, but, with a sense of rest at last, gave herself to him till death should separate them.

It was not many weeks after the wedding in Er Rahah, when messengers came to the camp of Israel, inviting Neariah and his bride to a similar festival in the favorite palm grove of the Midianites. The chiefs of Midian were all present, and Jethro, the aged priest,

presided at the nuptials. Hobab, the keen-eyed scout, stood at Bela's right hand, and Hagar stood by the side of Keturah.

The camp-fires beneath the palms blazed high, for scores of the choicest sheep were slaughtered to feed the host of guests. What a wealth of provisions there was! For the liberal hospitality of the Midianites led them into extravagant displays of their bounty. Keturah was clothed in what the desert maidens prized above all others, richly-colored robes from Babylon. She wore a coronet of pearls, and upon her fair neck was a necklace of turquoise, while brilliant emeralds glistened upon her shoulders and arms. Never had she appeared more beautiful than in her bridal robes, and the heart of her husband rejoiced in her.

Bela was also magnificently attired. The Midianite chiefs were accustomed to dress richly. They were enabled to do so because of their caravan trade; and now Bela was robed so handsomely that the singers of the tribes were inspired to sing their praises in the most exalted language.

Great was the gayety that followed. The Midianites were as happy a people as any that dwelt on the face of the earth, and in their festivities they gave abundant evidences of the freedom of their spirit. This bright festival had no foe to molest it, no enemy to

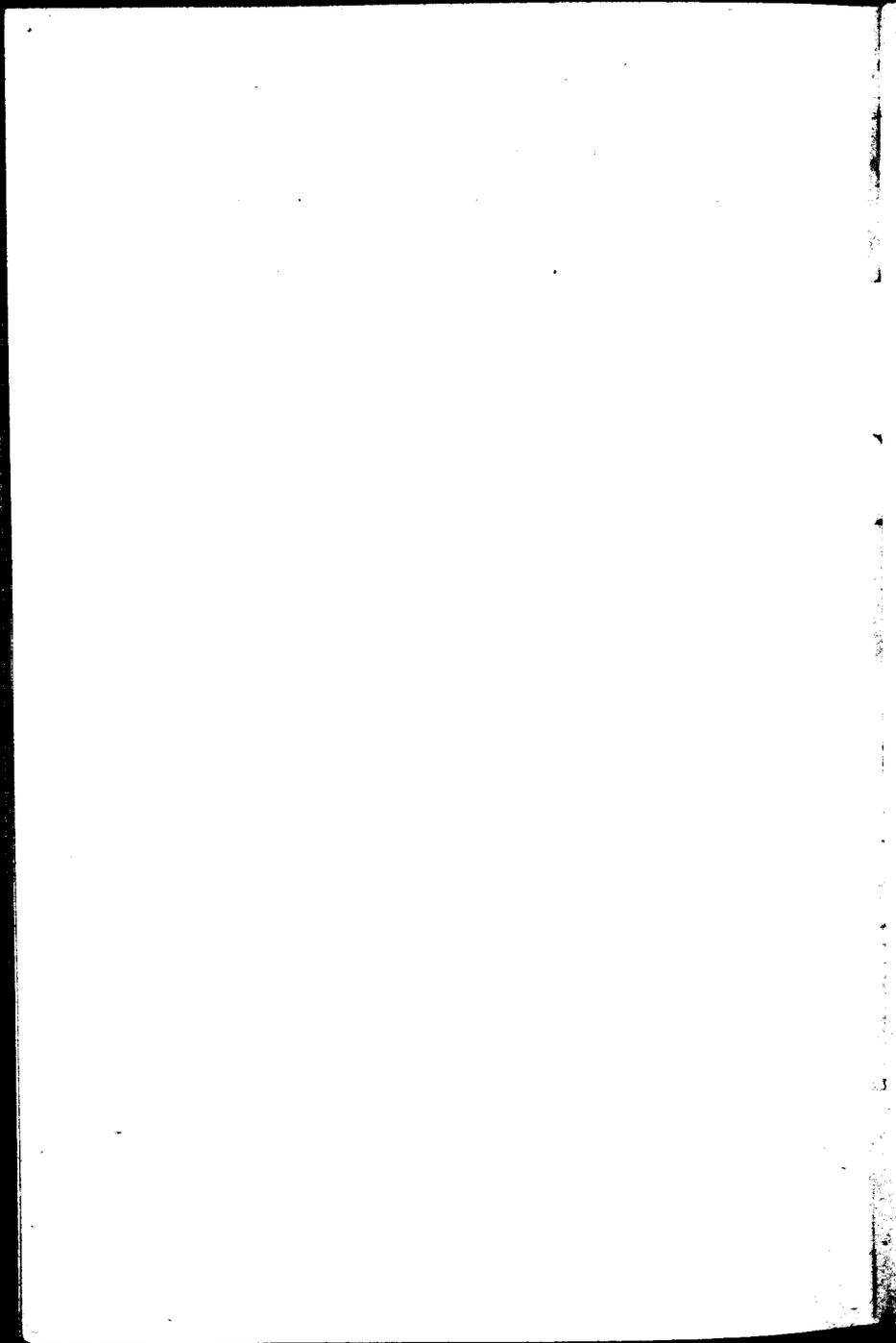
bring bitterness to mar their gladness; but, as the hours of the festal night rolled away, their joy steadily increased. Day after day the feast continued until the bridal week was passed, and then Bela took Keturah to his tent, and the people returned to their own camps.

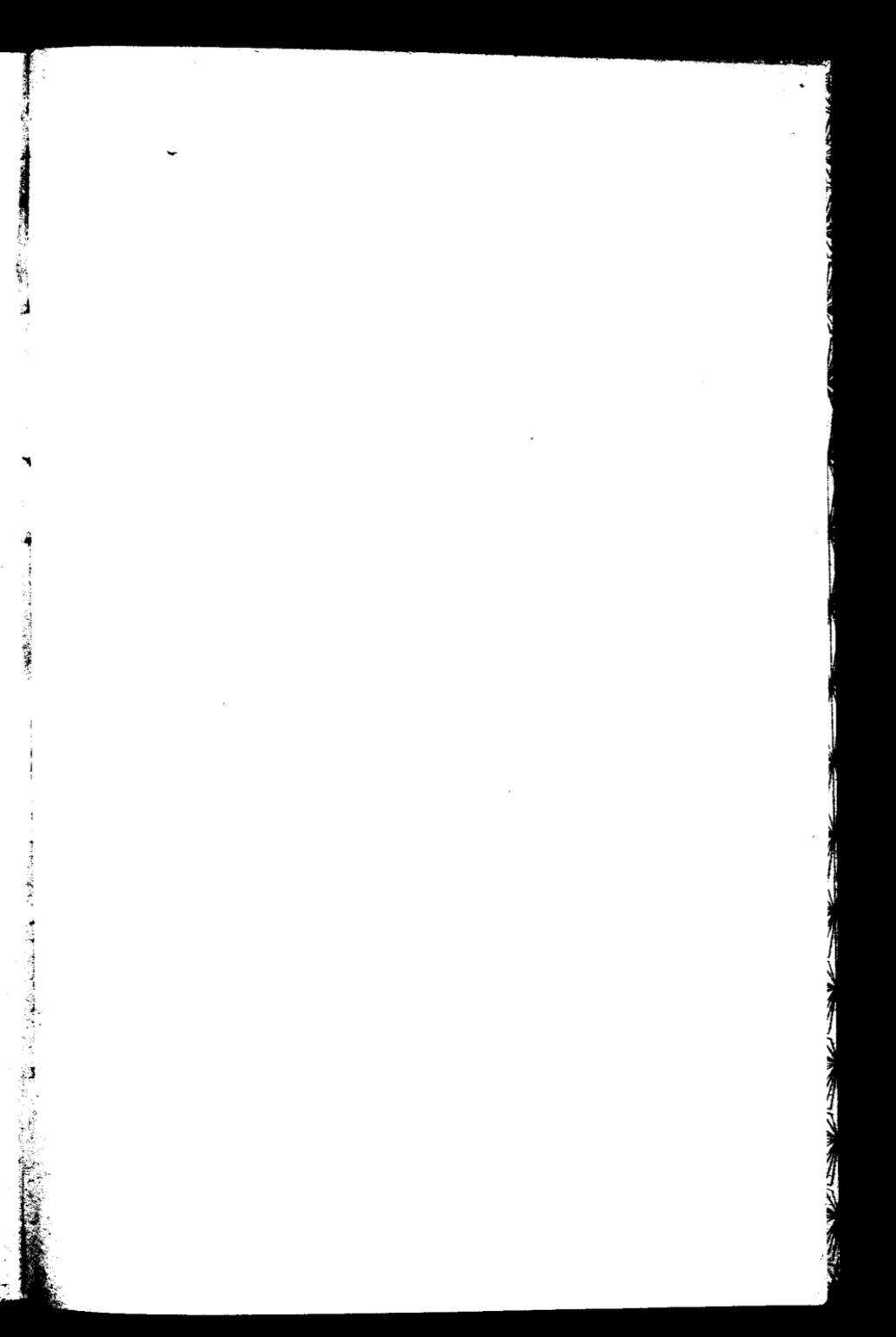
It was not long until they were called together for another scene of joy, for the time had come when Kenkenes, with all the ardor of his noble nature, found that Hagar was essential to his happiness. Once more the same parties assemble, and as the camp-fire is replenished, so as to thoroughly illumine the place, the same vows are spoken, the same glad smiles are seen, the same hopefulness breaks forth into expressions of joy, and all the assembled multitude join in glad sympathy with the happy bridal pair.

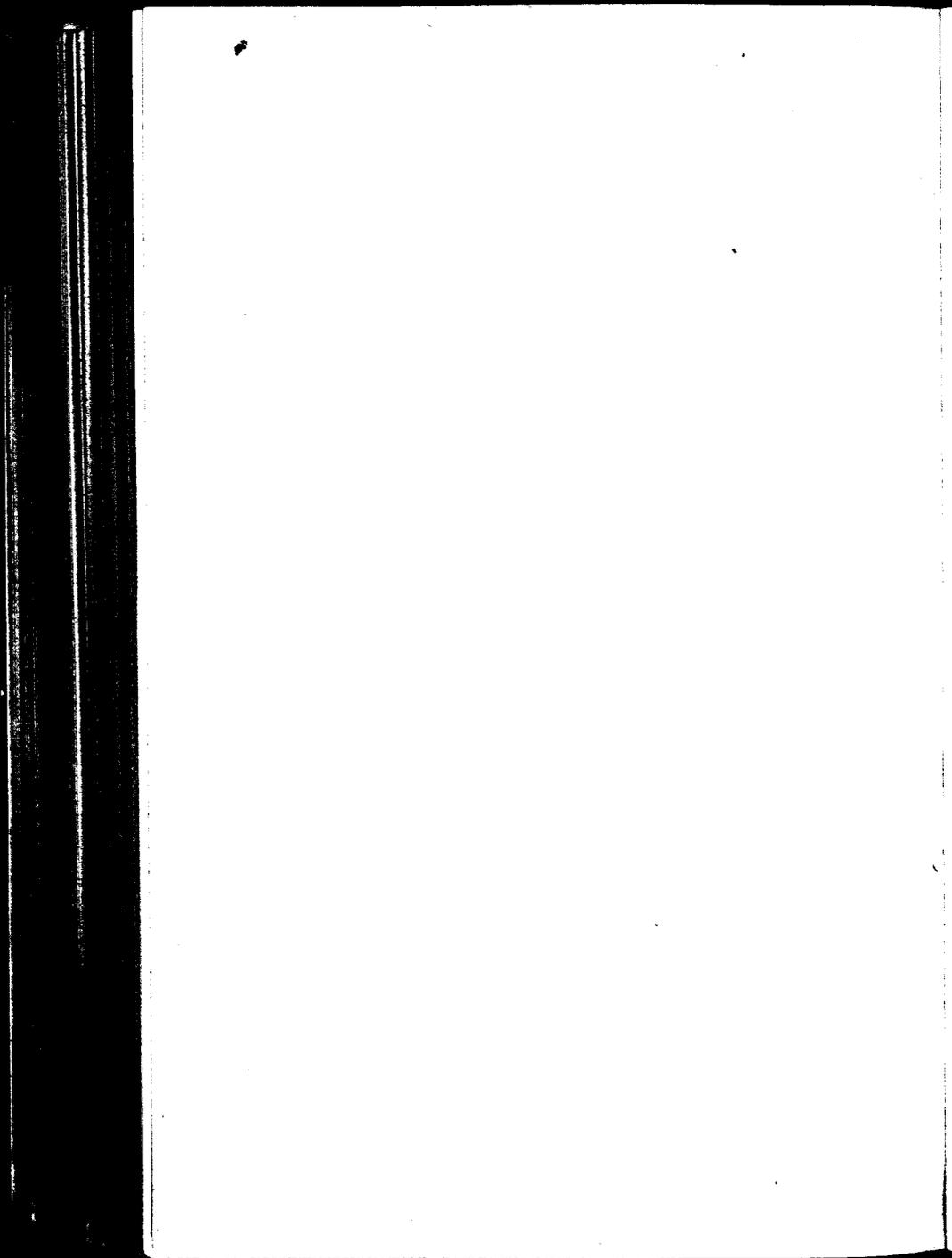
As the feast wears away they review the history of the past. The minstrels have learned the story, and they sing of the events in the life of the devout Kenkenes and the faithful Hagar, who are now so happy sitting in the centre of the group, fondly listening to the touching and sometimes thrilling occurrences of their short but eventful life. The singers also tell in their rhythmic song the story of Tirzah and Neariah, of Keturah and Bela, of Amal and Shafre, of Moses and the Exodus, of Amalek and Midian, and then carry it

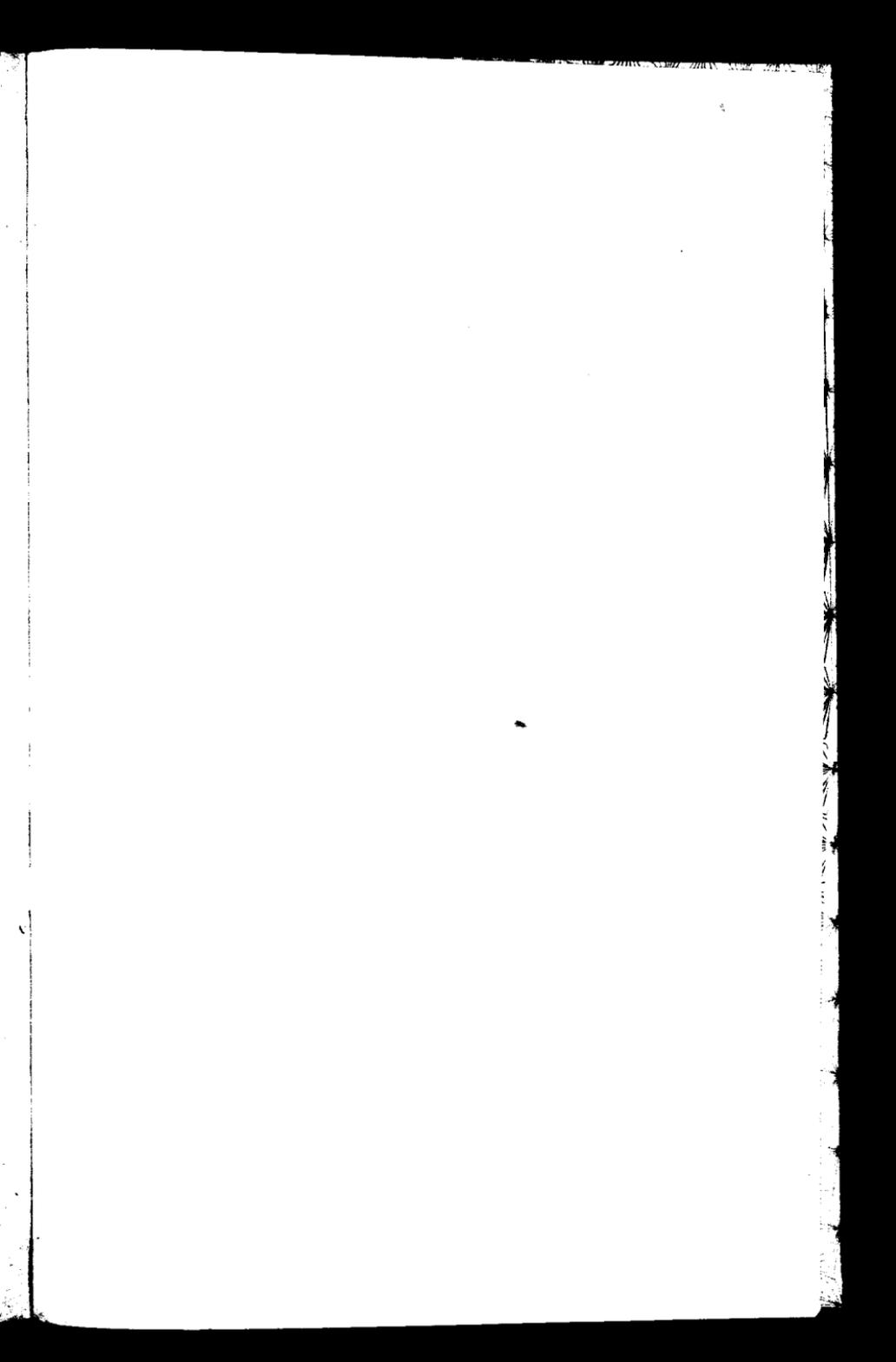
on in prophecy until the happy period when the will of the Lord of heaven shall be fully accomplished, and all his people enthroned in the glory that shall never know an end.

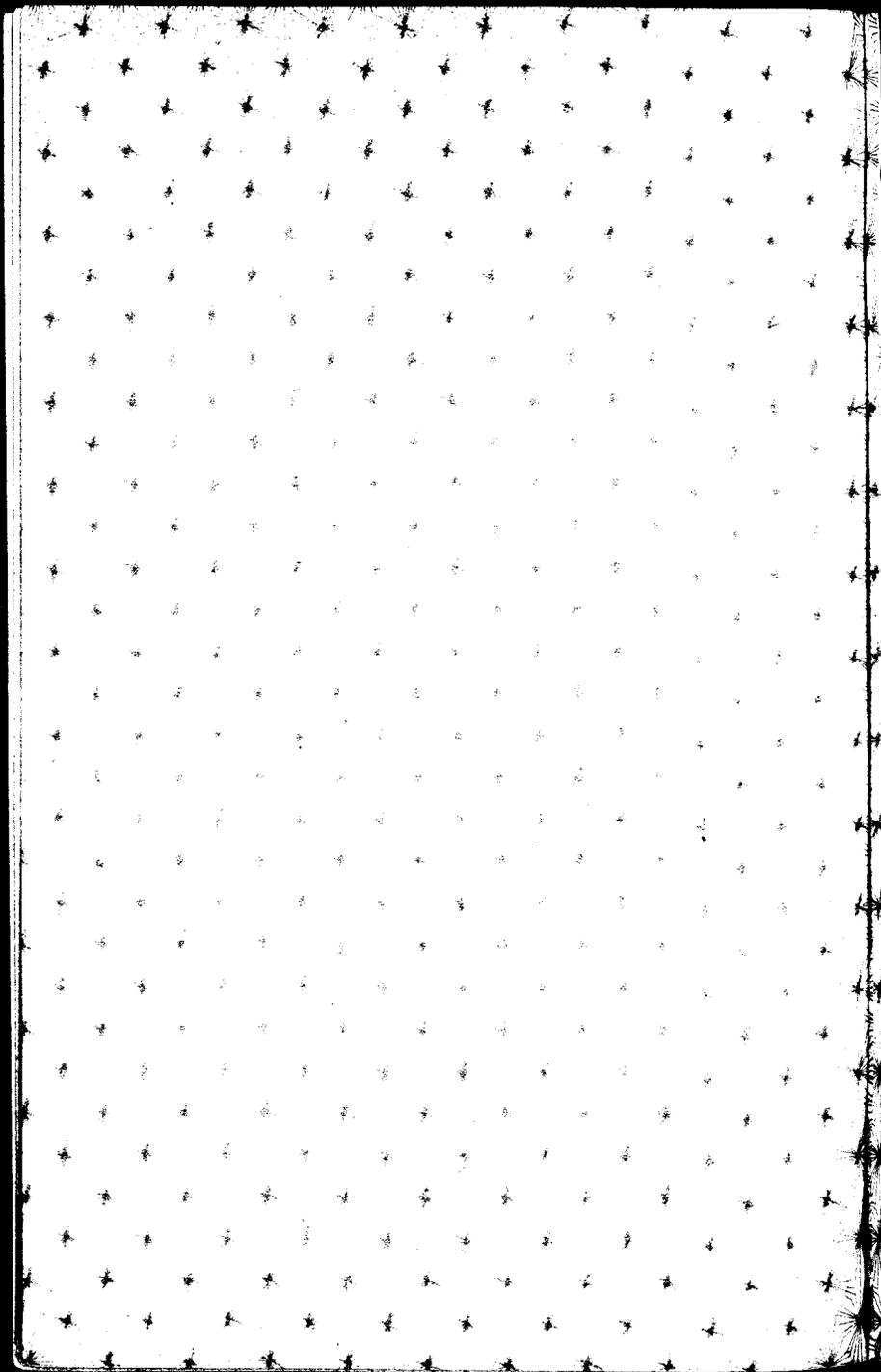
THE END.

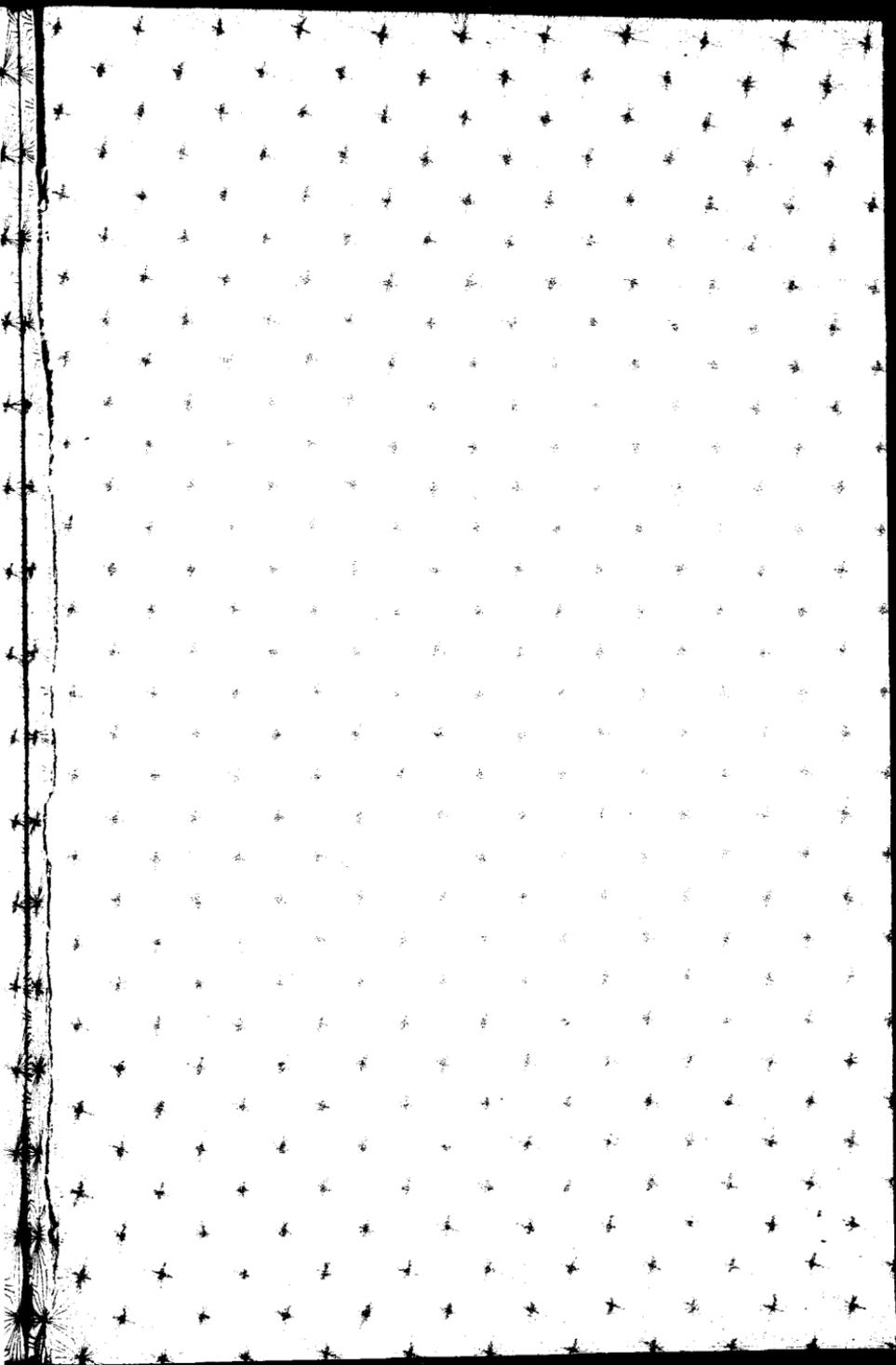












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