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nake," an

day had been perfect, and now the sianting rays of the sun lit up with mellowed radiance the charming ed with the brilliant tapestry of

green. The hills and gentle depressions around the little village of Nazareth, presented a scene of panoramic beauty, worthy of an artist's canvas. light of a clear spring day, the scene was now softened into a subdued yet undiminished glory in the yellow light Just as the sun was beginning to dis-

appear behind the mountain's graceful outline, two men appeared, walking toward the village. They were in ear-nest conversation; and occasionally they gianced at each other in surprise, as if each was pained at the utter-ances of his companion.

nnees of his companion.

There was likeness, yet contrast, in the appearance of the two. Both were young, both were notive and well-formed, and there was an earnestness in their demeanor and conversation which showed that both were deep thinkers and thoroughly interested in their thoughts. Both were an air of leadership, as if accustomed to impress thought and action upon their comthought and action upon their com-panions, and to mould others to their

The contrast was in their looks and In their demeanor. One was light of complexion, with brown, wavy hair and blue, frank eyes. He was less graceful than his companion, and more selfconscious in movement and speech; in-deed, he would be taken at a glance for one of the uncultured yet honest countrymen of Galliee, whom the educated aristocrats of Judea affected to despise. It was us clear that the other was one of those aristocrats. His dark eyes flashed with the pride of intellectual strength and superiority. His movements were more studied than those of the Galilean; and indeed, his entire dethe Galllean; and indeed, his entire demeanor was lacking in the open frankness so marked in his friend. He was one who was accustomed to deep, meditative thought on every action, self-interest, rather than generous impulse, being his guide.

As they commenced the ascent of the hill on whose summit Nazareth was built, the Judean stopped abruptly and eyed with apparent disdain the charm-

eyed with apparent disdain the charm- I know not."

No wonder you Galileans are alway looking for something supernatural, "One who gazes day and night, winter and summer, on the dreary monotony of hill and plain, un-relieved by the brilliance of glistening castle, dome and palace, can find relief from the dull thoughts such scenes inspire, only by looking above the earth, and hoping to find something there. It is only the involuntary upward glancing of the eye made weary by

"Thou dost not understand----"Let thine eyes rest on such scenes as we of Jerusalem see daily," inter-rupted the Judean, "and thou wouldst seek no farther for satisfaction. What does the world hold more beautiful than the temple of Solomon, reprodu in added splendor and magnificence by the great Herod? Or the house of Herod, surpassing all other palaces of and look down upon Jerusalem; thou take part in the stirring scenes enacted

such credulity to tales of the miracul-ous? What nonsense is it thou wert telling me but now? What means thy story of a virgin's miraculous concertion-of a notable birth in Bethlehe lights, angelic voices, the shepherds' adoration? Is it not that thine ignorant townspeople, returning from the taxing in the city of David, were filled with wine, and have seen these sights in their delirium? It is such a story as our old dames and senile chroni

may tell; but is it worthy the belief of such as thou and I?" He paused, and the look of contempt

"And who is this king of the Jews? What need have we of a king? The mighty Augustus, in the seat of the Caesars, the great and wise Herod, the place of the Maccabees, have given us splendor, magnificence-

"And taxation," interrupted Ezra, with a quiet smile. It was a home thrust. The Judean colored deeply, and for a moment was at a loss for

partry sestertil." said he at length, "compared with the glory given us by the splendid rule of Rome?"

"Ab Sylva-"

"Ah, Sylvanus" said the Galilean, "thou sayest too truly that Rome gives us her glory. Israel, intended by Jehovah to be the light of the world, has become as the not a borrowed radiance on Israel, and

the Judean. But it was only transito-ry. As the brief twilight began to fall they entered the outskirts of the wered Herod. But they sayest, has

cal answers. His mind was no longer on Jerusaiem, Bethlehem, the King of he Jews, Nazareth, Herod, or Caesar ision of beauty before him.
At length he left them, going to his

odging, while Ezra walked with Mir-I fear thy friend," she said with a "He fears thee not, my Mirlam," ans-

wered Ezra, with a good-natured, ban-tering smile. "Admiration"-Would his admiration were fear, hatred,—any feeling but the one ha is sinister. It requires only an occa-sion to make him thine enemy, Pray led his admiration for thy betrothed

Laughing at her fears, Ezra left her at her father's door, and then walked houghtfully homeward beneath the

CHAPTER II. Jerusalem.

Herod's palace lay in glittering splendor under the brilliant May sun. The streets of Jerusalem were thronged vith traders and totterers, who exchanged friendly greetings, good-na-tured badinage, or threats and vio-

tions, in strange, fantastic garb. They gazed with interest on the magnificent buildings, which the luxurious but prodigal and oppressive Herod had built. The scene was strange to men who had traveled for days and weeks smid the deserts and barren hills of Arabia and Judea. Travel-stained and weary, it was no wonder that they walked as in a daze; nor that they were the object of remark and ridicule

from the well-dressed loungers.
One group of these travelers, however, differed from the rest. Their dress was strange to Jerusalem, but it was not grotesque. They were men of sober, thoughtful mien, their faces furrowed with the lines of deep, serious reflection. Even the younger men of reflection. Even the younger men of the group were venerable. As they

Taking up their lodging in the inn.

seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Of all who came to see them of those

Scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee and Essene, they asked this question; until the city was filled with the strange rumor that at last Jehovah had looked upon his people and sent them their de-liverer. The rumor reached the ears of Herod, brought to him by curious, won-

Jews?" they asked, "and who is he?" Herod, lying on his bed in his richlyfurnished palace, was greatly disturbed by these rumors. He was in the last year of his life. Old before his time, wasted by disease, brought upon him by his excesses, filled with unavailing remorse, for his murder of wife, child-ren and friends, his peace of mind was gone from him, and even the shad-ow of a rumor was enough to cause him serious fear. Had one come to dishim serious fear. Had one come to dis-pute his right to rule? Was the power of Rome, represented by him, to be de-Who and where was the King of

Herod could not rest until these questions were answered. He could not brook even the thought of a rival beover the Jews, or to endanger the rule

But he was as crafty as he was suspicious. He called into his council chamber all the chief priests and elders of the Jews, and asked them where it was probable the expected king was born. They knew that Beth-lehem was the city of David, and the king would likely be of his line. They remembered, also, the prophecy that out of Bethlehem was to come the Deliverto Herod's questioning, they gave the opinion that the new king would be found in Bethlehem.

Dismissing the Jews, Herod lay on his hed for await, above the period of the

his bed for awhile absorbed in thought. The question which had filled Jerusa-lem since the arrival of the wise men rom the east was uppermost in his who is he? What need of another king? Am not I the friend of the Jews and of Caesar? Why, then, are they always looking forward for the

These and other questions which Herod asked himself, are the ones which self-interest and suspicion al-And he would end tre nothing which endangered his throne and the stability of his line of succession. Hence his jealousy and suspicion of this new king

figure appeared. Ah, Sylvanus, is it thou? Thy coming is most opportune. Perhaps thou canst answer this uni-

deliberately toward Herod, concealing most skillfully the interest he felt in the subject; for he had thought deeply on the words of Ezra, while pretending

They say he has been born at Beth-

adoption and by education. "It was a radiant night in springtime. The hills of Bethlehem were bathed in mellow radiance, and there the shepherds watched their flocks. The white roofs of Bethlehem glistened in the moonlight. light. Drowsliy the guard leaned on his spear, watching the dying embers of the fire, and listening to the faint nibbling of the browsing sheep. Far, far away, in the infinite depths of the blue ether, the stars blazed forth their

ight, shedding a mellow radiance on

hill and vale.

is no longer on browsing sheep and dy-ing embers. In rapt amazement his gaze is on the heavens. There, amid the stars, is a point of light no more luminous than they, yet vastly different. Gradually it descends toward the group of shepherds. They spring to their feet in amazement at another apparition. In the midst of the light, forming a nucleus to it, and concentra-ting its brilliance about his person, is ning, his eyes like the sun at noonday, But his aspect, not his manner, is terrible. Voice and words are infinitely gracious and tender. "Fear not," he soothingly says to the quaking shepherds. "For today is born to you in the city of David, a king, who is Christ, the Lord." Then the light breaks into innumerable points, each one a cherub's visage; and from these assembled hosts buses forth the characteristics. bursts forth the chant of praise: to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.' Then, as the glory fades and the heavenly hosts recede from the wondering gaze of the shepherds, fainter and fainter comes the refrain, 'Glory to God In the highest, and on earth peace, good will to

"Such, O Herod," said the young man, his manner suddenly changing from gravity to light raillery, "is the story. Sounds it not like a rhapsody born in the minds of ignorant Galileans, inflamed with the stronger vintage of

and break the yoke of Rome from the easy means of removing him, through his unconsciously manifested by one of his sworn officers, even while he was striving to show himself a friend to Herod!

Sylvanus marked Herod's apparent easy means of removing him, through his unmistakable faith in the coming Messiah, and his opposition to the rule of Rome. In fact, it seemed to him that the destruction of the alleged Christ-child would be the key to open him, "Dost thou think, O Herod, that I believe this story? Roman as I am, and thy officer, may I - can I - turn

Israel has but one king, the great Her-od. When Augustus came to rule, he was the promised Shiloh, ushering in the reign of peace. In him the sceptre has departed from Israel, and the only law-giver we have, or care to have, is thou, my master."

"Wilt thou prove thy devotion?" Hercommand me." exclaimed the other "If thou desirest that this puling infant be found and slain-

"Hold, softly, softly!" whispered lerod, "Be wise and not too hasty. Bethlehem is but six miles distant, and news of danger travels swiftly. But hast thou heard of these wise men who have come from the east to visit and worship this Messiah? The wise are full enough to execute my design; and these wise men shall I use for my pur-pose. Knowest theu that they lodge at the neighboring inn? Bring them hither, Sylvanus, that I may question

form his errand, the conflict of emotions within his soul manifested itself clearly in his face. On the one hand was the hope born of his Jewish origin and training that at some time Israel would be supreme, and her deliverer subdue all enemies under his feet. On the other hand were the desires spring-ing from his present worldly ambitionto rise high in the kingdom of Herod and the empire of Rome. But the strugcided as we weak mortals often decide those questions—from the standpoint of

In a few moments he returned, usherng the magi into Herod's presence. In the meantime the king had completely changed his demeanor. Though still racked with pain, and loathsome with his disease, he assumed a calmness and thoughtfulness which he rightly considered would confirm in the minds of the widespread—that he was an orthodox convert to Judaism, and a believer in the expected Messiah,

His interview with the wise men was So successfully did he conceal his sinister purpose, that he exacted from them a promise to return to him when they had found the child, and bring him word, that he might know where to go, and pay similar devotion Dismissing the travelers, he called they talked in low tones of the plot Herod had in mind. "And to thee, Sylvanus," he said, as their interview closed, "I trust its execution. Let these

save him from my wrath!"

As Sylvanus departed from the council chamber, his thoughts were in a tumuit. Doubt and fear, love and hatred, faith and unbelief struggled together; and it required all his self-control to avoid a betrayal of his emotions o the lolterers among whom he walked. But ringing in his mind, above all his frain he had repeated to Herod: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will to men!"

CHAPTER III.

Bethlehem. The wise men had taken their departure to Bethlehem; and the star went before them and guided them to the

his gaze from her face and figure. To the commonplace questions and remarks of Ezra, he made only mechani-radiant night in springtime. The hills with serious, questioning eyes. Each morning, they gazed at one another with serious, questioning eyes. Each divined the thought of all the rest, and the eldest said with all carnestness and solemnity, "Let us go back by another way; for Herod seeks to do the child harm. He must not know its resting-place." His voice was the voice of all; and with souls satisfied, as the souls of none of the magi of the east had been satisfied before, they took an-other route to their homes.

Herod awaited their return to Jerusalem:—at first patiently, then impatiently, then furious with suspense. The hot irons of remorse and fear were thrust into his soul, and the dread of approaching death was strong within him. Would he die before he could find this king and slay him? Would he leave to weaker and less unscrupulous hands, the fate of the infant rival to his line, and thus endanger the thrones of his sons? The thought was unbearable to him. He could not help knowing that every day his breath was beflesh more loathsome, his pain more in-

of testing the Messiante hope of Ezra and quieting of confirming his own fears; anxiety because he feared Herod's death before plans for the final test could be perfected.

The new king of the Jews must be de-

stroyed, and with Him the Mes-slanic hope, and all rivalry to Roman rule. These objects attained, Sylvanus knew that he would be in the line of preferment in the kingdom of Herod and his successors; and his ambition might even look forward to a position in the court of Caesar. And a deeper, dearer desire prompted him and urged him forward. Since the night when he met the beautiful and virtuous Miriam his thoughts had con-Bethlehem?"

But Herod's manner did not change so readily. During all the recital he had narrowly watched the face of Sylvanus, and had hung on every word with rapt attention. And when the Jew appeared in the looks and words of his young officer, he viewed the expression with alarm; for he saw therein an echo of the universal opinion of the Jews, that a Messiah was to come and break the yoke of Rome from the stantly reverted to her. To possess her was a desire as strong as his ambi-tion; indeed he intended to use his pomore than ordinarily severe paroxysm or pain. As usua, his rear had with his pain and weakness, as also his anxiety to urge forward his ambitious plans. Dismissing the other attendants, he and Sylvanus remained together for a time, in earnest conversa-tion. When Sylvanus arose and turned his face toward the door, there was a gleam in his eye and a firmness in his pared for the supreme event of his life —the casting of a die on which would depend fame and fortune, or disgrace

Three hours later, he was in Bethle-

hem at the head of a cohort of men. with Sylvanus, the Galilean was walk-ing with Miriam on the road southward from Nazareth. Apparently they were prepared for a long journey, for they were in traveling garb, and Ezra carried a bag of provisions, and a bottie of water. They walked in silence for a few miles, and for a time Ezra evaded her questioning glances. But when they had reached the open country, where no pedestrian might meet and overhear them, Ezra turned to her

Miriam, thou wonderest, no doubt, why I have asked thee to go with me to Bethlehem. I have not dared to tell thee until now, for fear the secret might escape and evil consequences follow. Thou must not ask me whence I had the knowledge which I am about to impart to thee. Let me tell thee all, and thou canst decide if my action is wise. When Sylvanus was in Nazareth I repeated to him the story our friends told us of the birth of the virgin's babe, hoping that he, a Jew, would believe the story and confess the miracle. To my surprise, he turned on me with disdain, and with an evil expression on his face, which showed not merely unbelief, but violent opposition He told me, in effect, that wishing for a new king was treason against Rome. From his manner more than from his words, I judged that he would do all in his power to faisify our Messianic hope. The evil thou sawest in his eye was not evil against thee or me; still worse, it was evil against the Lord's

He paused a moment, while Miriam gazed upon him with anxious interest.

"This morning" he continued, "I received from a traveler this message,
"For thy sake, for the sake of Sylvanus, for the sake of the infant king, go at once to Bethlehem.' What evil and violence to the son of the virgin, and fain would I shield him. I take thee with me, Miriam, because if danger threatens the babe, sorrow threatens the mother, and from a countrywoman would be sweet

"What thinkest thou Sylvanus will do?" inquired the anxious Miriam,
"All is conjecture. If Sylvanus is
under the influence of Herod, no evil
will be too great for him to desire yet know nothing." Thus fearing and talking of their fears, they took their way to Bethle-

The City of David was beautiful in the May sun. Peaceful and quiet were its walls and roofs, quiet the hills where the shepherds watched their flocks. But fear and dismay filled the hearts of the people; for an edict of slaughter had gone forth, and this was the hour for its execution. In vain trembling, wild-eyed mothers folded their infants in their arms and bared makin approached from an adjoining the bright eyes and guiden to display the form th

THE INFANT CHRIST tears of Christ himself, shall cry to God for justice and reward!

It was in the midst of this cruel slaughter, that Ezra and Miriam arrived in Bethlehem. The cries of parental grief were ringing through the streets of the city, and the cruel soldiers were just competitive their work. diers were just completing their work

the house where Ezra had reason to believe the Christ-child was. Without hesitating they entered; the house was empty. Wildly and anxiously Exra sped from room to room, hoping yet fearing to find the virgin and her babe. They were not there. As Ezra returned to the entrance and joined Miriam there, Sylvanus and his band of murderers reached the house. It was the only one they had not visited. In all the others they had sought for the object of Herod's wrath, and sialn without the control of the object of

sialn without question or remorse, each innocent babe. Loudly their mailed fists clanged against the door. Over-come by her own thoughts and by the scenes of blood and grief she had wit-nessed. Miriam sank to the floor in a faint as the murderous band rushed into the room. She lay there, a heap of white insensibility. Eyes stood he fore her his drawn sword in his hand. Coming from the light into the semidarkness of the room, Sylvanus at first failed to recognize his former ense.
Sylvanus, who was now his constant floor, he would have advanced rudely, attendant and closest confidant, but Exra opposed him. "Why comest thou hither?" he said in a firm, yet with mingled pleasure and anxiety: constrained voice, eying with grief and pleasure because he saw the opportunity of the bloody swords of Sylvania and his meant have advantaged radely, but Exra opposed him. "Why comest thou hither?" he said in a firm, yet constrained voice, eying with grief and contempt the bloody swords of Sylvania and his meant have advantaged radely.

> "I come by order and authority of Herod," Sylvanus answered, "Stand aside, fellow, that I may do his bid-

grief, half of anger, but all of reproof. Sylvanus recognized the voice, and for summoning all his braggadocia, and steeling his nerves which had been well nigh racked by the scenes and incidents of the day, he cried in his old tone of doubt and disdain, "By Herod's gods, Ezra, I verily believe thou hast behind these thy precious Galilean virgin and her babe, for whom we have sought in blood and death throughout this day. Stand aside, Ezra, that I may interview her on the fatherhood of her child; for even among the plous Gelliens a more ven among the plous Gallleans a maiden may conceive, but a virgin, never."

a virgin, never."

The taunt was more than Ezra could endure. With a cry of execration, he raised his sword and hurled himself on Sylvanus. His first thrust was parried, but a second would have fared ill with the Judean, had not his followers leaped forward and overpowered the indignant man. With a laugh of triumph, Sylvanus siezed the maiden's prostrate form, and unfolding her en's prostrate form, and unfolding her arms, looked eagerly for an infant there. His rough touch brought her back to consciousness, and seeing his brutalized visage and blood-stained hands, she sprang to her feet with a cry of terror, "The Judean! the evil

"Miriam! Miriam!" exclaimed the agonized man. "One look of pity, one word of love. I am not what I seem!" But with another cry of terror, the girl covered her face with her hands and fied to the other side of the room. Sylvanus, overcome by unwonted scenes of blood and by Miriam's aversion to him, burst into a fit of passionate weeping; and commanding his men to follow, rushed into the street, and thence toward Jerusajem. Slowly and sorrowfully, Ezra led

"Ah, Ezra." she sobbed, "has the Jehovah is his father. He will also

be his guardian," answered Ezra de-youtly. With bowed heads and anxious hearts, they took up their weary journey back to Nazareth.

CHAPTER IV.

Tericho. The wretched life of Herod was nearprolong it, he had gone to the warm o try the effect of drinking and bath-ng in the waters there. But it was without avail. He was dying by slow outrefaction; and no healing waters cuting on him due punishment for his

Accordingly, he set out to return to Jerusalem, but reaching Jericho, he could go no farther, and there he lay down upon his death bed.

Since the terrible day at Bethlehem, Sylvanus had plunged into all the ex-cesses of the corrupt court of Herod, in the hope of gaining respite from at Miriam's loathing of him. But one feeling he nursed and encouraged to the utmost-hatred for Ezra. Whether justly or not, he laid on him the blame for the evil impression of him which had been made on Miriam's mind. He was sure that the bloody deed per-formed by him in Bethlehem, which he regarded merely as a duty to Herod, was construed by Ezra and Miriam not only as an act of cruelty but as an attempt to destroy the Jewish Messiah He was fully aware that they would line; that he would recognize and acknowledge, as soon as anyone, a properly accredited Christ, coming as ruler of the Jews. This he would fain have the devout Miriam believe, though it is doubtful if he believed it himself. But he knew that Miriam would not hold this opinion of him, or bestow upon him any thought of love, as long as she was under Ezra's influence.

Therefore, it was not merely as a

rival, but chiefly as an unfavorable mentor, that he feared and hated his former friend. Since he would give anything his life held for the love of this girl, he was willing to do every-thing possible to remove this obstacle to the accomplishment of his hopes. But another duty now devolved upon im. In the weak imeballity of his last

months of life, Herod insisted on hav-ing Sylvanus as his constant attend-ant. This duty was not so trying, as long as others shared the watch with him. But when, as was often the case, he was left in the silent watches of the night, alone with the sick man, his position was one of most intense fear and dread. An innocent man would have been able, without fear, though not without disgust and loathing, to watch at such a death-bed; counting the quickened pulsations, inhaling the flercely heated breath, and stifling un-

A SKETCH

By

Willard Done

but not its remorse. When in the silence of the night, Herod's constant silence of the night, Herod's constant moan of pain changed to a piercing shriek of agonized remorse, as the images of his victims rose before him in his delirium, Sylvanus saw the blood of the murdered innocents, and heard the agonized shrieks of the defenseless mothers. Time and again did his cry of terror echo Herod's; time and again did he rush trembling to the couch, fall down before it, and vainly seek for comforting companionship from the comforting companionship from the other victim of fear and remorse. And when at length his watch was relieved, he would hasten into the refectory of the palace and there strive to drown in wine and bolsterous companionship the

One night as Sylvanus and some other officers of Herod were watching at the bed of death, the king asked, half in

It was a difficult question for servile flatterers of royalty to answer. As they hesitated, Herod watched them with a smile of derision and contempt. "Know ye not?" he said at length, "that I understand the felings of the Jews toward me? Mourn? Why, they will laugh with glee. Songs and prayers of gratitude to God will ascend from every synargorie and every how. from every synagogue, and every house will be a sanctuary of praise,"

For a moment he was silent; then he continued in a low voice, which the watchers gathered close around the bed to hear: "But I would he mourned. I would have it said that never did king pass away amid such universal sorrow.

Wailing and weeping and wringing of hands must follow my departure."

Again he paused, and a gleam of demoniac joy illuminated his countenance. It was as if the prince of devils was incorpanted in the second seco incarnate in him, bringing about the consummation of all the flendish actions of a lifetime. Again he spoke, and his voice was still lower: "Listen, sylvanus and Alexas. Let all the chief men of the Jews in all the provinces be gathered together in the hippodrome at Jericho, to await the hour of my death. As soon as my death is an-nounced, let all these Jews be put to death, and word of the slaughter spread throughout the land. In sylvania is a throughout the land. In every province, in every village, nay, in every household, there will be mourning at the death of Herod. And if mourning is dear to the departing soul, mine shall lenve the earth with sweetest incense of tears and grief!"

Accustomed though those men were to Herod's acts of blood, they stood aghast at so appailing a command. Hundreds of innocent men to be slain, thousands of unfortunates bereaved to throughout the land. In every province,

sands of unfortunates bereave satisfy the vanity of a dying mad-man! As if stricken dumb with amazement, breathlessly awaited his further

greater difficulty: 'To thee, Sylvanus, is intrusted the proscription. Thou must prepare the lists and gather my death-comrades together. Not a word of this must be uttered, lest they divine my purpose. To thee, Alexas, is in-trusted the slaughter. Let not pity or remorse turn thy hand and heart from the task. Though the hippodrome run blood the best among the Jews, my fellow travelers shall be noble enough

The edict had gone forth. If it was to be obeyed, no time must be lost. Herod had but a few more weeks of life. It would take time to send the summons into all Jewry, and gather the leaders of the Jows. Therefore Sy vanus must go about his work at once.

Dark and thoughtful was his face as a left the death-chamber. Suddenly he left the death-chamber. Suddenly his brow lightened with a gleam of joy and resolution, "And why not?" he exclaimed beneath his breath, "Is not the proscription in my hands? Have I not received from Herod full authority? Why should I hesitate? Does Exra should I remove him. Does he poison Miriam's mind against me? Then must he die. If he makes me appear to her as an apostate Jew, capable of des-troying not only helpless innocence, but the promised Christ as well, she will hold me in abhorrence. Is not my justification great enough? That she may love me, she must understand me; that she may understand me, my maligner must die. There is no other way." And Ezra's name was added to the list of

Mingled wonder and dismay spread throughout the land, as letters bearing Herod's seal were received by all the leaders of the Jews, commanding them under pain of death and the confisca-tion of all their property, to assemble

in the hippodrome at Jericho, Ezra carried his summons to Miriam, and together they considered its import. Almost involuntarily they associated it with Sylvanus, and that association made it evil. It seemed strange to Ezra that he, a humble, obscur-young man of Nazareth, should be sum moned with the noblest and greatest men of his own and other cities. This movement suspicious in his eyes. Miriam shared his fears and suspicions, and contrary to his earnest wishes, she determined to share his fate, whatever that might be. Accordingly, when he journeyed to Jericho, she went with him.
It is unnecessary and it would be

painful to the reader to describe the death of Herod. He died, as every immoral tyrant must, with naught but remorse behind him and fear of retribu-tion to come. But these feelings did not prompt him to revoke the cruel or-der he had given for the destruction of the lowich bedern. of the Jewish leaders. When his spirit left its decaying tenement and went to its reward, that prospective slaugh-ter was left, to go with past murders, and blacken his memory. To the last moment of consciousness, he had urged his officers not to neglect his wishes re-garding the universal mourning.

Crowded into the great circus were the Jews who had been gathered from all parts of Palestine. As they con-versed upon the strange events which versed upon the strange events which were occurring, conjecture was answered by conjecture, but no one among them knew the truth.

So passed the few weary days before the tyrant's death. But though the prisoners in the circus were necessarily inactive, and incapable of discovering the dealer concerning them there was

the design concerning them, there was one outside who was using all the resources of her woman's wit to wring from Herod's officers the secret.

It was the night of Herod's death. Sylvanus had watched at his bedside until brain and nerves ached and tingled

But he had not noticed that a silent figure followed him into the passage, and stood with bated breath to hear the scraps of laughter, song and conversation which came faintly from the room. Crouching close to the wall, lest one should touch her in passing, Miriam listened eagerly for some word to relieve her mind of its suspense. Long she waited, until the sounds from above became boisterous and ribaid. Two hours of weary waiting had almost plunged her into despair, when a woman's wild laugh and wilder question rang out: "Sylvanus, to what new use is our hippodrome to be put? Dost thou think it well for thee and Alexas to use it as a shambles?"

"Silence, woman!" cried Sylvanus in alarm. "Dost thou not know—"
A peal of scarcastic laughter drowned

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A peal of scarcastic laughter drowned his voice, and in confusion he left the room, rushed through the passage, almost brushing against Mirlam, and reentered the death-chamber. Slowly and cautiously, one weight taken from her heart, but an infinitely greaters.

and cautiously, one weight taken from her heart, but an infinitely greater one in its place. Miriam emerged from the passage and sought her lodging. The next hour, Herod died.

Half an hour before Herod's death, Miriam had sought and obtained an interview with Alexas, the officer to whom the murder of the Jewish leaders was intrusted, and his wife Saloras, With the eloquence and logic of earnest ers was intrusted, and his wife Saloms. With the eloquence and logic of earnest conviction, she spoke against the massacre, opposing it from every standpoint of humanity and policy. The effect of such an act on the successors of Herod, was her most convincing argument. If by Herod's order the chief men of the Jews were destroyed and men of the Jews were destroyed, and that without provocation, how would that without provocation, how would his sons answer for the deed to Caesar and the Jews? Though Roms had winked at many crimes of Herod, was it likely that such a wanton slaughter would be condoned? What vital policy even of Herod's rule would be subserved by such an act?

Then when she pictured in strong pathetic language the desolution of Jewish homes and of the Jewish nation.

pathetic language the desolation of Jewish homes and of the Jewish nation, the universal mourning, not for the necessary slaughter of war, but for the necessary slaughter of a mad-man's whim, the tender-hearted Salome burst into tears of compassion and symmetric tears of the compassion and symmetric tears of compassion and symmetric tears of the compassion and symmetric tears of the compassion and the compassio into tears of compassion and sym-

pathy.

A slight rustle at the door was followed by a loud knock, and Sylvanus burst into the room, "To thy task, O Alexas," he cried impetuously, not seeing Miriam in his excitement. "The great king is dead. Now let the dogs

in yonder kennel perish also!"
"They must not die!" Alexas answered calmiy. "The will of a mad-man is not of force after his death. The Jews shall live." "Art thou mad?" exclaimed Sylvanus aghast, "Will thou defy the will of the king, and miss thine opportunity for

"By the law of humanity, by the law of kingly policy, I am justified." As he spoke, he stepped aside and revesled Mirlam to the startled Sylvanus, No longer timid and shrinking in the pres-ence of "the evil eye," but bold and defiant, she uttered words of stern re-buke which pierced him to the heart. Never had he been able to control himself in her presence. In her words he saw his fate, rendered all the more bitter to him by the thought that his rival would live in the sunlight of her love, for whose sake he would sacrifice all else that life held dear. The tor-ture was more than he could endure, Cowed and sickened by the double dis-appointment, he left the room.

Joyfully Miriam accompanied Alexas and Salome to the hippodrome; and as the first rays of the morning sun gilded its massive pillars, the doors were thrown open, and Miriam was in azra's

arms. For the first time her self-con-trol falled, and she burst into tears. That night, Ezra and Miriam, with some others of the released captives, departed for their homes, under a safe conduct furnished them by Alexas. As they traveled forward in the brilliant in the mountain road, they saw a ghastly object lying prone in their path. Quickly Ezra sprang from his horse and raised the prostrate figure in his arms. It was the body of Sylvanus. idly flerce, determined expression of his face, and the blood-stained sword still clasped in his hand, told only to plainly how he had escaped a death like Herod's. Tenderly they took up the body and carried it to its last resting-place at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER V.

the fields and blils of Galilee. Some weeks had passed since the return of the proscribed Jews to their homes, and affairs had settled down to their accustomed routine. Great rejoicing attended the return of these chief men, for gratifude at the averting of such a public calamity as had threatened their leaders, was strong in the souls

Particularly bithe and gay were the hearts of Ezra and Miriam, for on the morrow they were to wed. Only one cause of doubt and fear remained in their minds—they knew not what had happened to the babe. A year had passed since his birth, and Ezra and Miriam, upon whose minds so strong an impression of his birth and threatan impression of his birth and the ened death had been made, and who, almost alone of all the people in Naz-areth, remembered and believed the story of the virgin's child, were full of anxious fear.

As the evening twight fell on the

landscape, the betrothed pair walked slowly, in earnest conversation, on the southward road. But the long, tollsome journey to Bethlehem or to Jer-icho did not lie before them. It was fitting that with the greater freedom introduced into oriental life by Roman influence, these two should walk together in happiness on the road which they had traversed together twice before in great and acceptance. fore in grief and anxiety.

"Travelers are approaching from the south," said Miriam. Let us meet and greet them. They may need our guid-ance and hospitality."

An old man slowly walked along. leading a donkey, on which sat a young, beautiful woman, holding a babe. With a cry of joy Ezra and Miriam sprang forward. "Joseph, Mary and the beautiful woman, and sprang forward." the babe!" they rapturously exclaimed. Miriam relieved the weary woman of her precious burden, while Ezra took the leading-strap and half supported