

Pearl Maiden

CENTENNIAL EDITION
1903–2003

TO
GLADYS CHRISTIAN

A DWELLER IN THE EAST

This Eastern Tale is Dedicated

BY HER OWN AND HER FATHER'S FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

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SEPTEMBER 14, 1902

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Lysbeth: A Tale of the Dutch
by H. Rider Haggard

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by H. Rider Haggard

Pearl Maiden

A TALE OF THE
FALL OF JERUSALEM

H. RIDER HAGGARD

REVISED AND EDITED
BY
CHRISTOPHER D. KOU
AND
MICHAEL J. MCHUGH

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in England on June 22, 1856. He was the eighth of ten children and received most of his primary and elementary education at home through private tutors and occasionally at a local grammar school. His parents took him on frequent trips to the Continent during his childhood days.

In 1875, when Haggard was nineteen, he traveled to South Africa to work as a secretary for the newly appointed governor of Natal. Three years later, the young Englishman resigned his post at the high court of Pretoria to take up ostrich farming in Natal.

Haggard visited England in 1880 and was married on August 11 to Mariana L. Margitson, a Norfolk heiress. The newlyweds soon returned to their farm in Natal to resume the business of farming. In his spare time, Haggard began to work on his first book project and also began to take up the study of law. In 1882, the Haggard family sold their farm in Natal and returned to England.

Henry Haggard completed his law studies in 1884 and accepted a call to the bar of attorneys in London where he worked as an assistant to a chief judge. It was during this time that he made use of what he describes as his “somewhat ample leisure time in chambers” to write his first successful novel *King Solomon’s Mines*. This book, as he put it, “finally settled the question of whether to pursue a legal or literary career.” Henry Haggard proceeded to write over sixty-six novels and numerous papers, producing nearly one book for each year of his life.

Haggard traveled extensively throughout the world during much of his married life. His knowledge of the culture and terrain of Italy and Palestine enabled him to complete one of his grandest novels, *Pearl-Maiden*, in 1903. The recognitions of his contributions as a writer were crowned in the year 1912 when Henry Rider Haggard was knighted.

Sir Haggard died in London on May 14, 1925, at the age of sixty-eight.

Michael J. McHugh

EDITOR'S NOTE

Pearl-Maiden was originally published in 1903 and has for one hundred years led a relatively obscure existence compared to Haggard's other more celebrated works, among them, *King Solomon's Mines*. Now, through this new centennial edition, the publisher and I hope to reintroduce this little known classic to a whole new audience.

We believe that the 1st century A.D. era described in this novel is of vital importance to the Church and too often an overlooked period of history. Few today even realize the continuing impact the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple have had in history. Fewer can describe the period leading up to that momentous event. It is our hope that *Pearl Maiden* will help to bring to light this critical event of Christian history so that we might better appreciate God's sovereign work of Providence both in the past and for the future.

To this end I have thoroughly revised and edited the original text to make the story clearer and more enjoyable for modern readers. Grammar and word usage have been changed and updated, and much of the dialog has been rephrased. Some Latin terms have been restored in lieu of the contemporary Victorian English equivalents found in the original text. Most of these changes are superficial in nature, but readers familiar with the 1903 edition will also note two new scenes near the final pages of this version: The preaching of Bishop Cyril to Marcus, and the final storm that threatens to sink the *Luna*.

Some historical errors and inconsistencies have been corrected. For instance, the reader will find that in this edition, the character Marcus is often called by his *cognomen*, or nickname, Fortunatus, while those who are closer to him tend to use his first name. His family name, Carius, is new to this edition entirely, and has been added to make the character more authentic. Hence, he now has a proper Roman name, Marcus Carius Fortunatus.

Finally, there were, in the original text, some fundamental biblical inconsistencies that needed to be addressed. The original version implied that it is lawful for a Christian to marry a non-

Christian, and it was only the command of Miriam's parents that forbade her. However, the Bible is very clear that those who are in Christ are not to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Intermarriage is a problem as old as the Noachic flood when the sons of God took wives of the daughters of men (Gen. 6:1,2). Throughout history, intermarriage between Israel, God's covenant people, and the pagan world was always an occasion for God's chastisement. The call for purity of faith in marriage has always been a resounding command. Nothing has changed in that respect for the New Testament era. Christians are not to intermarry with unbelievers.

That being said, Haggard's original work does highlight an important principle of Christian marriage. In our story, Miriam refuses Marcus, even when he offers to convert to Christianity for her sake, and so must young adults today be cautious where matters of marriage and faith are concerned. One cannot trust a hasty conversion to Christianity when desire for marriage is the motive. Miriam's faith and regard for her parents' wishes were more important than her feelings and emotional attachment to an unbeliever, and young Christians would do well to learn from that example set forth in this book.

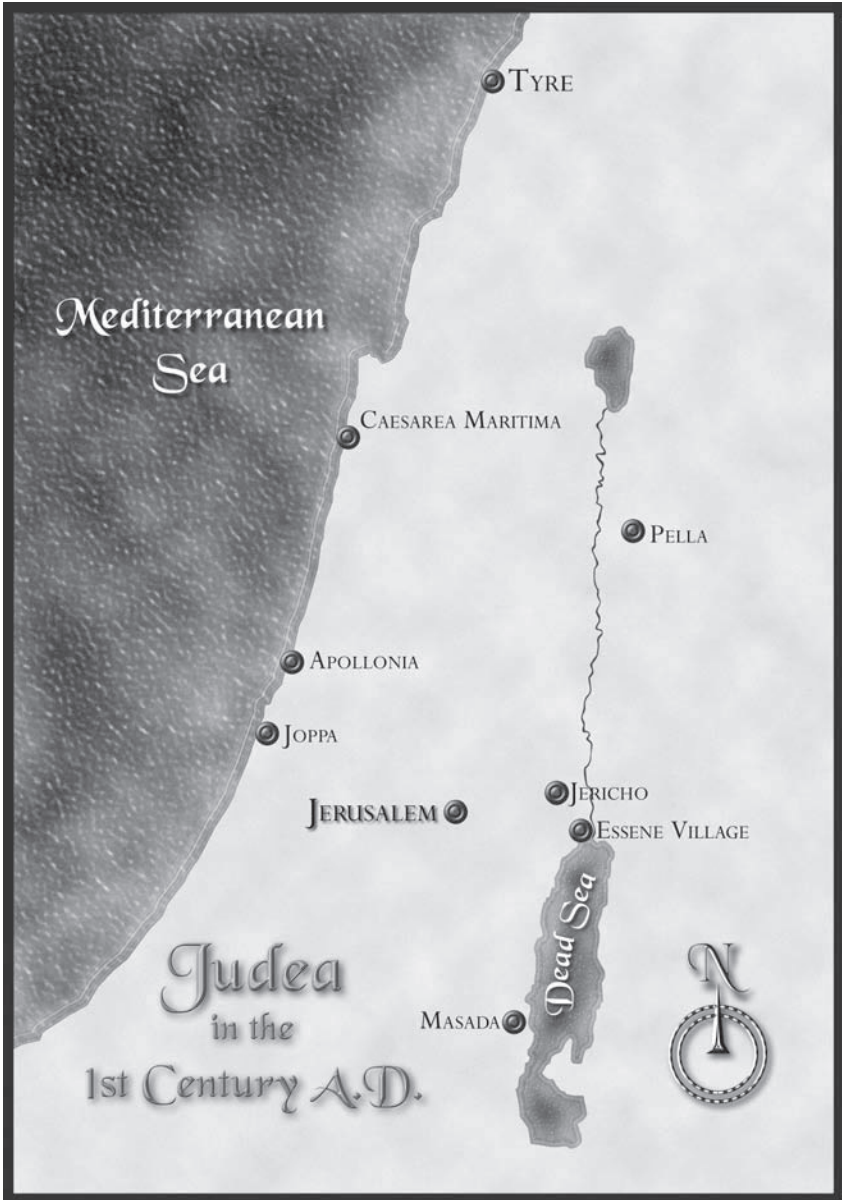
Notwithstanding all the revisions, the storyline structure of the original remains intact, as does the essential message that was always at the heart of the story—the message of God's grace and eternal love for His called out people and His sovereign working in history.

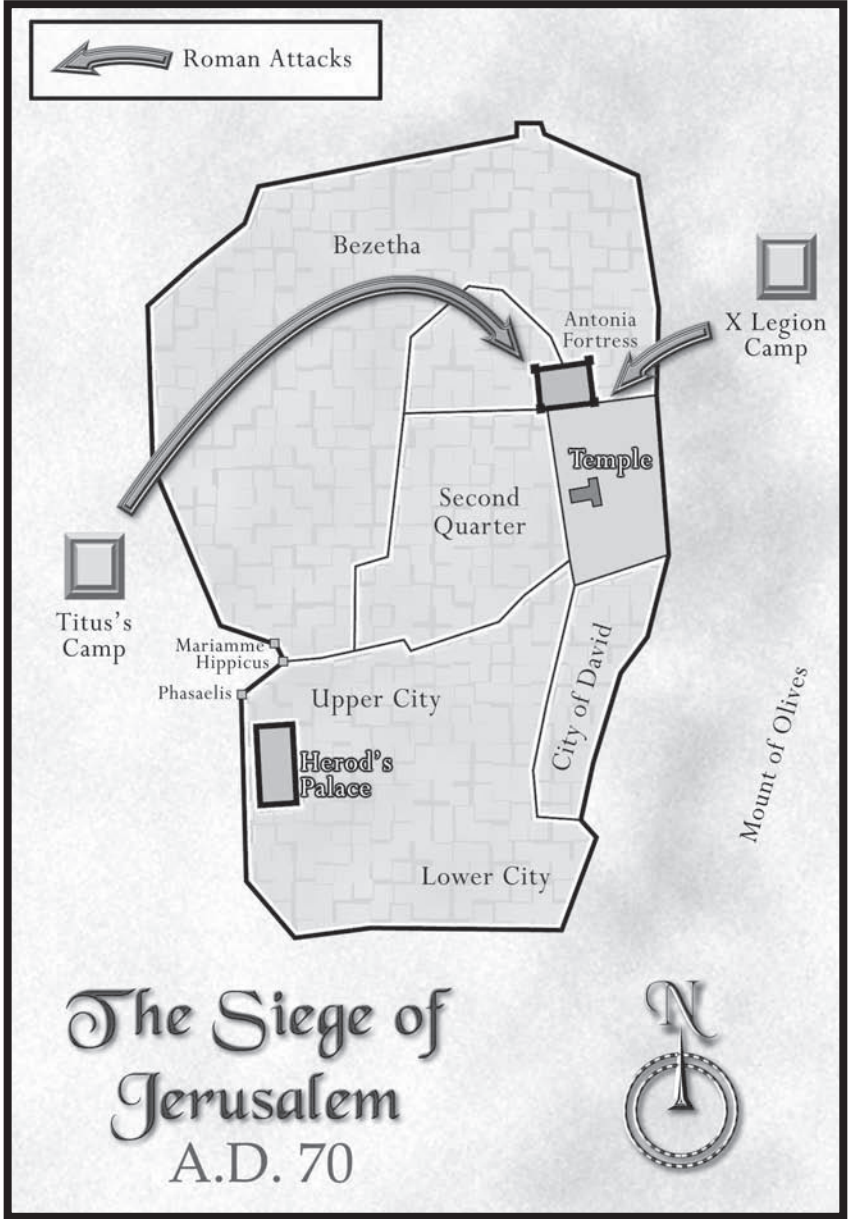
The *Pearl Maiden* project has been a great pleasure to work on, and I would like to thank Michael McHugh, director of Christian Liberty Press, for the opportunity to have a major part in it. It is my prayer and the prayer of all those involved that God will use this book for the furtherance of His Kingdom on Earth and the building up of His Church.

Ad maioram Dei gloriam, to the greater glory of God.

Christopher D. Kou
Prospect Heights, Illinois
2003







CHAPTER I

THE PRISON OF CAESAREA

It was two hours after midnight, but many were still awake in Caesarea, gem of the Syrian coast. Herod Agrippa, King of all Palestine by grace of the Romans, now at the very apex of his power, was celebrating a festival in honor of the Emperor Claudius, to which had flocked all the mightiest in the land and tens of thousands of the people. The city was full, and the camps of travelers were set upon the seashore for miles around. There was no room at the inns or in the private houses, where guests slept on the roofs, the couches, the floors, and in the gardens. The great town hummed like a hive of bees disturbed after sunset, and though the louder sounds of reveling had died away, parties of feasters, still crowned with drooping roses, passed along the streets to their lodgings, shouting and singing. As they went, those who were sufficiently sober discussed the incidents of that day's games in the great circus and offered or accepted odds upon the more exciting events of the morrow.

The captives in the prison, a frowning building of brown stone set upon a little hill, divided into courts and surrounded by a high wall and a ditch, could hear the workmen at their labor in the amphitheatre below. All were fixated upon the sounds drifting up to them, for many of those who listened were doomed to take part in the spectacle of this new day. In the outer court stood a hundred men called malefactors, most of them Jews convicted of various political offences. They had been condemned to fight against twice their number of desert Arabs taken in a frontier raid, unarmored savages mounted and armed with swords and lances. The malefactor Jews, to make the fight even, were to be protected with heavy armor and large shields. Their combat was to last for twenty minutes by the sandglass, after which, unless

they had shown cowardice, those who were left alive of either party were to receive their freedom. Indeed, contrary to custom, by a kindly decree of King Agrippa, a man who did not seek unnecessary bloodshed, even the wounded were to be spared if any would undertake the care of them. Under these circumstances, since life is dear, all had determined to fight their best.

In another section of the great hall was collected a very different company. There were no more than fifty or sixty of them, and the wide arches of the surrounding cloisters gave them sufficient shelter and even privacy. With the exception of eight or ten men, all of them old or well into middle age, this little band was made up of women and children. The younger and more vigorous males had already been carefully drafted to serve as gladiators. They belonged to the new sect called Christians, the followers of one Jesus, who, according to report, had been crucified as a troublemaker by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. In his day Pilate was unpopular with the Jews, for he had seized the treasures of the Temple at Jerusalem to build waterworks, causing a tumult in which many Jews had been killed. Now he was almost forgotten, but very strangely, the fame of this crucified Jesus seemed to grow. There were many who had come to accept his teachings and the claim of his followers that he had risen from the dead. They made him to be a kind of god, preaching doctrines in his name that were contrary to Roman law and offensive to every Jewish sect.

Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests, all called out against them. All petitioned to Agrippa that they should be rid of them, these apostates who profaned the land and proclaimed in the ears of a nation awaiting its Messiah, the Heaven born King who would break the Roman yoke and make Jerusalem the capital of the world, that this Messiah had already come in the guise of an itinerant preacher and had perished with other malefactors.

Wearied by their incessant pestering, the King consented. Like the cultivated Romans with whom he associated, Agrippa had no real religion. In Jerusalem he embellished the Temple and made offerings to Jehovah; at Berytus he embellished the temple and made offerings there to Jupiter. Before the world, he

was all things to all men, and in private, merely another licentious holder of public office. As for these Christians, he never troubled himself about them. Why should he? They were few and insignificant; not a single man of rank or wealth was to be found among them. To persecute them was easy, and it pleased the Jews. Therefore he persecuted them. One James, a disciple of the crucified man called Christ, who had wandered about the country with him, he had seized and beheaded in Jerusalem. Another called Peter, a powerful preacher, he threw into prison, and of their followers he slew many. A few of these were given over to be stoned by the Jews, but most of the men were forced to fight in the arenas of Berytus and elsewhere. The women, if young and beautiful, were sold as slaves, but if matrons or aged, they were cast to the wild beasts in the amphitheater.

Such was the end reserved for these poor victims in the prison on this very day of festival. After the gladiators had fought and the other games had been celebrated, sixty Christians, it was announced, old and useless men, married women and young children that nobody would buy, were to be presented in the great amphitheatre. Thirty lions made fiercely ravenous by hunger and mad with the smell of blood, were then to be set loose among them. Even in this act of judgment, however, Agrippa wished to be seen by all as gentle-hearted, and of his kindness he had decreed that any whom the lions refused to eat were to be given clothes, a small sum of money, and released to settle their differences with the Jews as they might please.

Such was the state of public feeling and morality in the Roman Empire, that this spectacle of the feeding of starved beasts with live women and children, whose crime was that they worshipped a crucified man and would offer sacrifice to no other god, either in the Temple or elsewhere, was much looked forward to by the population of Caesarea. Great amounts of money were wagered upon the event, and he who drew the ticket marked with the number that the lions left alive would take the entire sum. Some gamblers of foresight who had drawn low numbers had already bribed the soldiers and wardens to sprinkle the hair and garments of the Christians with valerian water, a mixture intended

to attract and excite the appetite of these great cats. Others, whose ticket numbers were high, paid handsomely for the employment of concoctions calculated to induce in the lions an aversion to the treated subject. The Christian woman or child who was to form the *corpus vile* of these ingenious experiments was not considered except as the fisherman considers the worm on his hook.

Alone under a stone arch, not far from the great gateway where the guards, their spears in hand, could be seen pacing up and down, sat two women. The contrast between the pair was striking. One, no more than twenty years of age, was a Jewess, too sallow and thin for beauty, but with dark and lovely eyes, and bearing in every limb and feature the mark of noble blood. She was Rachel, the widow of the Greco-Syrian Demas and the only child of the highborn Jew Benoni, the richest merchant in Tyre. The other was a woman of remarkable appearance, about forty years of age. She was a native of the coasts of Libya, where she had been kidnapped as a girl by slave traders, and passed on to Phoenician merchants, who had sold her upon the slave market of Tyre. She was a noble Arab without any trace of African blood, as could be seen by her copper-colored skin, prominent cheek bones, abundant black hair, and untamed, flashing eyes. In frame she was tall and spare, agile, and full of perilous grace in every movement. Her face was fierce and hard; even in her present dreadful plight she showed no fear, though when she looked at the lady by her side it grew anxious and tender. She was called Nehushta—*copper* in the Hebrew tongue—a name that Benoni had given her many years ago when he bought her upon the marketplace. In her native land, however, she had been named Nou, and by this name she was known to her dead mistress, the wife of Benoni, and to his daughter Rachel, whom she had nursed from childhood.

The moon shone radiant in the vacant sky, and by its light an observer could have watched every movement and expression of these women. Rachel, seated on the ground, was rocking herself to and fro, her face hidden in her hands, deep in her prayers. Nehushta knelt by her side, resting the weight of her body on

her heels, and stared sullenly into nothingness.

Presently Rachel dropped her hands to her lap, looked at the unfeeling sky and sighed. "Our last night on earth, Nou," she said sadly. "It is strange to think that we shall never again see the moon floating above us."

"Why not, mistress? If all that we have been taught is true, we shall see that moon forever and ever. However, for my own part I don't intend that either of us should die tomorrow."

"How can you prevent it, Nou?" asked Rachel with a faint smile. "Lions are no respecters of persons."

"Yet, mistress, I think that they will respect my person, and yours, too, for my sake."

"What do you mean, Nou?"

"I mean that I do not fear lions. They are country-folk of mine and I listened to their roar when I was still in the cradle. My father was called Master of Lions in our country because he could tame them. When I was a little child I fed them and they fawned upon us like dogs."

"Those lions are long dead, Nou. And the others will not remember such days."

"I am not sure that they are really dead. Blood will call to blood, and their brothers will know the smell of the child of the Master of Lions. Whoever may be eaten, we shall escape."

"I have no such hope, Nou. Tomorrow we shall die horribly, that King Agrippa may do honor to his master, Caesar."

"If you think that, mistress, then let us die at once rather than be rent limb from limb to give pleasure to a stinking mob. See, I have poison hidden here in my hair. Let us drink of it and be done. It would be swift and painless."

"Nay, Nou, it would not be right. I will lift no hand against my own life, and even if I would, I have another life to think of."

"If you die, the unborn child must die also. Tonight or tomorrow, what does it matter?"

"Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Who knows? Tomorrow Agrippa may be dead, not us. And then the child might live. It is in the hand of God. Let God decide."

"Lady," answered Nehushta, setting her teeth, "for your sake I have become a Christian, yes, and I believe. But I tell you this. While I live, no lion's fangs shall tear your dear flesh. I would sooner stab you there in the arena."

"Please, Nou," she murmured, covering her eyes. "Take no such sin upon your soul."

"My soul! What do I care about my soul? You are my soul. Your mother was kind to me when you were but an infant, and I a slave. I rocked you upon my breast. I spread your bridal bed, and if need be, to save you from worse things, I will lay you dead before me and myself dead across your body. Then let God deal with my soul. At least, I shall have done my best and died faithful."

"You should not speak so," sighed Rachel. "I know it is only because you love me. I too wish to die as easily as may be, so I may join my husband. Then I might see even my child, and all three of us may dwell together eternally. Nay, not all three, all four, for you are well nigh as dear to me, Nou, as husband or as child."

"That cannot be, I do not wish that it should be, for I am but a slave woman, the dog beneath the table. Oh! If I could save you, then I would be glad to show them how this daughter of my father can bear their torments."

The Libyan ceased, grinding her teeth in impotent rage. Then suddenly she leaned towards her mistress, kissed her fiercely on the cheek, and began to sob, slow, heavy sobs.

"Listen," said Rachel, silencing her. "The lions are roaring."

Nehushta lifted her head, alert, like a hunter in the desert. From near the great tower that ended the southern wall of the amphitheatre echoed short, coughing notes and fierce whimpering, followed presently by roar upon roar, as the lions joined in their fearful music. The air shook with the boom of their voices.

"Aha!" cried a voice at the gate. It was not one of the soldiers who marched to and fro unconcernedly, but the jailor, Rufus, clad in a padded robe and armed with a great knife displayed prominently in his sash. "Listen to them, the kittens. Don't be

greedy, little ones—be patient. Tonight you will purr upon a full stomach.”

“Nine of them,” muttered Nehushta, who had counted the roars, “all bearded and old, royal beasts. To hearken to them makes me young again. I can smell the desert and see the smoke rising from my father’s tents. I hunted them as a child. Now they will hunt me; it is their hour.”

“I need water!” gasped Rachel, sinking against her.

With a guttural exclamation of pity Nehushta bent down. Placing her strong arms beneath the slender form of her young mistress, and lifting her as though she were a child, she carried her to the center of the court, where stood a fountain, a remnant of the days when the jail had once been a palace. Here she set her mistress on the ground with her back against the stonework and dashed water in her face until she was herself again.

While Rachel sat, a gate swung open, and several persons, men, women, and children, were thrust through it into the court.

“Newcomers from Tyre in a great hurry not to lose the lions’ party,” jeered the warden of the gate. “Pass in, my Christian friends. Pass in and eat your last supper according to your custom. You will find it over there, bread and wine in plenty. Eat, my hungry friends. Eat before you are eaten and enter into Heaven—or the stomachs of the lions.”

An old woman, straggling at the back of the party, turned around and pointed at the buffoon with her staff.

“Blaspheme not, you heathen dog!” she said, “or rather, blaspheme and go to your reward! Thus saith my God by the mouth of Anna that you have *already* eaten your last meal on earth. You claimed to be a Christian once and, therefore, are doubly guilty.”

The man, a half-bred Syrian who had abandoned his faith for profit and now tormented those who were once his brethren, uttered a furious curse and snatched a knife from his girdle.

“You draw the knife? So be it, perish by the knife!” said Anna. Then without heeding him further the old woman hobbled on after her companions, leaving the man to slink away white to

his lips with terror. He had been a Christian and knew something of Anna and of her gift of prophecy.

The path of these strangers led them past the fountain, where Rachel and Nehushta rose to greet them as they came.

“Peace be with you,” said Rachel.

“In the name of Christ, peace,” they answered, and passed on toward the arches where the other captives were gathered. Last of all, at some distance behind the rest, came the white-haired woman, leaning on her staff.

As she approached, Rachel turned to repeat her salutation, then uttered a little cry and said, “Mother Anna, do you not know me? I am Rachel, the daughter of Benoni.”

“Rachel!” she answered, starting. “Alas! Child, how came you here?”

“By the paths that we Christians have to tread, mother,” said Rachel, sadly. “But sit. You are weary. Nou, help her.”

Anna nodded, and slowly, for her limbs were stiff, then she sank down on the base of the fountain.

“Give me to drink, child,” she said. “They brought me from Tyre on the back of a mule, and did not think to give me water.”

Rachel cupped her hands and held water to Anna’s lips, which she drank greedily, emptying them many times.

“For this refreshment, God be praised. What said you? The daughter of Benoni a Christian! Well, for that God be praised also, even here and now. Strange, that I should not have heard of it. But I have been in Jerusalem these two years and was brought back to Tyre last Sabbath as a prisoner.”

“Yes, Mother. And since then I have become both wife and widow.”

“Who did you marry, child?”

“Demas, the merchant. They killed him in the amphitheatre at Berytus six months ago,” and the poor woman began to sob.

“I heard of his end,” replied Anna. “It was a noble one, and his soul rests in Heaven. He would not fight with the gladiators, so Agrippa ordered him beheaded. But cease weeping, child, and tell me your story. We have little time for tears before we shall

be done with them.”

Rachel dried her eyes.

“It is short and sad,” she said. “Demas and I met often and learned to love each other. My father was no friend to him, for they were rivals in trade, but in those days Demas followed the faith of the Jews, and because he was rich, my father consented to our marriage. They became partners in business. Within a month of our wedding the apostles came to Tyre, and we attended their preaching—at first, because we were curious to learn the truth of this new faith against which my father railed—of all Jews, he is the most stubborn—and then because our hearts were changed. So in the end, we believed. We were baptized, both on one night, by the very hand of the brother of the Lord. The apostles departed, blessing us before they went, and Demas, who would play no double part, told my father of what we had done. Oh, it was awful to see! He raved, shouted and cursed us in his rage, blaspheming our Lord. When we refused to forsake Christ, he denounced us to the priests, the priests denounced us to the Romans, and we were seized and thrown into prison. My husband’s wealth, except what the priests and the Romans took, stayed with my father. We were held in prison here in Caesarea for six months. They took my husband to Berytus, to be trained as a gladiator, and the rest you know. I have been here since then with this beloved servant, Nehushta, who became a Christian to follow our path, and now, by the decree of Agrippa, it is my turn and hers to die today.”

“Child, weep not for that. Nay, be glad for you will find your husband and your Savior.”

“Mother, I am glad for that. It is for my child’s sake I weep, that will never be born. It is a cruel world, and full of tribulation, but I would have seen my child live. But now, it cannot be.”

Anna looked at her with her piercing eyes.

“Have you, then, also the gift of prophecy, child, who are so young a member of the Church, that you dare to say that this or that cannot be? The future is in the hand of God. King Agrippa, your father, the Romans, the cruel Jews, those lions that roar,

and we who are doomed to feed them, are all in the hand of God, and that which He wills shall befall, and no other thing. Therefore, let us praise Him and rejoice, and take no thought for tomorrow, unless it be to pray that we may die and go to our Master, rather than live on in doubts and terrors and tribulations."

"You are right, Mother," answered Rachel, "and I will try to be brave, whatever may befall. Listen, they call us to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord—our last on earth." And rising, she began to walk towards the arches.

Nehushta stayed to help Anna to her feet. When she judged her mistress to be out of hearing, she leaned down and whispered, "Anna, you have the gift. It is known throughout the Church. Tell me, will the child be born?"

The old woman fixed her eyes upon the heavens, then answered, slowly, "The child will be born and live out its life, and I think that none of us are doomed to die this day by the jaws of lions, though some of us may die in another fashion. But I think also that your mistress goes very shortly to join her husband. It was better that I showed her nothing of what is revealed to me."

"Then it is best that I should die also, and die I will."

"Why?"

"Because I go to wait upon my mistress."

"Nay, Nehushta," answered Anna, sternly. "Stay to guard her child, for this would be her desire, as well as the Lord's. When all these earthly things are done, you will give an account to God."