

**THE HOUSE OF
JUDAH; PP. 14-224**

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The House of Judah; pp. 14-224 by Charles Edward Hewitt

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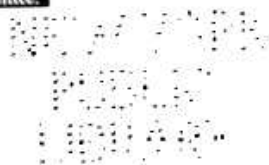
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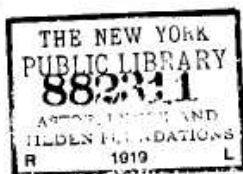
"AND THEN THE CERTAIN ONE DEPARTED"

The House of Judah

By
CHARLES EDWARD HEWITT



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"Hold a moment, Rachel," the recumbent one suddenly exclaimed, springing to upright posture. "There is a matter to tell thee which was nearly forgotten. An appointment I have in Jerusalem with our father and Saul of Tarsus, and when thou returnest from the feast 'tis likely the journey thence will be well begun."

"May the God of our fathers give thee joy and speed in the way, brother," and with motion infinitely expressive of sisterly affection a cheek of the texture and coloring of a rose leaf was offered for salute of parting.

The man gently touched it with his lips, for an instant searching deeply the depths of the beautiful eyes trustingly turned to him. Without falter, without quiver the scrutiny was met.

"To those that are childlike and innocent as thou, sister, I grant the son of Joseph may seem as a prophet wonderful with power and virtue," he said. "But mighty arms of evil and oppression have compassed Judah, and a man child must be given who shall wax great to conquer; even with the strength of the Lord of Hosts; but thou art but a babe in the understanding of such things. May Jehovah keep all harm from thee till we meet again." Thus saying, he strode from the chamber.

CHAPTER II

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."—*2 Corinthians 13. 5.*

TIBERIAS, the capital of the province of Galilee, was built upon the western shore of the Lake (or Sea) of Gennesaret through the decree of Herod Antipas, and although the latter had hoped to populate the town with Jews, but few of the sons of Abraham would take permanent residence therein, as the foundations had been laid in an ancient graveyard, and therefore the vicinity was unholy to them. A range of hills traced the horizon westward, a spur of which reached out a rugged arm almost menacingly toward this new creation, forming back of it a breastwork of basalt cliffs, as though to effectually hinder further progress in that direction.

Almost in the very shadow of the frowning of this green-black bulwark a small residence had been built by Rabbi Elim, of Jerusalem, for his motherless son and daughter, at the latter's special request; and as the place was fashioned simply to please what was considered a whim,

all thought had been turned to the fostering of comfort and pleasure for the inmates.

On the sixth day of the week, toward eventide, Rachel reclined in a luxuriously appointed pavilion on the roof of this dwelling, with an evident intention of supping in the cool of the open, for a white damask cloth was spread upon a small table, and platters of savory mutton and delicate wheatcakes to be eaten with crystal-clear honey, were ranged thereon in fashion calculated to tempt the most fastidious appetite.

"Thou hast again set cover for the young master, my good Philemon," she observed, with appreciative glance toward her hand maid, continuing in tone tinged with disappointment, "But most truly it seemeth as though he had determined to remain in Jerusalem until the Passover."

The thin, brown face of the bondwoman now softened wonderfully with a brooding look such as a mother might give. "The young master ever hath held close to his heart the welfare of the cherished sister, and since the old days in the City of David hath not allowed such time to pass in absence from her. Is he like to do so now?" she half crooned, as though to a child.

"Thy speech soundeth good unto my ears, and doth strengthen and shame me both," responded

the other. "Since the God of my fathers called mother unto himself the daughter of Rabbi Elim hath been weak of heart, and sorrowful indeed, giving but poor companionship to recompense the goodness of Rehoboam and thee."

Hot tears of sympathy filled the old serving woman's eyes, and she crouched low before her mistress.

"If thou hadst remained in the house of thy father, thy spirit might have been better aided from its gloom, O Sarai ['My lady']," she whispered. "There were many in Jerusalem to give thee comfort, the honored Rabbi Elim himself among them; or thou couldst have dwelt in Cana, in the house of thy uncle, Rabbi Mahalaleel."

"I could not abide where all things continually breathe of mother, Philemon; and as thou knowest, my father hath little time for aught save serving in the temple. And there is a special reason for my not desiring to be with the household of my uncle in Cana; but dry thy tears, faithful one! Thou ever sheddest a beam of comfort to dispel the dark moments of my soul, and I love thee."

The speaker now drew the turbaned head close, even to her cheek. "Listen, Philemon!" she whispered. "There is a confidence which shall be given to thine ear as child to mother."