

CHAPTER XV

WHAT PASSED IN THE TOWER

Nearly four months had gone by. Perhaps, during the whole history of the world there never has been and never will be more cruel suffering than was endured by the inhabitants of Jerusalem during that period, or rather by the survivors of the nation of the Jews who were crowded together within its walls. Forgetting their internecine quarrels in the face of overwhelming danger, too late the factions united and fought against the common foe with a ferocity that has been seldom equalled. They left nothing undone which desperate men could do. Again and again they sallied forth against the Romans, slaughtering thousands of them. They captured their battering-rams and catapults. They undermined the great wooden towers which Titus erected against their walls, and burnt them. With varying success they made sally upon sally. Titus took the third wall and the new city of Bezetha. He took the second wall and pulled it down. Then he sent Josephus, the historian, to persuade the Jews to surrender, but his countrymen cursed and stoned him, and the war went on.

At length, as it seemed to be impossible to carry the place by assault, Titus adopted a surer and more terrible plan. Enclosing the first unconquered wall, the Temple, and the fortress by another wall of his own making, he sat down and waited for starvation to do its work. Then came the famine. At the beginning, before the maddened, devil-inspired

factions began to destroy each other and to prey upon the peaceful people, Jerusalem was amply provisioned. But each party squandered the stores that were within its reach, and, whenever they could do so, burnt those of their rivals, so that the food which might have supplied the whole city for months, vanished quickly in orgies of wanton waste and destruction. Now all, or almost all, was gone, and by tens and hundreds of thousands the people starved.

Those who are curious about such matters, those who desire to know how much human beings can endure, and of what savagery they can be capable when hunger drives them, may find these details set out in the pages of Josephus, the renegade Jewish historian. It serves no good purpose and will not help our story to repeat them; indeed for the most part they are too terrible to be repeated. History does not record, and the mind of man cannot invent a cruelty which was not practised by the famished Jews upon other Jews suspected of the crime of having hidden food to feed themselves or their families. Now the fearful prophecy was fulfilled, and it came about that mothers devoured their own infants, and children snatched the last morsel of bread from the lips of their dying parents. If these things were done between those who were of one blood, what dreadful torment was there that was not practised by stranger upon stranger? The city went mad beneath the weight of its abominable and obscene misery. Thousands perished every day, and every night thousands more escaped, or attempted to escape, to the Romans, who caught the poor wretches and crucified them beneath the walls, till there was no more wood of which to make the crosses, and no more ground

whereon to stand them.

All these things and many others Miriam saw from her place of outlook in the gallery of the deserted tower. She saw the people lying dead by hundreds in the streets beneath. She saw the robbers hale them from their houses and torture them to discover the hiding-place of the food which they were supposed to have hidden, and when they failed, put them to the sword. She saw the Valley of the Kidron and the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives covered with captive Jews writhing on their crosses, there to die as the Messiah whom they had rejected, died. She saw the furious attacks, the yet more furious sallies and the dreadful daily slaughter, till at length her heart grew so sick within her, that although she still took refuge in the ruined tower to escape the gloom beneath, Miriam would spend whole hours lying on her face, her fingers thrust into her ears, that she might shut out the sights and sounds of this unutterable woe.

Meanwhile, the Essenes, who still had stores of food, ventured forth but rarely, lest the good condition of their bodies, although their faces were white as death from dwelling in the darkness, should tempt the starving hordes to seize and torture them in the hope of discovering the hiding-places of their nutriment. Indeed, to several of the brethren this happened; but in obedience to their oaths, as will be seen in the instance of the past President Theophilus--who went out and was no more

heard of--they endured all and died without a murmur, having betrayed nothing. Still, notwithstanding the danger, driven to it by utter weariness of their confinement in the dark and by the desire of obtaining news, from time to time one of them would creep forth at night to return again before daybreak. From these men Miriam heard that after the murder of the high priest Mathias and his sons, together with sixteen of the Sanhedrim, on a charge of correspondence with the Romans, her grandfather, Benoni, had been elected to that body, in which he exercised much influence and caused many to be put to death who were accused of treason or of favouring the Roman cause. Caleb also was in the Temple and foremost in every fight. He was said to have sworn an oath that he would slay the Prefect of Horse, Marcus, with whom he had an ancient quarrel, or be slain himself. It was told, indeed, that they had met once already and struck some blows at each other, before they were separated by an accident of war.

The beginning of August came at length, and the wretched city, in addition to its other miseries, panted in the heat of a scorching summer sun and was poisoned by the stench from the dead bodies that filled the streets and were hurled in thousands from the walls. Now the Romans had set up their battering engines at the very gates of the Temple, and slowly but surely were winning their way into its outer courts.

On a certain night, about an hour before the dawn, Miriam woke Nehushta, telling her that she was stifling there in those vaults and must ascend the tower. Nehushta said that it was folly, whereon Miriam answered that

she would go alone. This she would not suffer her to do, so together they passed up the stairs according to custom, and, having gained the base of the tower through the swinging door of stone, climbed the steps that ran in the thickness of the wall till they reached the topmost gallery. Here they sat, fanned by the faint night wind, and watched the fires of the Romans stretched far and wide around the walls and even among the ruins of the houses almost beneath them, since that part of the city was taken.

Presently the dawn broke, a splendid, fearful dawn. It was as though the angel of the daybreak had dipped his wing into a sea of blood and dashed it against the brow of Night, still crowned with her fading stars. Of a sudden the heavens were filled with blots and threads of flaming colour latticed against the pale background of the twilight sky. Miriam watched it with a kind of rapture, letting its glory and its peace sink into her troubled soul, while from below arose the sound of awakening camps making ready for the daily battle. Soon a ray of burning light, cast like a spear from the crest of the Mount of Olives across the Valley of Jehoshaphat, struck full upon the gold-roofed Temple and its courts. At its coming, as though at a signal, the northern gates were thrown wide, and through them poured a flood of gaunt and savage warriors. They came on in thousands, uttering fierce war-cries. Some pickets of Romans tried to stay their rush; in a minute they were overcome and destroyed. Now they were surging round the feet of a great wooden tower filled with archers. Here the fight was desperate, for the soldiers of Titus rushed up by companies to defend their engine. But they could not drive back

that onset, and presently the tower was on fire, and in a last mad effort to save their lives its defenders were casting themselves headlong from the lofty platform. With shouts of triumph the Jews rushed through the breaches in the second wall, and leaving what remained of the castle of Antonia on the left, poured down into the maze of streets and ruined houses that lay immediately behind the Old Tower whence Miriam watched.

In front of this building, which the Romans had never attempted to enter, since for military purposes it was useless to them, lay the open space, once, no doubt, part of its garden, but of late years used as a cattle market and a place where young men exercised themselves in arms. Bordering the waste on its further side were strong fortifications, the camping ground of the twelfth and fifteenth legions. Across this open space those who remained of the Romans fled back towards their outer line, followed by swarms of furious Jews. They gained them, such as were not overtaken, but the Jews who pursued were met with so fierce a charge, delivered by the fresh troops behind the defences, that they were in turn swept back and took refuge among the ruined houses. Suddenly Miriam's attention became concentrated upon the mounted officer who led this charge, a gallant-looking man clad in splendid armour, whose clear, ringing voice, as he uttered the words of command, had caught her ear even through the tumult and the shouting. The Roman onslaught having reached its limit, began to fall back again like the water from an exhausted wave upon a slope of sand. At the moment the Jews were in no condition to press the enemy's retreat, so that the

mounted officer who withdrew last of all, had time to turn his horse, and heedless of the arrows that sang about him, to study the ground now strewn with the wounded and the dead. Presently he looked up at the deserted tower as though wondering whether he could make use of it, and Miriam saw his face. It was Marcus, grown older, more thoughtful also, and altered somewhat by a short curling beard, but still Marcus and no other.

"Look! look!" she said.

Nehushta nodded. "Yes, it is he; I thought so from the first. And now, having seen him, lady, shall we be going?"

"Going?" said Miriam, "wherefore?"

"Because one army or the other may chance to think that this building would be useful to them, and break open the walled-up door. Also they might explore this staircase, and then----"

"And then," answered Miriam quietly, "we should be taken. What of it? If the Jews find us we are of their party; if the Romans--well, I do not greatly fear the Romans."

"You mean you do not fear one Roman. But who knows, but that he may presently lie dead----"

"Oh! say it not," answered Miriam, pressing her hand upon her heart.

"Nay, safe or unsafe, I will see this fight out. Look, yonder is Caleb--yes, Caleb himself, shouting to the Jews. How fierce is his face, like that of a hyena in a snare. Nay, now I will not go--go you and leave me in peace to watch the end."

"Since you are too heavy and strong for my old arms to carry down those steep steps, so be it," answered Nehushta calmly. "After all, we have food with us, and our angels can guard us as well on the top of a tower as in those dirty cisterns. Also this fray is worth the watching."

As she spoke, the Romans having re-formed, led by the Prefect Marcus and other officers, advanced from their entrenchment, to be met half-way by the Jews, now reinforced from the Temple, among whom was Caleb. There, in the open space, they fought hand to hand, for neither force would yield an inch. Miriam, watching through the stone bars from above, had eyes for only two of all that multitude of men--Marcus, whom she loved, and Caleb, whom she feared. Marcus was attacked by a Jew, who stabbed his horse, to be instantly stabbed himself by a Roman who came to the rescue of his commander. After this he fought on foot. Caleb killed first one soldier than another. Watching him, Miriam grew aware that he was cutting his way towards some point, and that the point was Marcus. This Marcus seemed to know; at least, he also strove to cut his way towards Caleb. Nearer and nearer they came, till at length they met and began to rain blows upon each other; but not for long, for just then a charge of some Roman horsemen separated them. After this both parties

retired to their lines, taking their wounded with them.

Thus, with pauses, sometimes of two or three hours, the fight went on from morning to noon, and from noon to sunset. During the latter part of the time the Romans made no more attacks, but were contented with defending themselves while they awaited reinforcements from without the city, or perhaps the results of some counter-attack in another part.

Thus the advantage rested, or seemed to rest, with the Jews, who held all the ruined houses and swept the open space with their arrows. Now it was that Nehushta's fears were justified, for having a little leisure the Jews took a beam of wood and battered in the walled-up doorway of the tower.

"Look!" said Nehushta, pointing down.

"Oh, Nou!" Miriam answered, "I was wrong. I have run you into danger. But indeed I could not go. What shall we do now?"

"Sit quiet until they come to take us," said Nehushta grimly, "and then, if they give us time, explain as best we may."

As it chanced, however, the Jews did not come, since they feared that if they mounted the stair some sudden rush of Romans might trap such of them as were within before they had time to descend again. Only they made use of the base of the tower to shelter those of their wounded

whose hurts were so desperate that they dared not move them.

Now the fighting having ceased for a while, the soldiers of both sides amused themselves with shouting taunts and insults at each other, or challenges to single combat. Presently Caleb stepped forward from the shelter of a wall and called out that if the Prefect Marcus would meet him alone in the open space he had something to say which he would be glad to hear. Thereupon Marcus, stepping out from his defences, where several of his officers seemed to be striving to detain him, answered:

"I will come," and walked to the centre of the market, where he was met by Caleb.

Here the two of them spoke together alone, but of what they said Miriam and Nehushta, watching them from above, could catch no word.

"Oh! will they fight?" said Miriam.

"It seems likely, since each of them has sworn to slay the other," answered Nehushta.

While she spoke Marcus, shaking his head as though to decline some proposal, and pointing to the men of his command, who stood up watching him, turned to walk back to his own lines, followed by Caleb, who shouted out that he was a coward and did not dare to stand alone before him. At this insult Marcus winced, then went on again, doubtless because

he thought it his duty to rejoin his company, whereon Caleb, drawing his sword, struck him with the flat of it across the back. Now the Jews laughed, while the Romans uttered a shout of rage at the intolerable affront offered to their commander. As for Marcus, he wheeled round, sword in hand, and flew straight at Caleb's throat.

But it was for this that the Jew had been waiting, since he knew that no Roman, and least of all Marcus, would submit to the indignity of such a blow. As his adversary came on, made almost blind with fury, he leapt to one side lightly as a lion leaps, and with all the force of his long sinewy arm brought down his heavy sword upon the head of Marcus. The helm was good, or the skull beneath must have been split in two by that blow, which, as it was, shore through it and bit deeply into the bone. Beneath the shock Marcus staggered, threw his arms wide, and let fall his sword. With a shout Caleb sprang at him to make an end of him, but before he could strike the Roman seemed to recover himself, and, knowing that his weapon was gone, did the only thing he could, rushed straight at his foe. Caleb's sword fell on his shoulder, but the tempered mail withstood it, and next instant Marcus had gripped him in his arms. Down they came together to the earth, rolling over each other, the Jew trying to stab the Roman, the Roman to choke the Jew with his bare hand. Then from the Roman lines rose a cry of "Rescue!" and from the Jews a cry of "Take him."

Out poured the combatants from either side of the market-place by hundreds and by thousands, and there in its centre, round the struggling

forms of Caleb and of Marcus, began the fiercest fight of all that day. Where men stood, there they fell, for none would give back, since the Romans, outnumbered though they were, preferred to die rather than leave a wounded and beloved captain a prisoner in the hands of cruel enemies, while the Jews knew too well the value of such a prize to let it escape them easily. So great was the slaughter that presently Marcus and Caleb were hidden beneath the bodies of the fallen. More and more Jews rushed into the fray, but still the Romans pushed onwards with steady valour, fighting shoulder to shoulder and shield to shield.

Then of a sudden, with a savage yell a fresh body of Jews, three or four hundred strong, appeared at the west end of the market-place, and charged upon the Romans, taking them in flank. The officer in command saw his danger, and knowing that it was better that his captain should die than that the whole company should be destroyed and the arms of Cæsar suffer a grave defeat, gave orders for a retirement. Steadily, as though they were on parade, and dragging with them those of their wounded comrades who could not walk, the legionaries fell back, heedless of the storm of spears and arrows, reaching their own lines before the outflanking body of Jews could get among them. Then seeing that there was nothing more to be gained, since to attempt to storm the Roman works was hopeless, the victorious Jews also retreated, this time not to the houses behind the tower, but only to the old market wall thirty or forty paces in front of it, which they proceeded to hold and strengthen in the fading light. Seeing that they were lost, such of the wounded Romans as remained upon the field committed suicide, preferring to fall upon their

own spears than into the hands of the Jews to be tortured and crucified. Also for this deed they had another reason, since it was the decree of Titus that any soldier who was taken living should be publicly disgraced by name and expelled from the ranks of the legion, and, if recaptured, in addition suffer death or banishment.

Gladly would Marcus have followed their example and thereby--though he knew it not--save himself much misery and shame in the future, but he had neither time nor weapon; moreover, so weak was he with struggling and the loss of blood, that even as he and Caleb were dragged by savage hands from among the fallen, he fainted. At first they thought that he was dead, but one of the Jews, who chanced to be a physician by trade, declared that this was not so, and that if he were left quiet for a while, he would come to himself again. Therefore, as they desired to preserve this Prefect alive, either to be held as an hostage or to be executed in sight of the army of Titus, they brought him into the Old Tower, clearing it of their own wounded, except such of them as had already breathed their last. Here they set a guard over him, though of this there seemed to be little need, and went under the command of the victorious Caleb to assist in strengthening the market-wall.

All of these things Miriam watched from above in such an agony of fear and doubt, that at times she thought that she would die. She saw her lover and Caleb fall locked in each other's arms; she saw the hideous fray that raged around them. She saw them dragged from the heap of slain, and at the end of it all, by the last light of day, saw Marcus,

living or dead, she knew not which, borne into the tower, and there laid upon the ground.

"Take comfort," whispered Nehushta, pitying her dreadful grief. "The lord Marcus lives. If he were dead they would have stripped him and left his body with the others. He lives, and they purpose to hold him captive, else they would have suffered Caleb to put his sword through him, as you noted he wished to do so soon as he found his feet."

"Captive," answered Miriam. "That means that he will be crucified like the others whom we saw yesterday upon the Temple wall."

Nehushta shrugged her shoulders.

"It may be so," she said, "unless he finds means to destroy himself or--is saved."

"Saved! How can he be saved?" Then in her woe the poor girl fell upon her knees clasping her hands and murmuring: "Oh! Jesus Christ whom I serve, teach me how to save Marcus. Oh! Jesus, I love him, although he is not a Christian; love him also because I love him, and teach me how to save him. Or if one must die, take my life for his, oh! take my life for his."

"Cease," said Nehushta, "for I think I hear an answer to your prayer. Look now, he is laid just where the stair starts and not six feet from

the stone door that leads down into the cistern. Except for some dead men the tower is empty; also the two sentries stand outside the breach in the brickwork with which it was walled up, because there they find more light, and their prisoner is unarmed and helpless, and cannot attempt escape. Now, if the Roman lives and can stand, why should we not open that door and thrust him through it?"

"But the Jews might see us and discover the secret of the hiding-place of the Essenes, whom they would kill because they have hidden food."

"Once we were the other side of the door, they could never come at them, even if they have time to try," answered Nehushta. "Before ever they could burst the door the stone trap beneath can be closed and the roof of the stair that leads to it let down by knocking away the props and flooded in such a fashion that a week of labour would not clear it out again. Oh! have no fear, the Essenes know and have guarded against this danger."

Miriam threw her arms about the neck of Nehushta and kissed her.

"We will try, Nou, we will try," she whispered, "and if we fail, why then we can die with him."

"To you that prospect may be pleasing, but I have no desire to die with the lord Marcus," answered Nehushta drily. "Indeed, although I like him well, were it not for your sake I should leave him to his chance. Nay,

do not answer or give way to too much hope. Remember, perhaps he is dead, as he seems to be."

"Yes, yes," said Miriam wildly, "we must find out. Shall we go now?"

"Aye, while there is still a little light, for these steps are breakneck in the dark. No, do you follow me."

So on they glided down the ancient, darksome stairway, where owls hooted and bats flittered in their faces. Now they were at the last flight, which descended to a little recess set at right angles to the steps and flush with the floor of the basement, for once the door of the stairway had opened here. Thus a person standing on the last stair could not be seen by any in the tower. They reached the step and halted. Then very stealthily Nehushta went on to her hands and knees and thrust her head forward so that she could look into the base of the tower. It was dark as the grave, only a faint gleam of starlight reflected from his armour showed where Marcus lay, so close that she could touch him with her hand. Also almost opposite to her the gloom was relieved by a patch of faint grey light. Here it was that the wall had been broken in, for Nehushta could see the shadows of the sentries crossing and recrossing before the ragged opening.

She leant yet lower towards Marcus and listened. He was not dead, for he breathed. More, she heard him stir his hand and thought that she could see it move upwards towards his wounded head. Then she drew back.

"Lady," she whispered, "he lives, and I think he is awake. Now you must do the rest as your wit may teach you how, for if I speak to him he will be frightened, but your voice he may remember if he has his senses."

At these words all her doubts and fears seemed to vanish from Miriam's heart, her hand grew steady and her brain clear, for Nature told her that if she wished to save her lover she would need both clear brain and steady hand. The timid, love-racked girl was transformed into a woman of iron will and purpose. In her turn she kneeled and crept a little forward from the stair, so that her face hung over the face of Marcus. Then she spoke in a soft whisper.

"Marcus, awake and listen, Marcus; but I pray of you do not stir or make a noise. I am Miriam, whom once you knew."

At this name the dim form beneath her seemed to quiver, and the lips muttered, "Now I know that I am dead. Well, it is better than I hoped for. Speak on, sweet shade of Miriam."

"Nay, Marcus, you are not dead, you are only wounded and I am not a spirit, I am a woman, that woman whom once you knew down by the banks of Jordan. I have come to save you, I and Nehushta. If you will obey what I tell you, and if you have the strength to stand, we can guide you into a secret place where the Essenes are hidden, who for my sake will take care of you until you are able to return to the Romans. If you do not

escape I fear that the Jews will crucify you."

"By Bacchus, so do I," said the whisper beneath, "and that will be worse than being beaten by Caleb. But this is a dream, I know it is a dream. If it were Miriam I should see her, or be able to touch her. It is but a dream of Miriam. Let me dream on," and he turned his head.

Miriam thought for a moment. Time was short and it was necessary to make him understand. Well, it was not difficult. Slowly she bent a little lower and pressed her lips upon his.

"Marcus," she went on, "I kiss you now to show you that I am no dream and how needful it is that you should be awakened. Had I light I could prove to you that I am Miriam by your ring which is upon my fingers and your pearls which are about my neck."

"Cease," he answered, "most beloved, I was weak and wandering, now I know that this is not a dream, and I thank Caleb who has brought us together again, against his wish, I think. Say, what must I do?"

"Can you stand?" asked Miriam.

"Perhaps. I am not sure. I will try."

"Nay, wait. Nehushta, come hither; you are stronger than I. Now, while I unlatch the secret door, do you lift him up. Be swift, I hear the guard

stirring without."

Nehushta glided forward and knelt by the wounded man, placing her arms beneath him.

"Ready," she said. "Here is the iron."

Miriam took it, and stepping to the wall, felt with her fingers for the crack, which in that darkness it took time to find. At length she had it, and inserting the thin hooked iron, lifted the hidden latch and pulled. The stone door was very heavy and she needed all her strength to move it. At last it began to swing.

"Now," she said to Nehushta, who straightened herself and dragged the wounded Marcus to his feet.

"Quick, quick!" said Miriam, "the guards enter."

Supported by Nehushta, Marcus took three tottering steps and reached the open door. Here, on its very threshold indeed, his strength failed him, for he was wounded in the knee as well as in the head. Groaning, "I cannot," he fell to the ground, dragging the old Libyan with him, his breastplate clattering loud against the stone threshold. The sentry without heard the sound and called to a companion to give him the lantern. In an instant Nehushta was up again, and seizing Marcus by his right arm, began to drag him through the opening, while Miriam, setting

her back against the swinging stone to keep it from closing, pushed against his feet.

The lantern appeared round the angle of the broken masonry.

"For your life's sake!" said Miriam, and Nehushta dragged her hardest at the heavy, helpless body of the fallen man. He moved slowly. It was too late; if that light fell on him all was lost. In an instant Miriam took her resolve. With an effort she swung the door wide, then as Nehushta dragged again she sprang forward, keeping in the shadow of the wall. The Jew who held the lantern, alarmed by the sounds within, entered hastily and, catching his foot against the body of a dead man who lay there, stumbled so that he fell upon his knee. In her hand Miriam held the key, and as the guard regained his feet, but not before its light fell upon her, she struck with it at the lamp, breaking and extinguishing it.

Then she turned to fly, for, as she knew well, the stone would now be swinging on its pivot.

Alas! her chance had gone, for the man, stretching out his arm, caught her about the middle and held her fast, shouting loudly for help. Miriam struggled, she battered him with the iron and dragged at him with her left hand, but in vain, for in that grip she was helpless as a child who fights against its nurse. While she fought thus she heard the dull thud of the closing stone, and even in her despair rejoiced, knowing that until Marcus was beyond its threshold it could not be shut. Ceasing from

her useless struggle she gathered the forces of her mind. Marcus was safe; the door was shut and could not be opened from the further side until another iron was procured; the guard had seen nothing. But her escape was impossible. Her part was played, only one thing remained for her to do--keep silence and his secret.

Men bearing lights were rushing into the tower. Her right hand, which held the iron, was free, and lest it should tell a tale she cast the instrument from her towards that side of the deserted place which she knew was buried deep in fallen stones, fragments of rotted timber and dirt from the nests of birds. Then she stood still. Now they were upon her, Caleb at the head of them.

"What is it?" he cried.

"I know not," answered the guard. "I heard a sound as of clanking armour and ran in, when some one struck the lantern from my hand, a strong rascal with whom I have struggled sorely, notwithstanding the blows that he rained upon me with his sword. See, I hold him fast."

They held up their lights and saw a beautiful, dishevelled maid, small and frail of stature, whereon they laughed out loud.

"A strong thief, truly," said one. "Why, it is a girl! Do you summon the watch every time a girl catches hold of you?"

Before the words died upon the speaker's lips, another man called out, "The Roman! The Prefect has gone! Where is the prisoner?" and with a roar of wrath they began to search the place, as a cat searches for the mouse that escapes her. Only Caleb stood still and stared at the girl.

"Miriam!" he said.

"Yes, Caleb," she answered quietly. "This is a strange meeting, is it not? Why do you break in thus upon my hiding-place?"

"Woman," he shouted, mad with anger, "where have you hidden the Prefect Marcus?"

"Marcus?" she answered; "is he here? I did not know it. Well, I saw a man run from the tower, perhaps that was he. Be swift and you may catch him."

"No man left the tower," answered the other sentry. "Seize that woman, she has hidden the Roman in some secret place. Seize her and search."

So they caught Miriam, bound her and began running round and round the wall. "Here is a staircase," called a man, "doubtless he has gone up it. Come, friends."

Then taking lights with them, they mounted the stairs to the very top, but found no one. Even as they came down again a trumpet blew and from

without rose the sound of a mighty shouting.

"What happens now?" said one.

As he spoke an officer appeared in the opening of the tower.

"Begone," he cried. "Back to the Temple, taking your prisoner with you. Titus himself is upon us at the head of two fresh legions, mad at the loss of his Prefect and so many of his soldiers. Why! where is the wounded Roman, Marcus?"

"He has vanished," answered Caleb sullenly. "Vanished"--here he glanced at Miriam with jealous and vindictive hate--"and in his place has left to us this woman, the grand-daughter of Benoni, Miriam, who strangely enough was once his love."

"Is it so?" said the officer. "Girl, tell us what you have done with the Roman, or die. Come, we have no time to lose."

"I have done nothing. I saw a man walk past the sentries, that is all."

"She lies," said the officer contemptuously. "Here, kill this traitress."

A man advanced lifting his sword, and Miriam, thinking that all was over, hid her eyes while she waited for the blow. Before it fell,

however, Caleb whispered something to the officer which caused him to change his mind.

"So be it," he said. "Hold your hand and take this woman with you to the Temple, there to be tried by her grandfather, Benoni, and the other judges of the Sanhedrim. They have means to cause the most obstinate to speak, whereas death seals the lips forever. Swift, now, swift, for already they are fighting on the market-place."

So they seized Miriam and dragged her away from the Old Tower, which an hour later was taken possession of by the Romans, who destroyed it with the other buildings.