The Scourge of Damascus

A Story of the East...

By SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

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CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

Judah got down from the back of his horse, and having thrown the rein over the branch of a tree, he started after the volunteer guide. Half a mile distant, at the edge of a thick grove of wood, the Israelite was informed that he must submit to be hoodwinked. He made no objections and the rider proceeded to bind a scarf over his eyes, after which he was led some distance further in a direction of which he could not tell. Soon he heard the horses watered, and when the bandage was removed he found himself in a rude cabin, literally filled with armed men, and in the presence of a chief and seven men. One man, a handsome, noble looking youth, arose and approached him, to whom his guide reported what he had transpired.

"Do you seek Julian?" asked the youth, looking upon the Israelite with a searching glance.

"Yes," replied Julian, promptly and calmly as though he had not been sworn some of his enemies.

"I am Julian," said the youth, politely.

"Then you behold the man to whom I was sent with a petition.

"Proceed."

"My name is Judah and I am a servant of the Israelite merchant of Damascus.

"Ah, I see. You have come to tell me that your master has changed his mind, and that he will not accept my proposition."

"No, my master. I have come to tell you that my master is dead, and that I am now the head of his household."

"Indeed! Then you are the man who has been sent to me with a petition from Ishmael, the Israelite?"

"I am the man."

"Then I am sorry to say that I cannot grant the petition."

"Why, my master?"

"Because I have already granted it to another."

"Another!" uttered Judah, starting back in surprise. "Another! Then I am undone!"

"Why so?"

"Because my master, Ishmael, has left his property to be divided between his children and his wife, and I was to receive a portion of the property which he had from Cyprus, Asia Minor, Phœnicia, Egypt and Palestine up to Damascus, and stated that I was to remain until the expected caravan made its appearance.

Sometimes Julian took his tent with him when leading his band upon long expeditions, but on the present occasion he had left it behind, choosing that the place of his encampment should be as little noticeable as possible. After he had seen his sentinels all posted and given such directions as he thought necessary, he sought a place of rest beneath a large tree where he soon sank into a dreamy slumber. It must have been near midnight when he was aroused by someone moving near him, and on starting up he was addressed by Osmir.

"My master, I have a strange message for you."

The chieftain arose to a sitting posture.

"Is this Osmir?"

"Yes."

"From whom bring you a message?"

"From one in my master, whom I had little expected to see here. As I walked forth a short time since a sentinel informed me that a stranger was within the camp, wished to speak with me. I went to the spot designated, and there found a young bedouin of Damascus. Her name was Alda."

Alda!" cried Julian, starting to his feet. "Why, such was the name of the maiden who attended upon the princess Lilis."

"Are my lord, she is the same."

"What! Do you mean that the bondmaiden of Lilis is at our camp?"

"She is."

"Has she been here long?"

"She wishes to speak with Julian."

"But her business of what does she wish to speak?"

"She would not tell me my lord. She said that it was that she was the bondmaiden of Lilis, and she desired to see Julian. I knew her not, but she seemed so earnest, and so timid and timed your name so eloquently that I could not resist her. I think her story is true. I think she is what she represents herself to be."

"But she not tell you from whom she came?"

"No, unless her announcement that she was the bondmaiden of the princess Lilis may be taken in answer to the query."

"By the lyre of Apollo, she must have come from her mistress," exclaimed the chieftain, warmly. "The princess may be in trouble. She may need stout arms to help her. Lead me to this bondmaiden at once."

"She begged my lord that she might not be exposed."

"Lead on. I will see her."

The great rock stood around the foot of the hill, and ere long the guard had reached a point so utterly shut off from the camp that his loudest cry could not have been heard by the nearest sentinels.

"Is the girl here?" asked Julian as his sable guide stopped and turned.

"She must be very near here, my lord. I left her upon this spot."

The chieftain heard a slight rustling behind him, but, not being startled into quick action, before he could turn he received a blow upon the side of the head that felled him to the earth. He was for the moment stunned, and before his reason was clear enough to direct his movements, he was set upon by three stout men, who bound his arms and legs so quickly that his power of resistance was gone before he fairly knew what opposed him.

"Sir Robber," spoke the Israelite bending over the prostrate chieftain, "you are my prisoner, and henceforth you are in my keeping until I deliver you up to my master. You cannot escape me, so do not trouble yourself with the attempt."

"You are Judah," said the chieftain "I am."

"And these others are professed to be of Aleppo?"

"Yes."

"And you three serve the king of Damascus?"

"You have guessed the truth."

By the gods," muttered Julian, as though communing with himself, "I should have guessed this before. I have been blind. I have acted like a child. But I am not yet quite lost and stuff within me."

The Israelite had been watching him narrowly and when he saw that the chieftain had a disposition to call for help, he sprang upon him and stopped his mouth.

"Do not blame yourself Sir Robber Judah of Damascus has done more difficult work than this, and you may be sure to yourself the assurance that when he set out upon his mission the deed was sure of its accomplishment. Ah, here comes Selim with the horses. You shall have an easy ride and a quick one, and when you are in the presence of the king you can plead your cause as eloquently as you please for I shall not listen, nor have I the power to judge."

The Scourge of Damascus in the full vigor of robust manhood and possessed of a strength and daring beyond any of his fellow followers, was a powerful man in the hands of those who were his enemies. He was bound between two stalwart men on the good which led from Cæsarea Philippi to Damascus, and there they were to remain until the expected caravan made its appearance.

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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"DISCOVER NOT A SECRET TO ANOTHER."

Keeping One's Own Counsel — People Should Learn to Say Nothing of Others That Is Not of Good Import—Proverbs XXV. 9.

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Washington, July 5.—A practical question which is asked in most houses, and for many years, is here asked by Dr. Talmage and answered; text, Proverbs xxv. 9, "Discover not a secret to another."

It appears that in Solomon's time, as in all subsequent periods of the world, there were people too much disposed to tell all they knew. It was blab, blab, blab; physicians revealing the case of their patients, lawyers exposing the private affairs of their clients, neighbors advertising the faults of the next door resident, pretended friends betraying confidences.

One of the peculiarities of every community comes from the fact that so many people have not the capacity to keep their mouths shut. When I hear something disparaging of you, my first duty is not to tell you, but if I tell you what somebody has said against you and then go out and tell everybody else what I told you and they go out and tell the other half I told them that I told you, and we all go out some to hunt up the originator of the story and others to hunt it down, we shall get the whole community talking about what they did not do and there will be as much scope for it to run as a band of Mormons had swept around a block of houses. We have enough to do, but only one couple in a thousand ever get a good deal to think about. But no, I am not a man who will keep such counsel. I am going to tell it. I am going to tell it to the whole world. I am going to tell it to the whole world. I am going to tell it to the whole world