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LIBERIA HERALD.

THE DAUGHTER OF ISRAEL.

BY MARY V. SPENCER.

In a large and splendid apartment, filled with the most luxurious furniture of the fifteenth century, and partaking in its florid architecture of the oriental style then so prevalent in Spain, sat a young and lovely female. Her attire was that worn by the wealthier Jewesses in the seclusion of their private apartments. The silken tunic, the rich robe, and the turban were all there, but it needed not this picturesque dress to heighten her beauty. Of all her sect, Miriam, the daughter of Boaz, was admitted to be the most lovely. In the poetical language of her people she was called the rose of Judah, that being her father's tribe.

She was sitting at a desk, with a small parchment before her as if engaged in writing. But now the pen was held listlessly in her hand, and the expression of her countenance was one of deep thought. Miriam, though young and beautiful, had already seen trouble. Unknown to her widowed father, she had secretly become a christian; and had been accustomed, during his absence, to attend the ceremonies of this new faith. Hitherto she had delayed to acknowledge her conversion publicly, for she knew it would break her father's heart; and as he was an old man, whose years would probably be few, filial affection induced her to keep secret her change of faith. Yet; day and night, she put up prayers for his conversion; for her bosom yearned to see him too a christian.

The many trials she had to undergo in consequence of this struggle between filial love and her new religion; had, hitherto, been made comparatively light, by the counsel and sympathy of one she had learned to love with all the truth and fervor of her eastern race. The student, Salvado; as he was called, was a Christian of the old blood, whose fathers had fought against the Moors in the mountains of Asturias, and who inherited all the high intellect and manly courage of his ancestors. Miriam had formed an acquaintance with him at the house of a mutual friend, for at the period of our story the wealthier Jews often formed intimacies with the higher classes, and indeed intermarried with them, as the genealogies of some of the oldest families of Spain will prove. No two beings ever came together, more fitted for each other, than Miriam and the young student. Both were beautiful, both were enthusiastic, both possessed souls of the loftiest stamp. It was to Salvado's eloquent teachings that Miriam principally owed her conversion to Christianity. And, yet, though long betrothed, no one knew the fact but themselves. Miriam dared not tell her father, for he would sooner have seen her in the grave than wedded to a Christian; and Salvado was a poor student, with no inheritance but noble blood and his father's knightly sword. So the lovers agreed to wait for better times. Then is youth not hopeful?

The betrothal had continued for about a year, during which Miriam and her lover met frequently though secretly, when Salvado received a summons to return home and abandon his studies, the uncle who had hitherto supported him at the university having died. He was now altogether penniless, having scarcely money enough left for the journey, but he immediately set forth, taking a melancholy farewell of Miriam. "I will return ere long," he said: "keep a good heart: perhaps I may win fortune and come to claim you soon. After I have had a settlement of my father's poor estate from the executors of my uncle, I shall join the camp and seek to win wealth and renown by my sword. I will write to you as often as I have opportunity to send by a trusty hand; and if ever you have occasion for the aid of a friend, call on me, and, though at my vigils as a knight, I will fly to you succor." Miriam promised and with many tears parted from her lover.

Time passed, and in the interval great changes took place in the position of the Jews in Spain. The popular opinion began to run strongly against them: always a despised people, the hatred of the mob began to find vent in open persecution. Already the monarch was meditating their expulsion, that most fatal measure to the prosperity of his kingdom, from the effects of which Spain has not yet recovered, nor ever will. The Jews were in consternation. In a few months, the edict came, and then consternaton gave place to despair.—Forced to sacrifice their goods, compelled to leave their native land, the persecuted Hebrews cast themselves in the dust and put on sackcloth and ashes. But this was not the whole of their miseries. The populace, upaid, as they thought, by the royal edict, broke out into riots, almost daily, in which they sacked the homes of the wealthier Jews, and often murdered the inoffensive owners.

Poor Miriam was in despair. To acknowledge her conversion now and desert her father would seem the blackest perfidy: to go into exile would be to lose Salvado forever, and all the dear hopes connected with him. At length she resolved to write to him, to summon him to her side, and then to take a final farewell of him, telling him she could not desert her father in his extremity. Yet when she took up the pen to indite this missive her heart almost shrank from the task. Hot tears fell on the parchment, and even when, more composed, she remained in deep thought.

Suddenly she started from her reverie, for a low, hollow murmur, like the sound of the autumn wind, penetrated to that retired chamber. She had heard such a sound once before, when a furious mob sacked the house of the Rabb Benjamin, her cheek turned ashy white. The noise increased and drew nearer; while the faint hope she had entertained that her ears deceived her, vanished away. There was no longer any doubt that there was a rising of the populace. Louder and louder their shouts approached: Miriam trembled with vague apprehension. Snatching a crucifix from her bosom, she kissed it fervently and had just replaced it, when the door of her apartment opened and her aged parent rushed into the room, alarm depicted on every feature of his countenance.

"The God of Abraham protect thee, sweet one," he exclaimed. "The spoiler is up: the Ishmachites are abroad. Haste to get some of your most valuable jewels and fly with me by the back way. Hark, there are the blows upon the outer door: the wolves will soon be in the fold of Israel!"

Even while he was speaking, a noise as if a battering ram was being used against the heavy gates of the house, shook the walls; accompanied by a succession of huzzas, as when a crowd cheers on the efforts of the more daring portion of its members. Miriam knew, therefore, that no time was to be lost: there was a riot among the populace; and the reputed wealth of her father had drawn the mob to his house, which they intended to sack. Life itself probably depended on her speed. Taking up, therefore, the parchment on which she had been writing, she thrust it into her bosom, and then hastily collecting the most valuable of her jewels she hurried them into a casket, her father assisting her with trembling hands.

"Alas! alas!" he said while thus occupied, "the glory has departed from my house. We will go forth beggars into a strange land. Oh! Miriam, beloved of my heart, the image of thy blessed mother, how will it fare with thee now after my aged head is laid in the dust? I thought to leave thee the richest, as thou art the loveliest of our tribe, but now thou wilt be a beggar among thy people—like the wild coneys, having no home but on the hills. God, of my fathers," he continued, looking to heaven, "verily, thou hast laid the rod heavily on us. The chosen of thy right hand are delivered to the Philistines—we wanderers on the earth—oh! when will the days of our tribulation and sojourning be over?"

His words were cut short, as well as their further progress in collecting valuables, by a crash which shook the house to its foundation, followed by a shout of triumph from the crowd; and instantly the feet of the infuriated mob was heard in the courtyard below.

"Fly, fly, never mind the jewels—better life and poverty than death by such hands," said Miriam, recoiling with horror at that shout, and dragging her father away from his task. "We shall barely have time to escape into the back street—throw over yourself this cloak: I am sufficiently disguised by my veil."

Taking the old man's hand in hers, she hurried along the corridor, into which the room opened. Their way led for some distance along the passage, which was separated from the court-yard, now filled with people, only by a thin wall; and at every step Miriam expected to hear the door at the upper end give way, when they would be immediately visible to their pursuers—She could hear the blows on it increasing in rapidity, and urging her trembling limbs forward with an increased pace, she has just gained the door of exit when the entrance give way. As she hurriedly emerged into the narrow street behind the house the mob rushed into the corridor.

The door was hastily closed behind her and then she looked up and down the narrow thoroughfare, uncertain which way to proceed, for her father, whom age and terror had rendered incapable of thought, stood beside her, gazing bewildered into her face. To the right, where the narrow lane abutted on the main street, she heard shouts as if the mob was in great force in that quarter: so she turned her footsteps toward the left, and hurried on, dragging her father with her. She hoped that her flight had been unnoticed by the mob, and that she might gain the end of the street undiscovered: then, if there was no crowd in that quarter, or if their disguises proved effective, she might escape into another part of the city and find refuge with some of their sect until the riot was over.

But these hopes were of short duration. Horror, and regret at leaving his possessions, had so far overcome her father, that he was now as helpless as a child, and Miriam found herself almost compelled to carry him along. Their progress, therefore, was comparatively slow, and they were already a considerably distance from the outlet of the lane, when the door by which she had fled was opened, and a rioter looked out. A glance down and then up the street discovered the fugitives: and immediately a dozen of the mob rushed out yelling, and gave pursuit. Miriam shrieked, and make an effort to drag her father forward still faster; but the effort was vain: the rabble made two steps where she advanced one.

"Father," she cried despairingly, "cannot you haste. See, they gain on us, and will tear us limb from limb. If we can only gain yonder outlet before them, some archway or open gate may afford us a shelter. A single minute may be enough to baffle the mob."

"I cannot fly faster—I feel as if the angel of death was passing over me—my limbs totter and my heart is still," he said, "leave me to my fate—and the Lord God of thy fathers and my fathers bless thee!"

As he spoke, Miriam notice that his eyes grew glassy, and a ghastly paleness overspread his countenance. His feeble limbs gave way beneath him, and he would have sunk to the ground if his daughter had not supported him.

This was a terrible moment for Miriam. To desert her father in his extremity was not to be thought of, yet remaining would do him no good and would seal her own fate. Death was not in itself so terrible; but she had heard of the outrages perpetrated by the rabble on their victims, and she shrank, with maidenly modesty, from the profanation. These thoughts flitted rapidly through her mind, as she heard the exulting cry of the mob, when they saw her father sink down: then, all selfish considerations passed from her mind, and she grew absorbed in her dying parent.

"Father," she said, kneeling, and supporting his dying head," father! Oh! he is dying," she cried agonizingly, looking to heaven, "son of God intercede for him."

The old man faintly opened his eyes which rested upon his daughter's tearful countenance. It was the last glow of his faculties, rallying from the stupor of approaching death. There was all the strength of earlier manhood in them now.

"The God of Israel protect thee, my child," he said, "I go to join Abraham and the patriarchs of old. The Lord is forgiving—he may yet save my murderers—I see the blessed in heaven and there are Gentile as well as Jew——"

His voice ceased, his head fell back, and Miriam felt the weight in her arms increased. But her heart throbbed with joy at the words he had spoken—was there not forgiveness in them for her?—oh! could it be that the dying have glimpses of futurity and learn then a charity they knew not while they lived?

But this thought was succeeded by the reflection that her long loved parent was dead, and that his remains, in another moment, would be the prey of a brutal mob. At this thought she started up: and now, for the first time, she perceived that her pursuers had halted a few paces distant, as if awed for the instant by the unexpected spectacle of death.

It was a subject for a painter. There lay the corpse, with uncovered contenance that undefinable expression which ever dwells on the faces of the dead, checking the mob with sudden awe; and over it stood Miriam, her slight, woman's form drawn proudly up, confronting the rioters with the haughty bearing of a priestess, whose shrine has been broken into by sacreligious hands.—At a little distance was the rabble, huddled together like a pack of hungry wolves, suddenly startled by the appearance of some new and unexpected foe.

It might have been a minute that the two parties stood thus regarding each other. Although Miriam, as if remembering her

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