A Mother in Israel

By IDA ALEXANDER

Margaret Ellis sat with her face pressed against the window pane of the car in which she had been traveling for many hours. Now, seated on the train which was to take her home, she wished that there were something darker than the blackest black. For it was with a heavy heart that she was going to the home which she had long considered empty. There was one too many there now. For two years there had been too many and one too few. But the house to which her baby had been taken after all, was the home of her husband's people, and they had deferred in all things to Margaret's opinions. Now there was someone else.

Margaret took out the three months' old letter. There had been others since, but this was the one that had been read and reread. It was folded at the place that had hurt most. She knew it by heart, yet she read it again. "And she is a good woman, Margaret, reminding me in many things of your sainted mother." She read the letter from beginning to end, and twice she read the part that hurt so sorely. Then she tore it across, again and yet again. Presently the tiny bits, upon which no word could be distinguished were flung from the window.

People were beginning to gather up their packages, the train to slacken its speed. After a little Margaret found herself on the platform, with half a dozen others. She saw her father before he saw her. Everything looked much the same—the same old buggy, the same old horse, and with a little thrill at her heart, Margaret saw the same old father. What change she had expected marriage to make in him she did not know; but she knew she had expected one and was thankful that it was not there. Presently he spied her with his nearsighted eyes and came over. There was little said by either but when Margaret slipped her small hand into her father's he gave a sigh of relief. The first meeting was not what she had feared.

All the long ride home she kept up a gay chatter which a more observant man would have rightly understood. But as they drew near the house even he noticed how her face flushed and paled by turns.

The group standing in the door was a very pleasant one, but not in Margaret's eyes. How often in her dreams she had seen them. Teddy and Bertha, Myrtle and wee Dot—but now it was as if they didn't stand before her. What she saw, the only thing she saw, was the lady who stood beside them. She was tall, with iron-gray hair and sharp, observant eyes, the very antithesis, Margaret hotly thought, of her little dove-eyed mother. All in the minute, before a word was said the owner of those observant eyes took note of the girl who stood before her. She saw a slight girl scarcely more than a child, with soft, brown hair, which the wind had blown into picturesque disorder; a mouth surely meant for smiling where life was forcing a downward curve, brown eyes, which might have been, which almost were, beautiful in spite of their angry appeal against fate. Grief, rebellion, loathing—so many emotions were written on the face that her stepmother involuntarily stretched out her arms as Mr. Willis introduced them. Margaret did not even take her hand. She bent over Dot a moment to hide the tears that were gathering in her eyes.

"If you'll excuse me, Mrs. Ellis," she said quite steadily, "I'll go up to my room. It's quite a tiresome ride."

"Yes," her stepmother answered, "take a good rest. Dinner won't be ready for an hour. I'll bring yours up if you like, you poor, tired child."

But the unveiled pity was harder than anger would have been.

"No, I'll come down, thank you," Margaret answered, coldly.

As day succeeded day the breach between them widened, till finally it was a gaping place which no one love could have bridged. Even the children helped in the widening with their clinging fondness for their stepmother. Mr. Ellis alone stood nervously impassive, longing for peace as only the nervous can, longing in vain, as they usually do.

In every possible way Margaret thwarted her stepmother, sometimes covertly, sometimes openly, but ever with an intolerant disregard that made Mrs. Ellis feel an intruder in her own home. Her patient acceptance of the situation, her silent understanding, but served as fuel to the feelings Margaret nursed. When a sweet and wholesome nature becomes embittered through real or fancied wrongs, no other is so bitter, so implacable.

"I wouldn't take Dot, if I were you Margaret," said her stepmother one morning, as Margaret took out the child's hat and coat. "She has not seemed well the last day or so, and it looks like rain."

Margaret silently put on and buttoned the coat and pulled Dot's curls through the elastic of the hat. Then she spoke:

"I don't think it will rain, and Dot seems in perfect health." She looked at the clear sky with a sneer as she went out. "She's afraid Dot'll love me," she said to herself.

But on the way home her stepmother's words came true. The clouds increased, the wind blew, the rain fell in torrents. In spite of Margaret's care of the child she was drenched when she reached the [illegible] gained it and held out her arms for the child.

"Margaret, you shouldn't have put your coat over her. You must be wet through and through. Run and change your things."

In the middle of the night Margaret became conscious of a knocking at her door.

"Yes?" she said sleepily.

"Get up, Margaret," answered her father's voice, "Dot is very sick. I'm going for the doctor."

It seemed only a moment to her before she was dressed and in her stepmother's room. The child lay on the bed, flushed, fighting for breath, almost unrecognizable as her baby self. But the face that bent over the child, and then turned at her approach, a face alight with love and pity, Margaret wondered where she had seen that look before. The likeness grew and grew. Then in a flash she knew whence it came. Just so her mother had once fought death for little Ted. Neither spoke. Her stepmother went on with the wringing out of hot cloths, applying them to the tender throat. Margaret watched her deft fingers wonderingly, or covered her ears with her hands at sound of the cough—a sound that once heard is never forgotten. At last, she dropped on her knees by the bed and looked up into her stepmother's eyes.

"Is there"—she faltered, "are you afraid?"

"Yes," the quiet voice answered, "I am afraid. It is right to tell you, Margaret, when the danger is so great. I would not have disturbed you otherwise. But God is very good, my dear. Have faith and hope, for I think He knows we couldn't give up little Dot."

Margaret shuddered. Once before she had known.

"I—can I help you? Do you need me?"

"No there is nothing more to do until the doctor comes. Go and lie down you poor child. You look half sick yourself."

Margaret paced her room to and fro to and fro. After a little she heard her stepmother open the door and let the father and doctor in. She even caught the words and tone of appeal—an appeal we make to the doctor and none other in like case. Then the door of the sick room opened and shut and there was silence. And Margaret crouched by the bed, lived again the months she had lived since her return to her father's house. Then backward again to the last months at the boarding school. Then further still to her mother's last kiss and her own promise to "be good."

It seemed impossible to look forward, and yet through her closed door she heard the opening of the one where the sick child lay. She heard the first faint tap at the door, and her stepmother's voice, "Margaret." Margaret crouched lower. "The child is dead," she said to herself.

Of a sudden she went to the door and threw it open. Her stepmother stood upon the threshold the tears running down her face. Years were crowded into the second before she spoke.

"My dear, my dear, the child will live."

Margaret swayed and would have fallen but for the strong and tender arms that caught her. She nestled closer, closer, sobbing away her bitterness and grief against the motherly heart that yearned over her, even as her own mother might have done.

Former Land Steals.

Oregon was anticipated in the matter of land steals by about 100 years when the "Yazoo fraud" was perpetrated. This was a term applied to the transaction by which the State of Georgia, through an act of its legislature, Jan. 7, 1795, granted about 35,000,000 acres of her western territory to four land companies, known as the Yazoo companies. The consideration paid was $500,000 and the territory extended from the Alabama and Coosa rivers to the Mississippi, and from the thirty-fifth to the thirty-first parallel of latitude. Every member of the legislature except one was a shareholder in one of the companies. Although the grant was repealed and the records of the transaction publicly burned the next year, the case did not end them. In 1814 the Congress of the United States ordered the lands sold and appropriated $5,000,000 for extinguishing the rights of the claimants.

Man's Best Year.

A professor has just gone deeply into the records of achievements of the world's chief workers and thinkers, and finds that the average age for the performance of the master work is 50. For the workers the average is 47 and for the thinkers 53. Chemists and physicists average the youngest, at 41; poets and inventors, 47; novelists, at 46; explorers and warriors, 47; composers and actors, 48; artists and clergymen, 50; essayists and reformers, 51; physicians and statesmen, 52; philosophers, 54; mathematicians and humorists, 56; historians, 57; naturalists and jurists, 58. The professor concludes that if health and optimism remain "the man of 50 can command success as readily as the man of 30."

Chinese Eat Meat.

Unlike the Japanese, the Chinese are meat eaters. Fowls, including ducks and geese, are abundantly consumed and pork is the most used of all edible meats. The number of pigs raised is enormous.

Rose That Changes Color.

A Japanese florist there has been discovered a rose which is unique. The color is a delicate pink when the plant is in the shade, but becomes crimson exposed to the sun.

ANIMAL SLAUGHTER IN FRANCE.

Strict Inspection to Be Sure They Are Not Diseased.

Regarding the information regarding animal slaughtering in France having been sent to the United States Consul General in Paris, he replies that no special supervision is given to entrails, but that no animal may be slaughtered for food there unless it has first been under veterinary inspection. If it has been found sound the viscera are also regarded safe without further examination.

When a cow, hog or sheep proves to be affected with disease when killed, steps are taken to prevent its use as food. If the disease is not contagious the body is impregnated with petroleum. If the animal suffers from a disease which may be transmitted, body, hide, entrails, horns and hoofs must be burned. Cattle which show traces of tuberculosis are treated with petroleum but no restriction is put on the ordinary uses of the hide, horns and hoofs. In rare cases where the meat is destined for use in menageries the authorities refrain from applying oil, but supervise the business of feeding the carnivorous animals for which the meat is intended.

These regulations apply to the cattle, hogs and sheep sold by farmers to rural butchers, as well as to the animals slaughtered for food in big cities.

The Modest Third.

Early in the Jongressional career of Mr. Blaine, says a writer in the New York Tribune, when Thaddeus Stevens died, who for ten years had dominated Congress, Mr. Blaine, who entered the House the same year as the late Senator Allison, remarked to a friend in the rotunda of the Capitol, "The death of Stevens is an emancipation for the Republican party. He kept it under his heel."

"Whom have you got left for leader?" queried the friend.

"There are three young men coming forward," was Mr. Blaine's reply. "There is a young man to be heard from," pointing to Allison, who was passing. "James A. Garfield is another."

There was a pause, and the friend asked, "Well, who is the third?"

Mr. Blaine gave up in the dome, and said, quietly, "I don't see the third."

Roman Nomenclature.

The noble Romans were peculiar in their system of nomenclature. They had the praenomen, the nomen and the cognomen. The first of these distinguished the individual and was equivalent to our Christian or baptismal name. It was usually indicated by a single letter, as A. for Aulus, or by two letters, as Ap. for Appius, or three, as Her. for Hernius. The nomen was distinctive of the gens or clan, and has no corresponding appellative among us. The cognomen was placed last, and designated the familiae, precisely answering to our surname. Sometimes a fourth name was added, the agnomen, in consequence of a renowned action, some conspicuous event of life or feature of character. Scipio, in addition to his regular names, was styled Africanus after his conquest of Carthage. The name Germanicus was assumed by those who distinguished themselves in the wars with the Germans.

Unique Cannon.

It is a curious fact that when the island of Malta was in possession of the Templars those doughty knights defended their forts by means of cannon cut into the solid rock.

Each of these strange engines of war was capable of containing an entire barrel of gunpowder, and, it is said, could throw ten thousand pounds of projectiles. Inasmuch, however, as these natural cannon could not be aimed, fifty were cut out of the rock guarding the various channels of approach; and the vessels of that time were therefore unable to come within their own range before being annihilated by the big weapons of defense.

Although the fame of these cannon was spread far and wide, they were not duplicated elsewhere, and to this day they remain the only rock cannon of which there exists any record.

Women's Names.

In female names the Romans indulged but small variety of appellation, and fancy had little or nothing to do with their invention and bestowal. When there was but one daughter in a family she received the feminine termination of her Gentile name, as Tullia, the daughter of Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Octavius, the sister of Octavius Caesar, etc., which names were retained even after marriage. When there were two daughters one was called Major and the other Minor; as Cornelia Major and Cornelia Minor. If there were more than two they were distinguished by their number, thus: Prima, Secunda, Tertia, Quarta, etc.

Advance of the Glaciers.

For a long time past scientific observations in various parts of the world have shown a tendency on the part of glaciers to recede. This has been particularly noted in the Alps. But recent information indicates that a change may be at hand. At least, it has been found that since 1904 the Norway glaciers have begun to advance again. In 1907 this progression became general in Norway, the advance varying from 1 to 12 meters.

His Humble Wish.

"My dear friend, I beg you to lend me fifty dollars," wrote a needy man to an acquaintance, "and then forget me forever. I am not worthy to be remembered."

PROVED ON THE SPOT.

Sculptor's Demonstration in Mud and Slush by a Lantern's Light.

The following characteristic anecdote is told concerning H. C. Potter, the sculptor:

"I saw him one evening paying a call upon comparative strangers. A plaster cast of a horse stood at one side of the room, a little piece full of poetic imagination, but done loosely and sketchily. Mr. Potter sat down, but his gaze kept returning to that horse.

"He barely heard what was being said to him as he studied it again and again. At last his interest in it broke out. He jumped up and walked across.

"'Of course, it has feeling,' said he, quite irrelevantly. 'I like it. But look at that head.'

"His fingers travelled sensitively over the plaster.

"'No horse was ever constructed in that way. He simply couldn't have those great holes over his eyes.'

"As he felt it, he warmed up more and more.

"'Why, come out here and I'll show you,' he exclaimed.

"So he took his companion out to where his own horse was standing and, regardless of the mud and slush of a winter night, got down on the porch to show it. The unlovely light the bony processes that really modified the cavity in question."

Ducks Plentiful in China.

There are more ducks in China than in all the rest of the world, says "The Dundee Advertiser." China, literally, is white with these birds, and day and night the country resounds with their metallic and sonorous voices. Chinamen herd ducks on every road, on every pond, on every farm, on every lake, on every river. There is no backyard without its duck house. There is no boat, little or great, without its duck quarters. Even in the cities of China ducks abound. They dodge between the coolies' legs. They flit squawking out of the way of the horses. Their indignant quack will not much drown the roar of urban commerce. All over the land there are great duck hatching establishments, many of them of a capacity huge enough to produce fifty thousand young ducks every year. The Chinese duck is extremely tender and delicate—the best tame fowl for eating in the world. Duck, among the Chinese, is the staple delicacy. It is salted and smoked, like ham or beef.

Bedroom Mirrors.

"Only a hand mirror should find place in a bedroom," said a doctor, "and it should be one flattering to the patient—the kind, for instance, which if the face is too broad will lengthen it a little. And the patient should only be allowed to look in the mirror at propitious times. Many a patient has been frightened literally to death by his haggard reflection—has looked, sighed, and renounced hope. But many another patient in a really bad way—really desperate, indeed—being given a look at himself just after he has taken a stimulant, has looked up wonderfully. In fact, a sick-room mirror, wisely handled, is a curative agent, while recklessly handled it may kill.

Naval Wireless Badge.

A wireless telegraph corps has been formed in the British Navy, and any seaman may earn proficiency marks in it, as he may in marksmanship or other specialties of the service. A badge for proficiency is given, to be worn on the right sleeve just above the elbow. To win it the seaman must pass an examination on board H. M. S. Impregnable at Devonport. The badge is a pair of wings crossed by a flash of lightning, worked in gold. A fully qualified wireless telegrapher adds one star above the badge; a first-class petty officer, two stars, and a chief petty officer a small crown.

Messages in the Ring.

No article worn upon the person has more romance and sentiment connected with it than the finger ring. Not only love and feuity, but hatred, murder and magic are associated with the golden circlet. Caesar Borgia had a ring with a receptacle for poison behind the stone, and with this it was his pleasant custom to deal death to his guests as they sat with him at wine.

No Man Lives Unto Himself.

There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone; you can't isolate yourself, and say that the evil which is in you shall not spread. Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe; evil spreads as necessarily as disease. Every sin causes suffering to others besides those who commit it.—George Eliot.

That Strange Lake in Africa.

That strange African lake, Lake Tchad, has been the subject of renewed attention within the last two years, and the fact that in a period of twenty years it alternately increases and decreases in size and depth seems to have been well established.

Historic Dagger Sold.

The dagger presented to Lord Darnley by Mary Queen of Scots in the year they were married, and believed to be the one with which Rizzio was killed, was sold at Sotheby's, London, recently, for $50.

Doctor's Second Call.

An Aberdeenshire doctor who recently attended a woman was somewhat staggered at receipt of the following epistle from her: "Please come and vaccinate the child you gave birth to last week."—Caledonian Medical Journal.

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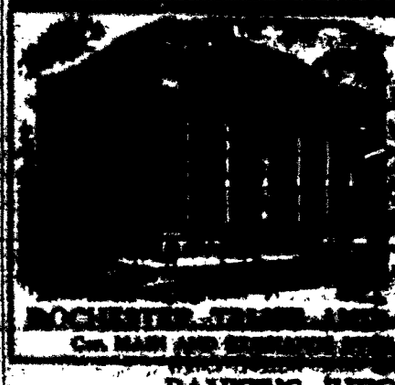

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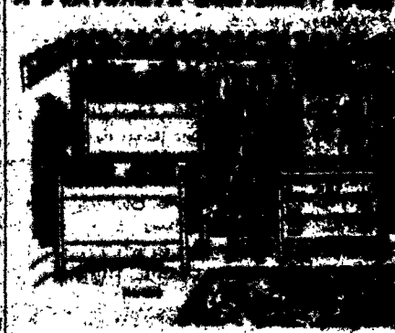

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