

*The* EMPEROR'S  
PHYSICIAN

J. R. PERKINS

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*Title:* The Emperor's Physician

*Date of first publication:* 1944

*Author:* J. R. Perkins, 1878-1959

*Date first posted:* Mar. 31, 2015

*Date last updated:* Mar. 31, 2015

Faded Page eBook #20150368

This ebook was produced by: Marcia Brooks, Al Haines, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>



# The Emperor's Physician

*by*

J. R. PERKINS



McCLELLAND AND STEWART LIMITED

TORONTO, CANADA

INDIANAPOLIS

NEW YORK

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FIRST CANADIAN IMPRESSION

PRINTED IN CANADA

WRIGLEY PRINTING COMPANY LIMITED  
578 SEYMOUR STREET, VANCOUVER, B.C.

TO MY WIFE

STELLA BEAMAN PERKINS

*whose constancy is a lasting commentary on  
Saint Paul's avowal that love suffers  
long and is kind*

# THE EMPEROR'S PHYSICIAN





The letter to me from Emperor Tiberius Caesar came from Capri where he had lived for three years in self-imposed exile; but another letter, written by Septimus Cumanus, my former instructor in the medical sciences, came from Rome where, after half a century of practice, he was living in retirement, except for continuous research. Both letters importuned me to give up my own practice in Antioch of Syria and go down to Caesarea, Palestinian headquarters of the Roman Legate, and await the arrival of the Emperor's physician, Sergius Cumanus, the gifted son of the aged medical scientist whose pupil I had been in the Imperial City.

The old Emperor's letter was tantamount to a command; the one from my former teacher was imploring. But each set forth at some length the facts of a medical mission the Emperor's physician was about to undertake throughout Rome's border possessions—a mission authorized in reality by the Senate. For the spread of many diseases, especially throughout Palestine, known colloquially as "Jewry," was giving birth to alarming social problems.

I was instructed to present my credentials to Lucius Vitellius, Governor of all Syria—who had been apprised of the mission—and place myself at the disposal of the Emperor's physician as soon as he reached Caesarea.

I recalled readily the son of Septimus Cumanus, though Sergius was only fifteen years of age when I had finished my study at Rome. In those days he was with his father a great deal and everyone believed the son would follow in the footsteps of his illustrious sire. From all I had learned since leaving Rome to practice in my native city of Antioch, I felt the younger Cumanus might prove as learned as the elder and with even greater opportunity make himself famous in the medical sciences throughout the Empire.

But it was with some regret that I made preparations to leave Antioch, now the third city of the Empire—a city famous for its arts and sciences, theaters, inns and baths and sports—and spend a full year in Palestine which, despite its Hellenization, was, through the priesthood of Judaism, waging a vigorous war against the ways of the gentiles. For I held a nominal adherence to Judaism—the religion of my mother—and journeyed, off and on, to Jerusalem to attend some of the great feasts. I knew something of the land and the people and of the ceaseless conflict between them and their conquerors, and it was this knowledge that I was to place at the disposal of the Emperor's physician, especially in things pathological. But I set my house in order, turned over my heavy practice to a young physician of the city of Corinth and went down to the coastal city of Caesarea—a raw, elemental town as cosmopolitan as

Alexandria in Egypt but without its mind and spirit.

It was near the close of winter. Desiring to be comfortable while awaiting the arrival of Sergius Cumanus, I took quarters in a famous inn. It was known as Strato's, being in a very old tower of the same name, well up on the cliff that shadows the lower city. This inn, amazingly large, was the stopping place of the official, merchant and estate classes, and had a commanding view of the sea, the city and the hill country south and eastward toward Jerusalem. North of the inn, and on the same cliff, was the old palace of the first Herod, who, with many a gesture of contemptuous obeisance to Rome, rebuilt the original town between the cliffs and the sea and named it Caesarea in honor of Augustus. This palace stood in a spacious garden, walled in from the ribald population, and was now the official residence of Lucius Vitellius, the Governor of all Syria. Near this palace was a most attractive villa, the home of Pontius Pilate, the Judean Procurator, for Caesarea had been the residing place of the province procurators ever since Rome chose to rule Judea and Samaria directly from the Imperial City rather than to place so-called kings over them, as in the case of the rule of Herod Antipas over Galilee and Perea.

But Pontius Pilate was spending more time in Jerusalem than any of his predecessors, for the simple reason that he was having more trouble with the Jews than any other Roman ruler had ever encountered. This political adventurer, in the bad graces of the Emperor, held his position chiefly through the influence of his wife, Claudia, who was a distant kinswoman of Augustus. But they hated the Jews and were in turn hated, for they looked upon a procuratorship in Jewry to be near-banishment and clung to it only because Rome had nothing else to offer them.

Lucius Vitellius dwelt alone in the palace except for Julia, the child of his latter years, for his sons were in school at Rome and did not take the trouble to visit their father at the end of each school year. So, with his little daughter and a retinue of slave-servants, he occupied the great house. He was a lonely, weary ruler and when I put in my appearance he received me with joy, for there was sickness in his household and no physician in Caesarea had been able to help him. He informed me that his daughter had been ill for several years with a skin malady and had recently grown worse.

I knew that skin diseases of many kinds were indigenous to the common people of Jewry and I wondered if the Governor's child had been infected by a servant in the great household. But all I said was, "I would like to see your daughter."

He nodded and led me from the library down into the garden where, greatly to my astonishment, I saw what was tantamount to an Aesculapian house, half temple, half hospital, built especially for the family of the first Herod in imitation of the Greek

method of caring for the sick of the upper classes.

This building was a cloistered place, oriented both to the rising and setting of the sun; marble built, it had a sky-blue painted ceiling bordered with a band of gold. The walls were as white as snow and windowless, though the interior was fairly well lighted with oil cressets deeply set in niches. Two white-robed attendants moved about the room and one of them came forward and made obeisance.

“How is Julia today?” the Governor asked.

“The same as yesterday, Excellency,” the woman replied, “and the same for many days past.”

Lucius Vitellius sighed deeply, but said, “Lead the way to her couch.”

So the woman conducted us to one side of the room where, between fluted pillars, stood a low, beautiful bed on which lay a girl of about twelve—a breastless child without comeliness of face or form. She was, as the saying goes, all eyes, and they burned with deep fires of fear and suspicion.

“Julia,” her father began, “I have brought the greatest physician in all Syria to see you.”

“I will take no more black potions,” the girl all but screamed, pulling the bedclothes under her chin.

“I do not give black potions to little girls,” I said as I bent over her and peered at her hands as she gripped the covers. On her right hand was a wonderful gem set in a solid band of gold. “Do all the maidens of Caesarea wear rings on their right hands instead of the left as do the maidens of Antioch?” I interrogated.

“My left hand was very sore when my father first brought me the ring, so I placed it on the right,” she explained. She let go the covers and extended her left hand for me to see. “It doesn’t hurt me any more,” was her final remark that gave me an unpleasant shock.

I knew that real leprosy, in its more advanced stages, deadened the nerves; but of course I made no comment as I examined the scaly patches between her fingers—patches like the scales of a fish.

“Are there scales on other parts of her body?” I inquired of the attendant.

“Yes,” she said. “On the soles of her feet and in her hair.”

“May I look at your feet, Julia, and at your scalp?” I began as fatherly as I knew how.

With a slow, labored movement as if her joints were stiff the listless child thrust her feet from beneath the covers and, in the light of a close-held candle, I continued my examination. Surreptitiously, I pinched one of her toes; she did not flinch, and I knew it was without sensation. Her scalp, which I next examined, was a mass of

scaly sores, and patches of white hair dotted a luxuriant growth normally raven black.

I felt the questioning eyes of the Governor upon me, so I became very professional. “My examination is too superficial to determine the exact nature of her skin malady,” I began as we turned from the bed. “As you know, skin diseases abound in this land and most of them yield to treatment—especially the kind of treatment your child is receiving. I will prescribe a certain diet and oil baths which, I hope, will restore her flesh and clear the skin.”

But I knew the Roman Legate was far from satisfied and on returning to the study he plied me with questions concerning skin diseases in general. Then came a query that I knew to be inevitable. “Julia’s affliction couldn’t be leprosy, could it?” he asked. But without giving me time to answer, he hurried on. “I have always been very careful of her since coming to this land—keeping her away from crowds and guarding her health in every way possible.”

“Good as far as it goes,” I asserted. “But disease is no respecter of persons, Excellency. And speaking of leprosy, of course you know that it is not necessarily a disease of plebeians. Sometimes it enters the great households, either through the serving classes or from contact with leprous garments, and medical authorities have about concluded that lepers who walk barefooted—and most of them do—may infect the very soil. Anyone—child or adult—walking such paths and highways without sandal-shod feet might contract the disease.”

“Are you trying to tell me that the soles of Julia’s feet are leprosy?” he demanded.

“Excellency,” I began as hopefully as possible, “in the very nature of the case my diagnosis was superficial. I would want to know the history of your child’s case before I expressed a definite opinion. So when the Emperor’s physician arrives he and I together——”

“Enough, Luke Galen,” the Syrian ruler interrupted sadly. “Your manner excites suspicion. I believe my child is a leper.”

He got up and paced the tiled floor and I went to the window and looked down on the showy harbor of Caesarea. Two ships—one setting sail and the other coming in—curtsied to each other on either side of the long mole and I found myself praying that the one soon to dock would have the Emperor’s physician aboard. “A great ship is coming in,” I announced to the Governor.

He joined me at the window. “She looks like the *Castor*,” he said. “But it might be the *Pollux*, a twin ship. It was on the latter that the Emperor’s physician was supposed to sail. If it is the *Pollux* it is many days overdue.”

We turned from the window and sat down to discuss the medical mission throughout the Palestinian portion of Syria. Lucius Vitellius knew all about it; moreover, he had comprehensive knowledge of the conditions in the provinces he ruled, and surprised and pleased me by producing carefully documented records that charted the areas wherein disease was working havoc among the common people. Of course he was thinking in terms of the political problems rising out of such conditions, while I knew that they went much deeper; but I was highly gratified to learn that Sergius Cumanus and I were to labor within the realm of a ruler who had laid some of the groundwork for our task. "Out of a population of a quarter million in Galilee—where Herod Antipas rules brutally and blindly—there are fully a hundred thousand diseased," he stated gloomily.

"And what are the conditions in Judea where Pilate rules?" I questioned, thinking how pivotal this province was in the whole of Palestine.

"Bad, but much better than in Galilee," he replied. "You see, the priesthood of Judaism, with Jerusalem as the great central point in the lives of the people, is able to enforce the dietary and the religious laws in a way that they cannot be enforced in Galilee."

"Why can't those laws be enforced in Galilee?" I interrogated sharply. "Is it because Herod Antipas does not rule with a hand as firm as Pilate? Or is the reason deeper?"

"Deeper—much deeper. It is a long, complicated story of rebellion of the diseased multitudes—rebellion against both the religious and the civil authorities. I will tell you later the story in detail," he promised. "But first of all I feel that I should make clear certain things concerning Sergius Cumanus, who may be on the incoming ship. Of course you know him personally?"

"Yes and no," I replied. "He was but a boy when I studied at Rome under his father. But I recall what a magnificent-looking lad he was, intellectually advanced, a trifle imperious and with a singularly skeptical turn of mind for one so young."

The Governor nodded understandingly. "He still possesses those characteristics," he said, "and certain others not too desirable." He paused, measured me with an impersonal eye and added, "I think you should know more about the man with whom you are to be associated. Especially you should be told why his father was eager for him to get off the island of Capri and lose himself for a year in this distant land."

"I have heard many rumors concerning the society of Capri," I remarked, seeking to encourage Vitellius to confide in me to the fullest extent. "But of course Sergius Cumanus would not be mixed up in the homosexual scandals of the place?"

My words constituted a question—one of the highest importance to me.

Vitellius shook his head. “Nothing of that sort,” he stated. “But there was an affair involving the young wife of a prominent court official, all of which meant little to the Emperor but a great deal to the father of this brilliant young physician. So you see, Septimus Cumanus really planned and promoted the medical mission that is bringing his son to Syria. Capri and court circles have added nothing to the good name and the fame of the old Emperor’s young physician,” was the Governor’s final declaration on this score.

In the silence that followed I had time to meditate upon the marked trend in Roman official circles; of the great amount of filial unfaithfulness among the ruling families; of the sickening amorous habits of the old Emperor himself—habits that had added new words of repulsive meaning to the vocabulary of Romans, and paved the way for orgies of unspeakable degeneracy throughout the Empire. Suddenly I felt how desperately some mighty arresting force was needed among all peoples and how helpless I was to contribute to its birth. My train of thought was interrupted by a singular interrogation from the Governor.

“Do you ever find your religious beliefs and your medical science in conflict?” he asked. And before I could make reply he added, “I believe that the Hippocratic school of medicine—in which you were trained at Rome—generally denies the supernatural any place in healing. Is this not so?”

I marveled at the erudition of a man whom I thought was little more than a politician and I wondered if he were attempting to involve me in an argument, so my rejoinder was guarded. “I do not follow slavishly my school of medicine,” I said. “If supernatural beliefs help my patients and augment medical science in any manner, I encourage them in their faith.”

“Then I fear you and the Emperor’s physician will not begin your medical mission on quite the same level.”

He told an experience he had at a banquet the Emperor gave at Capri in honor of the elevation of Sergius Cumanus to the position of court physician. During the course of the meal someone asked him if he believed that the god Aesculapius aided physicians in the cure of the sick, and his reply was that the god Aesculapius was an untenable myth and, therefore, had never made any contribution to the healing art.

I was not altogether surprised to learn of the atheism of Sergius Cumanus, for his father—how well I recalled his views—did not believe in the reality of the supernatural. Consequently, his medical philosophy was wholly naturalistic, though he was always careful not to offend his students who believed otherwise. Still, my medical education might have destroyed my folklore heritage of religious faith if it

had not been that my mother grounded me in Judaism. I was thinking on these things when Vitellius suddenly asked, "Is there any place in the Hippocratic school of medicine for belief in the work of the many priest-physicians in this land?"

"Your question is difficult, Excellency," I began broodingly. "For example, the father of Sergius Cumanus always ruled out prayer in the approach to disease, though he sometimes admitted that its psychic value might contribute to the healing of certain nervous diseases. Perhaps the son is like the father: I shall soon know."

"But what of your own beliefs, Luke Galen?" he questioned closely. "Do you rule out all the work of the exorcists and miracle-men? I think you would speak of them as thaumaturgists, would you not?"

I nodded, marveling at his knowledge of medical terms. "No," I answered slowly. "I would have no right to rule out all the work of the thaumaturgists or miracle-men. I rule out nothing that may contribute to my own efforts to heal the diseased. I am not debating whether prayer has only psychic value or whether it reaches the central source of life in the universe—a source that I, being a monotheist, call God. But I will say that there have been instances in my own practice in which medical science and prayer conjoined to produce far better results than if both my patient and myself had been destitute of all belief in higher powers. For, after all, a miracle may be the fulfilling of natural law and not its suspension. The centuries may reveal this, Excellency."

Lucius Vitellius sat and pondered my arguments at length, though I could not tell whether he was believing or skeptical. But his next remark convinced me that he knew far more about me than I remotely imagined, for he said, "Luke Galen, I have heard it said that you could become the greatest physician in the Empire—even greater than your old instructor and his son—except for your odd ambition to paint portraits and write Jewish history."

I thanked him but stated that I expected to keep on painting portraits and writing Jewish history. "You see, Excellency," I explained, "I come quite naturally by all this: my father was a Greek artist and my mother from an old and honorable family in Palestine—a Sadducean line of money-makers which threatens to become extinct in my own contempt for gold."

He regarded me curiously and then lapsed into a mood of melancholy. I knew he was thinking of his daughter, and I rose and stood at the window and watched the busy scene down in the harbor. A servant brought wine and nuts and cakes and we refreshed ourselves, speaking but little. Then, with startling suddenness, the Syrian Governor cried, "Oh, Luke Galen! Tell me without equivocation—is my child a leper?"

And my rejoinder was straightforward, even as he had requested. “Yes, Excellency, your daughter is a leper.”

He stifled a groan, gulped another goblet of wine and stalked to the window, gazing seaward in great sorrow. Then, after what seemed an interminable time, he turned and said, “I have suspected this, but I did not have the courage to ask the physicians of this city. Anyhow, they would have lied to me as long as possible. Everybody lies to me.” Dropping down in his chair and staring at the floor, he went on musingly, “So my little Julia is a leper.”

“Have you any theory as to where she may have contracted this disease?” I inquired. For I was anxious to learn if the child’s leprosy had come through contact with some slave in the household or if there were lepers in or near the city of Caesarea.

But Lucius Vitellius did not seem to hear me, for instead of making reply to my question he repeated, “So my little Julia is a leper. Such is my reward for my burning ambition to come and rule over this accursed land of leprosy, lunacy and bitter rebellion. The gods have punished me for my pride of place and power.”

A servant entered and said, “Noble ruler, a Roman is down in the atrium. He has just come from a ship and says you are expecting him.”

The Governor got to his feet and we exchanged glances. “Conduct him here at once,” he commanded. Then to me he added, “Fortune may have brought me two great physicians in one day. And how I need them!”

I made no rejoinder but turned and faced the portal. Vitellius did likewise, and we waited. Nor was the wait long, for, with quick, firm tread, Sergius Cumanus, the Emperor’s physician, came up the stairway and entered and paused. And neither I nor the Syrian ruler were to forget the picture we beheld.

Standing before us was a man prematurely old, as the Empire was prematurely old, perhaps both for the same reason. He was a magnificent, well-groomed Roman of thirty, just ten years my junior, and his resemblance to his illustrious father was striking. An intellectual face of pure patrician outline, a muscular body of remarkable symmetry, and a poise, unstudied but impelling, revealed a personality of marked charm and power. But his eyes—the eyes of one who saw all things and too well—held doubt. They were interrogating eyes that seemed to penetrate past all exteriors and see to the core of reality. Still, I saw that now they were friendly and their smiling was not yet destroyed.

“Well, you cosmopolitan,” Lucius Vitellius was saying as he advanced with outstretched arms. “I’d rather see you at this moment than the gods themselves. And with me is Luke Galen, your father’s former student. Do you recall him?”



The Emperor's physician, lifting his hand in salute, after the Roman fashion as I, after the Jewish, salaamed, replied, "Vaguely, Excellency. But who, among the medical men of all the Empire, has not heard of him?" He took a step nearer to me. "My father has always said that none of his students ever excelled Luke Galen of Antioch. I bear his warm greetings, his esteem, his love. And to you, Excellency, I bear the greetings of the Emperor."

As Vitellius made no rejoinder I asked, "What is the state of your father's health, Sergius Cumanus?"

"Fair," he replied with a doubtful shake of his head. "His age is great, yet he retains all his faculties; otherwise he would not have been able to plan the medical mission upon which we are about to enter."

"And is the Emperor in good health for his age?" The question of the Syrian Governor seemed reluctant.

"Speaking professionally and confidentially," he began, "I would say that the Emperor is in decline. But he has a firm hand upon the government despite the fact he never visits Rome."

"How long can this absent rule prevail?" was the next query of the Governor. And the reply was singular.

"How long will anything prevail—Rome, the world, the universe?" the Emperor's physician returned enigmatically. He stood frowning at nothing in particular and then he smiled at me. "Luke Galen," he began as if he had known me intimately for years, "I count myself fortunate that I'm to be associated with you a full twelvemonth. Something tells me there is adventure ahead and work that will absorb us. And I need it. But you must guide me in all things, for this is your land and your people. When will you be ready for the task?"

"I am ready."

"Then you are to say where we shall begin."

I looked at Vitellius and my eyes were questioning. He nodded understandingly and I said, "We should begin right here in Caesarea, and in this very household. For I just came from the bedside of the Governor's little daughter, ill with a suspicious-looking skin malady, and I am afraid she is a leper." The Emperor's physician betrayed no emotion. He reached for a goblet of wine and waited. "Tomorrow," I went on, "I would like to have you examine the child and give an opinion."

He bowed, sipped his wine and addressed the Syrian ruler. "Excellency, I will make a diagnosis if you wish, but my colleague's judgment is superior to my own. Later we will make a prognosis. And no matter what we discover we will devote our best skill to your child."

He turned suddenly and, apparently dismissing the subject, held his glass of wine up to the light of a late sun that was making the Mediterranean a sea of gold and, as if speaking to himself, he said, “Unexcelled vintage; unexcelled companionship; freedom from court life, and an absorbing task: how fortunate I am to be alive.” He emptied his glass and turned to me. “Luke Galen, where can I find a comfortable inn?”

I told him of Strato’s and he was pleased, but before we departed the Syrian Governor invited us to return an hour after sunset and dine with him. “Pontius Pilate, the Judean Procurator, and his animated wife, Claudia, will be present,” he said. “Your arrival—strangely coincidental—is timely, for tomorrow they leave for Jerusalem. The festival of the Passover is drawing near. And as Pontius Pilate is bound to play no small part in your medical mission, the dinner together should prove significant.”

After accepting the invitation, we left the palace and went to the customhouse to clear my colleague’s boxes; then, led by the porters, we mounted to Strato’s Inn just at sunset. The terrace was deserted except for the figure of a woman standing in silhouette against the sun at the top of the stairway. As we climbed toward her she looked down upon us with languid interest. She was a woman of remarkable beauty with hair like the setting sun. She wore a purple robe, close fitting, revealing a body so beautifully proportioned that two certain physicians, quite accustomed to the outlines of the female form, stared in open admiration. A shawl, dull gold in color, was pulled tightly across her shoulders and a jet-black band across her forehead kept a wealth of red hair out of her eyes.

But it was her eyes that held our attention above all other features: they were strangely luminous, restless and distrustful. They darted from the face of the Emperor’s physician to his well-shod feet and back again, taking in every item of his rich garments. Still, while her glances were appraising they were not covetous. Her face, for all its beauty, held a pallor that denoted uncertain health, yet her beauty was so startling and the interest of my companion so obvious that I wondered if our mission, at its very beginning, was about to be handicapped by this chance meeting.

But whatever I may have wondered was banished from my thoughts by a sudden imprecation just behind us—one that broke the spell of the scene—and a massive, ugly fellow in a somber caftan brushed past us and took the girl by the arm.

“Go to your room and make ready for the evening performance,” he commanded, whirling her around. Then, without waiting for her consent, he pushed her toward the portal of the inn. But he took occasion to shoot a look of wrath and resentment in our direction.

“Quite a contrast in beauty and beastliness,” the Emperor’s physician remarked as we followed them into the inn.

I made no rejoinder and we went on to find the innkeeper and arrange for a room for my colleague. But his mind was still on the red-haired woman. “Who is that beautiful woman with the flaming hair—the one who just entered with that big, sour-looking fellow?” he interrogated.

“Ah!” the innkeeper exclaimed, nodding and smiling. “She is Mary Omri, the famous dancer from the village of Magdala over on the Sea of Galilee; and the man—her keeper—is Malchus, Captain of the Temple Guard at Jerusalem and head servant of the High Priest. She is dancing in this city and Malchus is making a small fortune out of her.”

There was something so incongruous about the dancing woman being identified with the chief servant of the High Priest that I felt compelled to say, “I should think there would be a great deal of objection on the part of the High Priest to this relationship.”

The innkeeper lifted his hands, shoulders and eyes all in one gesture but all he said was, “Would you like to go to the theater tonight and see her dance?”

I waited for the Emperor’s physician to make the decision. He made it with a slow shake of his head, and we went on to our rooms. We went to the bath as soon as possible and made a change of garments, for the dinner hour in the palace of the Roman Legate was drawing near.

## II

Pontius Pilate and his irrepressible wife were at the palace when we arrived and she greeted the Emperor’s physician with effusiveness. But her surly husband kept in character, as the Greek dramatists say, and would not permit anyone to forget that he was Procurator of Judea—the most important province in all Palestine. They were a peculiar pair, both in looks and temperament. She was thin, even bony, superstitious and given to experimenting with sorcery, beautifully dressed and incessantly chattering; he was fat and flabby, cynical and blunt, and highly impatient with ideas not wholly consonant with his own. He possessed a strong dislike and distrust of most other Romans in the official life of the Empire’s borderlands, and his antipathy to Herod Antipas, who held the title of Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, amounted to hatred.

Pilate’s wife had made him politically, for she knew how to trade on her distant

relationship to the dead Augustus, and she was never free from scheming, so Lucius Vitellius later informed us. All in all, they were a pair of Roman plotters who ruled in the name of Caesar and with little understanding of the people they ruled. Nothing was sacred to them except their own skin but they worked hard to preserve it.

The dinner resolved itself into a discussion of Rome's political problems in her border possessions and turned, finally, on our medical mission.

The Judean Procurator was free both with observations and advice. "The diseased and the outcasts are everywhere," he said gloomily, "and the provinces I rule have their full share. But Galilee and Perea—which Herod Antipas misrules—are the worst of all. Lepers and outcasts and lunatics constitute one-fourth of the population and Herod should be classed among the last."

Pilate's blunt remark, perhaps intended for laughter, was followed by a deep silence, and Claudia, quick to note that her husband's attempts at humor and sarcasm had failed, lifted a glass of wine and cried, "Do not be so pessimistic, my husband. You should thank the gods that the two most capable physicians in the realm are ready to begin their work in Palestine, and I hope Judea will be their first field."

I stole a look at the Emperor's physician as he reclined on the opposite couch, but he was—or feigned to be—preoccupied with a roast fowl on a silver dish. I hoped that the garrulous woman was through, for her remarks were decidedly indiscreet, but suddenly she began a discussion of leprosy.

"Is leprosy so contagious that households like our own may be afflicted, or is it a disease that attacks only the poorly nurtured?" she asked. "I have heard that it is a malady of the common people."

I waited for my colleague to reply, but he gave no indication that he would do so. "While it is true that we find more leprosy among the masses than the classes," I began, "the disease has been known to appear in households apparently far removed from it. One cannot tell just where leprosy may strike; it has that much in common with lightning."

I glanced at our host; his eyes signaled me to change the subject, so I asked him some irrelevant question. But before he could answer me, Claudia returned to the problem of leprosy, saying, "Caesar could not have chosen a worse land to send my husband to, and whenever we are compelled to leave Caesarea and journey through the provinces to Jerusalem—which we are now about to do—I am in constant fear of brushing against a leper. I dread this disease more than all other maladies put together," she concluded with a shudder.

"You need not," I informed her. "You are safer in Jerusalem than elsewhere.

There the priests enforce rigidly the laws of health.”

“They are more concerned with herding the people to the feasts than with health regulations,” Pontius Pilate spoke up acidly.

“But you know that lepers never enter Jerusalem,” Lucius Vitellius reminded him.

“I know that feasts like the Passover bring many whose diseases are unknown,” he replied stubbornly. “What you should know, Lucius Vitellius, is that most of my trouble with the Jews—for which Caesar blames me always—has risen out of my efforts to prevent contagions of one kind or another. For example, when I took money from the Temple Treasury to build an aqueduct to convey pure water into Jerusalem, I was called a thief. Once—just once—I tried to segregate the multitudes crowding into the so-called Holy City for this same Passover, and a deputation of powerful Jews, some of whom lend money to Caesar, journeyed all the way to Rome and accused me of aiming at the destruction of Judaism. They lied, but Caesar loves lies—especially the ones affecting me.”

It was a long speech for a man whose greatest gift was brevity, but the Syrian Governor answered it in kind, and I could see that they had little in common. They exchanged sharp words over the general situation in Palestine and might have argued indefinitely except for a sudden interruption from the Emperor’s physician, and what he said caused me to marvel at his understanding of the problem of disease in the land.

“In dealing with the Jews,” he began, “we must bear in mind that centuries after Hippocrates, we find them still believing that all maladies are imposed by the gods and that cures are effected through supernatural agencies. It is not surprising, therefore, that so-called healers abound in this land. Wherever there are ignorance and superstition and crudities of religious belief, there the diviners, the exorcists and miracle-men are to be found. The greater the problems of the Empire the greater the number of these fakirs.”

His final remark on this score set me to thinking and I was about to tell him that the greater the number of the poor—through the heavy taxation imposed by the Roman government—the greater the number of the diseased and rebellious, when Claudia, ever alert to have her say, informed us of a new kind of miracle-worker who had risen in Galilee the year before. “He is stirring all Jewry,” she declared. “For if half I hear is true he has never failed in a single cure undertaken.”

“Your percentage is far too high, Claudia,” her husband put in scoffingly. “For little is true that you hear in this land and nothing is true of the fables of the Jews concerning their healers.”

But she was undaunted and insisted, “I told you this Galilean healer is unlike the

others: he uses no charms and medicines at all, nor does he depend upon incantations of any sort. A perfectly trustworthy maid in my Jerusalem household has seen him heal someone in the hill country of Judea of a bad case of leprosy.”

Sergius Cumanus and I stole glances at our host almost simultaneously. Though his eyes were now on the gossiping woman, he did not enter into the conversation. However, Pilate did and with renewed skepticism. “My wife is regaling you with stories of a Galilean peasant who seems to have a gift for charming women with imaginary ills. I think I will offer him a large sum of gold to come to the Praetorium, the next time he is in Jerusalem, and work on my wife, for she lives in constant fear of every disease the servants tell her about.”

But Claudia was determined to keep the conversation going on the worst malady known to mankind, for she turned to the Emperor’s physician and asked, “Did you ever know leprosy to be cured, Sergius Cumanus?”

“There are several kinds of leprosy,” he said, “both curable and incurable. Which kind do you refer to, fair woman?” The question was paradoxical, or nearly so, and Pilate’s wife drew her brows in a frown.

“I—I spoke of leprosy in its worst form,” she said.

“No,” he replied, with a shake of his head. “I never knew the incurable kind of leprosy to be cured. Such would be a contradiction in terms. But you might inquire of Luke Galen,” he went on, as if he desired me to shoulder the responsibility of making a final reply, “for he has had more experience with leprosy than I.”

So the woman plied me with questions and, seeing there was no escape, I asked her if she ever heard of the story of a Syrian captain—Naaman, who was a leper. She shook her head. “Well,” I began, “his story is to be found in one of the sacred books of the Jews. He was a mighty military chieftain but he was a leper—one of the incurables. However, a Hebrew prophet named Elisha cured him. And it was a maid in his household—a Jewish slave—who told her mistress of the miracle-working prophet who dwelt in Samaria. I recommend the story to anyone who does not believe that the supernatural can enter the realm of the natural,” I concluded in the midst of deep silence.

But the Emperor’s physician challenged me at once, saying, “I could not accept such a story whether found in the sacred books of the Jews or elsewhere. It is pure legend, which is the basis of all sacred literature.”

I made no reply, for I knew I had said enough—which was my motive—to let my colleague know that I intended to live with an open mind throughout our medical observations and experiments. Not that I had anything in common with the miracle-men of Palestine, for I was well aware of their grave intellectual limitations, not to

speak of their charlatantry. But to observe all phenomena and to keep the spirit free from prejudices preconceived was, so I believed, the ethical obligation of all men of medical science. But I was not ready to argue this point with the Emperor's physician, so I kept silent.

Lucius Vitellius, however, kept the subject open by saying, "I would like to read the story of the Syrian captain who was a leper. It might prove comforting to me at this hour." He stared at Pontius Pilate for several moments and then at Claudia, and both seemed puzzled. Then he startled them by adding, "I have great reasons for reading a story of this kind, whether from the sacred books of the Jews or any writings, for my daughter, Julia, is a leper. Luke Galen made the discovery this afternoon."

Pilate's exclamation of amazement was drowned by his wife's cry of horror. She sat bolt upright on the dining couch and I feared she was about to rush from the room. Quickly I said, "There isn't the slightest danger to anyone present. The child is isolated and has been for weeks. Shall we go on with the meal and talk things over in a rational way?"

But Claudia was beyond rationality. She took no more food and her husband, observing her uneasiness, found opportunity to say, "The hour grows late and tomorrow we must begin our journey up to Jerusalem. It is the longest seventy miles in the Empire." His effort to shift our attention from what had just passed was so obviously a failure that he attempted a bolder stroke with Lucius Vitellius. "I expect trouble—greater than ever—at the Passover in April," he continued as he got up from the couch and pretended to adjust his garments. "The temper of the people, not alone in Galilee, that nest of rebels, is such that I need three cohorts at the Jerusalem barracks instead of one. And Titus, who is in command there, confirms my fears and agrees that the garrison should have reinforcements."

Lucius Vitellius got up from the table, and I could tell from his tense manner that the Judean Procurator and his wife were in for a bad moment. In cold, measured tones the Governor said, "You fear the Jews, Pontius Pilate, and your wife fears the contagion of my house. Well, your own fears might be lessened if you knew how to treat the vassal people you rule; and your wife's fears should vanish after she gets out of my house, which I invite her to do at once. And you may accompany her forthwith."

"You—you are insulting," Claudia cried. "I shall let Caesar know of your rudeness. And I shall inform the Senate of your weak rule over Syria, you old——"

But Pontius Pilate seized his enraged wife by the arm and led her from the dining room. "And now that this pair has honored us by departing," the Governor

remarked, "I suggest that we retire to the library and discuss the care of my leprous child."

### III

We gave our attention to the problem of organizing the Governor's household and there was, from the outset, a great deal in our favor: the seclusion of the walled garden, the temple-hospital, the baths, not excelled in all Syria, the disciplined retinue of slave-servants, the unlimited quantities of superior foods—all combined to simplify our task. And when it came to selecting a diet for the leprous girl, my colleague and I were in full accord: milk and vegetables, neither meat nor fish, no pastries and wines; plenty of figs, pomegranates, honey, oranges and almonds; cinnamon and ginger limitedly; daily ablutions, both of water and oil, and no soporifics except in hours of physical and mental suffering that might result in hysteria.

But when it came to the problem of medicine I was ready to defer to the Emperor's physician. I knew that he and his father had experimented successfully with scores of lepers in the island of Sicily, using a rare oil from far-off India—a costly product said to be indigenous only to the soil and the climate of that land. I had heard that the use of this oil had been limited to the practice of those two in the Empire, though there were rumors that the priest-physicians of India had used it both externally and internally in the treatment of leprosy—which the elder Cumanus doubtless discovered on a journey to that land. How singular, if the priest-physicians of that mysterious country beyond the Tigris knew a therapy that combined the best in medicine with the noblest in religion—supplication to the deity.

"Were there instances of specific cures in cases thought to be incurable?" Lucius Vitellius asked wistfully.

"Yes, as far as could be determined," the Emperor's physician answered; "but of course my father's patients had the benefit of every other therapy known to medical science. There were, to be sure, certain failures, especially where the disease was too far advanced and where tubercular and rheumatic maladies were added complications."

"Oh!" cried the Syrian Governor. "That I might secure this oil for my child." And then he wailed, "India is remote, and Rome—even though your father may possess this oil—is also too far, because little Julia grows worse daily."

But Sergius Cumanus, speaking quietly, said, "I brought a quantity of this oil with me and it is at your disposal, Excellency."



“The gods are kind at last,” the Governor murmured emotionally. “How great is providence!”

“Nature is kind,” my colleague corrected, “for if the gods had been kind—or existed at all—they would have seen to it that the trees producing this oil grew in every clime. The accidents of nature constitute the only providence in which I am able to believe,” he concluded.

His materialistic philosophy, which came naturally and without pretension, grew more and more apparent in all he said concerning the medical sciences and I knew I had to deal with a skeptical mind. But before our conference ended we were in full agreement, which included a determination to keep secret the leprosy of the Governor’s daughter and a desire that our presence in Caesarea also remain unknown.

But despite the secrecy enjoined and attempted, the city soon knew both of the child’s leprosy and of our presence: a gossipy staff of servants, subordinate officials connected with the Legate, the small talk of idle people at Strato’s Inn, and the general disposition of the people of cosmopolitan Caesarea to whisper about the household of Vitellius, contributed to the unfavorable publicity and added to our difficulties.

The Governor was bitter over the turn of affairs and also fearful that there would be pressure brought to bear to compel him to seclude his child in a leper colony, and his fears were realized when a deputation of citizens called and suggested, on account of the temper of the city, such a course.

We were present at the conference between the Governor and the citizens and they were making headway against him when the Emperor’s physician assumed the initiative. Boldly, learnedly, he said, “Leprosy is contagious but infection is due largely to ignorance and carelessness. The Governor’s child is isolated as completely as if she were in a leper colony on a lone island out in the Mediterranean, for the disease is not air-borne like miasma. Thus, none are menaced by the leprosy of this household except members of it who are, as I have said, ignorant and careless. It will be the function of Luke Galen and myself to see that both faults are overcome so far as any member of this household is concerned. Of course the people of Caesarea have rights in such matters above the Governor and his house, but let no prejudice enter into the problem. For to compel his child to enter a leper colony would create far more problems than it would solve.”

His cogency and convincing manner, his poise and charm of person were too much for the deputation of citizens and they yielded all points. So, having a clear field, we completed the organization of the ruler’s household and instructed its

members, high and low, both in the care of the child and themselves. When we had met all the exigencies of the situation we prepared to go to Jerusalem, for it was now apparent that our medical mission, based on our close study of the Governor's datum of disease, would center in that city and radiate northward into Galilee. And this meant that we would have to deal with two rulers who were mortal foes—Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee.

So it was at the end of our second week in Caesarea that the Emperor's physician and I were ready to join a camel caravan for Jerusalem, seventy miles into the interior. The day we began our journey was beautiful, for spring had come to Syria and the city was luminous in the light of the morning sun as we, in company with Lucius Vitellius and a guard of honor, rode toward the gate in the south wall to join our caravan. The carriage made its way slowly, for many were going in the same direction, so many in fact that the Governor spoke to the captain of the guard and asked, "What is the meaning of all this mob converging on the south gate, for it is more than a caravan multitude?"

"The city, Excellency," the officer replied, "is aware of the departure of the noble physicians and of Mary Omri, the celebrated dancing woman of Magdala. She concluded her engagement in this city just last night and is leaving in the same caravan to be taken by the Emperor's physician. With her will be her master and keeper, Malchus, chief servant of the High Priest at Jerusalem."

The Governor frowned and muttered something we did not hear, though I looked at Sergius Cumanus and smiled and when he arched his brows and winked, I knew that he considered the hour of our leaving to be most fortunate.

We hadn't laid eyes on the beautiful dancing girl since the day we saw her at Strato's Inn and, though we had made no inquiry about her, having many other more important duties, I knew that her keeper, the big and repulsive Malchus, saw to it that she did not come in contact with the Emperor's physician. Malchus, soon to reveal that he was as shrewd as he was villainous, had seen enough to convince him that his beautiful dancing woman—who meant gold to him—and the handsome young physician from the Court of Caesar should be kept apart.

We drove under the great arch of the south gate of the city and saw the camel caravan, a long and colorful line, for interwoven with the brownish beasts of burden were all the colors the dyers of the land could stamp into garments. There were richly garbed merchants and their families in purple and fine linen; smocks and sashes and turbans of scarlet and gold; and, now and then, somber garments of gray and black and brown, for going up to Jerusalem were some of the pietistic rich, as well as those who were journeying for reasons other than worship, and these wore

clothing more in keeping with the solemnities of the Passover. But the whole scene was vivid and inviting and I could see that the Emperor's physician was throwing off his former manner of boredom and weariness and was ready for adventure.

The people were strangely silent when we drove past a milling crowd just outside the walls, and I wondered if Lucius Vitellius were unpopular. There was much staring, chiefly at the Emperor's physician, and I knew that wherever he might journey in Palestine he would attract great attention and cause wonder. Suddenly the silence was broken by a shout, for the multitudes had caught sight of Malchus and the dancing girl in a vehicle back of our own and the clamor was so great that we turned to see. Mary Omri of Magdala sat beside her keeper like the morning light struggling against a rising cloud. She wore a robe as blue as the Syrian sky above our heads, and a gold scarf carefully concealed her glorious hair. The head covering displeased the crowd and there were loud shouts for her to uncover. For most of the people had seen her dance and all knew how wonderful was her heavy red hair.

Our own vehicle had stopped near the center of the line of crouching camels and we soon saw that the one that held Malchus and Mary Omri was headed for a position near where we had halted. In fact, it came to a stand within a few feet of the Governor's stately carriage and as it stopped the dancing girl threw back her scarf, uncovering her hair.

But the burly Malchus objected, and with a quick, imperative gesture he flung the scarf back over her head and motioned for her to get out of the vehicle. The crowd roared its disapproval, but Malchus, with his business in Caesarea at an end, simply grimaced at them and ordered the girl to go to the camel she was to ride.

"A jackal if there ever was one," the Emperor's physician remarked. "Did I understand you to say that he is chief servant of the High Priest of Jerusalem?" he inquired of the captain.

But it was Lucius Vitellius who made reply. "Yes," he stated. "The fellow is fairly well known to me because of my dealings with the party of the High Priests. But he has many vocations other than being the chief servant of the High Priest. He is Captain of the Temple Guard, conducts a band of spies, operates the largest gambling house in Jerusalem, and is said to be the panderer for all the traffic in slave girls in Palestine."

I saw my colleague scowl as the Governor emphasized this final achievement of the big, repulsive fellow who was now thumbing directions for the beautiful, long-limbed girl to mount her camel. But he made no comment, though I asked, "Is he a Jew?"

"No," Lucius Vitellius replied, "he is an Idumean—the most vicious and immoral

of all Semitic peoples. It is said that the Herods have descended from this race. I can well believe it, and this may explain Malchus' position and underworld powers."

I fell to thinking of the singular political, social and religious contradictions in Palestine, but as it was time to leave Lucius Vitellius and secure our camels, my colleague and I began to speak our farewells, though our eyes were on the dancing girl who, unassisted, had mounted her camel. For she and the burly Malchus seemed to be disputing. I saw her put her hands to her temples several times and each time she did it he growled in displeasure and once he shouted, "Fool! Obey me, obey me!"

"I would like to go and kick that fellow away from her," the Emperor's physician snapped, "and with your permission, Excellency, I will do so."

But the Governor shook his head, saying, "You would only make a scene——"

But the dancing girl made one for us. Uttering a wild scream, she pitched suddenly from the back of the camel to the dust of the road. Instinctively, I started toward her, but my colleague was swifter. Striding past me he hurried to her and started to lift her up when, with a snarl of disapproval, the giant Malchus roared, "Let her alone. She is demon-possessed. I may have to beat her to drive them out."

"Strike her and I will beat the demons out of your own big hulk," my colleague cried, suddenly stepping between the surprised Idumean and the woman on the ground. "She is ill and I am a physician and I am going to attend her."

But Malchus, wholly indifferent to the fact that my colleague had just stepped from the carriage of the Roman ruler, jerked a dagger from the folds of his smock and lifted it menacingly. "Touch her and I'll give you this!" he exclaimed.

Sergius Cumanus struck swiftly, catching the Idumean cleanly on the jaw. He dropped to one knee but, with a wild yell, got to his feet and made for the Emperor's physician. A sharp command from Vitellius projected the guards into the fray and Malchus found himself ringed by broadswords.

"Now attend the woman," the Governor ordered grimly, nodding to us, while the people shouted approval.

We both knelt quickly and I seized her hands, for she was clawing at her face. "Epilepsy, eh?" I whispered to my companion.

He nodded and then called loudly for water. A camel driver hurried up with a full waterskin as Sergius Cumanus removed the scarf from the girl's head and turned back the folds of the blue garment at the throat. He thrust the end of a kerchief into her mouth to prevent her biting her tongue.

Working swiftly, skillfully, he bathed her temples, moistened her lips and neck and then—for she was slow to come out of the spasm—he emptied the goatskin of

water on her head, and the shock of it caused the girl to gasp and struggle as if seeking to escape our hold upon her.

She opened her eyes, stared at us in bewilderment and began to moan. “We are physicians,” my colleague said quickly, “and we have soothing medicines for you.”

“Medicine,” she repeatedly eagerly. “Is it the dust of the magic stone to drive away the demons?”

“No,” he answered with quick comprehension. “It is a potion that will slay them and they will torment you no more.”

She struggled to a sitting posture, but I kept an arm about her shoulder. “Then give it to me,” she begged. “For the demons tear me.” And she began to writhe once more as if really in torment.

Quickly the Emperor’s physician drew a phial from his wallet and held it to her lips and she took the drug without hesitancy. He gave her a drink of water and then told her to lie back and remain quiet for a few moments. She obeyed, and he supported the flaming red head in the curve of his arm.

“I am better now,” she said at length, and expressed the desire to sit up. We assisted her and, taking a comb from her dress, she ran it through her hair—a sure sign that the crisis had passed.

The people looked on expectantly; most of them believed that Malchus would yet make a scene, but he did not interfere, nor did he interpose objection when the Emperor’s physician lifted the girl to her feet and led her toward the camel.

We did not leave the girl until she was securely mounted on the camel, and then the Emperor’s physician went to where Malchus was still ringed by the swords of the guards. He pushed his way into the group, confronted the scowling Idumean and said, “The woman is able to travel now, but I shall ride near her throughout the journey, and if she needs further medical attention we will give it.”

Malchus started to make some ugly retort—I could see it stamped on his sagging mouth—but he checked himself and stalked to where the girl sat.

“I told you the demons would torment you for dancing so poorly last night,” he growled.

“I was ill before I danced,” she declared wearily. “But you would not heed me.” Then to Sergius Cumanus—for he had drawn closer—she said, “But he is right. I am tormented by evil spirits—seven of them. For my sins are many—so this man accuses.”

“There is no such thing as an evil spirit, or a demon who can enter you and rule you,” the Emperor’s physician stated so loudly and scoffingly that many heard and wondered. “This belief is nothing more than a crude superstition, though if there are

devils they must be in your keeper,” he concluded. And turning his back on the enraged Malchus, as the people howled with laughter, he strode away.

A warning signal from the head camel driver caused all caravan travelers to scatter and mount, for many of them had pressed close to the scene, and my colleague and I, bidding farewell to Lucius Vitellius, mounted our own beasts. And so we moved away from the walls of Caesarea, down the great highway that led to Egypt, but our immediate destination was Joppa, which we reached well before sundown. Although weary from the day’s long journey, and eager to seek refreshment and a night’s rest, the Emperor’s physician, still indifferent to the scowls of Malchus, tarried long enough to ask the dancing girl how she had borne the trip. She said that she felt much better. They stood beside her camel and conversed for several minutes while I kept an anxious watch over the burly Idumean. I felt that only daylight and the presence of so many travelers, officials, prominent merchants and their families prevented him from attacking my colleague.

Accommodations were obtained in an inn near by, and the next morning found us refreshed and ready for the last lap of our trip.

We left Joppa and, crossing a great valley, began the ascent toward Jerusalem. Through the long day the dancing girl rode with head uncovered, and the spring sunshine on her glorious red hair enhanced its fire-filled beauty. Now and then she looked back and called to us and each time she did so her Idumean keeper, riding just in front of her, shouted some imprecation. But on we toiled and we came in sight of the towers of Jerusalem a full hour before the going down of the sun. As we began the ascent of Hill Scopus we came upon a singular sight—a healer at work.

The entire caravan grouped to watch the healer perform as he stood at the side of the road surrounded by about a dozen men in provincial holiday attire—a colorful group that all but blocked the highway. He was a fine Semitic type of trim but solid physique and, so I judged, about the age of the Emperor’s physician. The men with him—for it seemed to be a band—were as young as himself and they were in sharp contrast not only to the healer but to one another. Two of them attracted my attention: one was a stockily built fellow with aggressiveness stamped all over a bold countenance and the other was a gentle-looking man with the face of a mystic. But the face of the healer, now turned toward us with luminous, questioning eyes, was startling in its cast of majestic and intellectual power. Perhaps he resented the halting of the caravan that curious people might watch him heal a lame man, for he stood beside the cripple and—my colleague and I were the closest to him—gazed at us—gazed, so I felt, into our souls. Then he turned and took a crutch from the lame man, broke it over his knee, tossed the pieces aside and commanded him to walk.

But the lame man was fearful and clung to his arm. Gently disengaging himself, he lifted up his voice—for effect, so my colleague afterward said—and cried:

“Be not fearful but believing, for all things are possible to one who believes. If you have faith that I can heal you my Father will grant my wish, for he worked hitherto and I work.”

Here were words that puzzled and I was about to ask my colleague if he understood what the healer meant when the lame man, starting uncertainly, gained confidence and strength, and started up Scopus—the most difficult direction he could have taken. And the healer, without heeding the excited shouts of the men who were with him, turned and followed the lame man, or he who had been lame, up the hill.

“What is the meaning of all this?” my colleague called to the young man of mystical countenance.

“Jesus of Nazareth has just healed a cripple,” was the quick and positive reply as he crossed the road to where we sat on the camels.

“And who is Jesus of Nazareth?” my companion inquired as others of the band crowded closer in expectation of alms.

“One who forgives our sins, heals our diseases and brings us salvation,” was the confident rejoinder.

“Quite a series of accomplishments, eh?” Sergius Cumanus remarked to me in the Latin tongue. Then, speaking again in the Aramaic, which he knew slightly, he asked, “Do you mean the man is a physician?”

But the stocky, aggressive fellow answered the question and, in tones that admitted of no argument, he said, “Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest physician in the world.”

The Emperor’s physician turned and looked at me and smiled skeptically, cynically. But he did an unexpected thing: he opened his wallet, took out a coin and tossed it to the Jew. “Here,” he said, “give the gold to the greatest physician in the world, with my compliments.”

The provincial caught the coin, glanced at it and gave a shout of surprise: it was no trifling piece of Palestinian silver; it was a gold stater, stamped with the image and the superscription of Caesar.

“Well, Luke Galen,” my colleague said just before our caravan started up Scopus, “what do you make of it?”

“Just this: a miracle-worker caused a lame man to walk. What else could you make of it?” I said in return.

“Just this,” my colleague replied in the same vein. “A Jewish fakir, with the stage

well set for his show, performed so well that our eyes would have been deceived if our senses had not remained intact.”

“So you think the incident was only a piece of good theater?” And in my colleague’s reply was the germ of all the cynicism and skepticism from which, in months that followed, grew a noxious mistrust of a rare personality.

“Precisely,” he ejaculated. “For I have seen the same performance—all in the interest of gold and the bid for notoriety—a score of times on either side of the Adriatic, where so many healers ply their profession. So what we have just seen, as the Greek writers of comedy used to say, is an old one.”

“Then why did you give a mere fakir a gold stater?” I demanded, attempting to point out my colleague’s inconsistency.

“Because his exhibition was highly realistic, done with artless grace, and devoid of jugglery.” He paused and stared at the figure of the miracle-worker now toiling up Scopus. “Moreover,” he added thoughtfully, “the man neither looks nor speaks nor acts like the common run of sorcerers.”

I agreed fully, though I could not have told wherein the difference lay. But I knew that I had seen an unusual type of thaumaturgist—perhaps one who worked neither for gold nor the plaudits of the crowd. And in the swift action of the highway drama I caught sight, or believed I had, of a rare personality. Something seemed to tell me that the man called Jesus of Nazareth was to cross our paths again as we journeyed up and down the disease-infested land on the mission an Empire and an Emperor had assigned us.

## IV

As we drew near the walls of the city the crowds along the converging highways grew denser and by the time our caravan halted outside Gate Gennath, which marked the western end of the Street of Colonnades, a multitude of Passover pilgrims jostled one another in their attempts to enter the city and find accommodations. Our own camels knelt willingly, for going up to Jerusalem from Joppa is no easy ascent, and we were as weary as our beasts of burden. Dismounting, we stretched ourselves, hired two eager porters to carry our luggage and then, with one accord, gave attention to the hurried actions of Malchus. The swaggering fellow, now at home, gave every indication of dominating the dancing girl in the old way. He all but dragged her from the back of the kneeling camel, for she had turned and was looking at us; then, seizing her by the arm he pushed her through



the crowd and made for the gate, and both were soon lost to our sight.

“I hope to meet that jackal again and with sword in hand,” Sergius Cumanus exclaimed as the pair vanished.

“And the woman also?” I inquired as we followed our porters toward the gate.

“Oh, I shall meet her,” he returned lightly and confidently. Then we entered Jerusalem—a city built at the confluence of half a dozen cultures as old as the race itself.

The Street of Colonnades—the only broad thoroughfare in the walled town—was a restless mass of color: booths, bazaars, shops, curtained windows, and garments on the backs of every race under the sun. Here India met Gaul and, running like a drab stream between banks of many-colored flowers, were the somber habiliments of the priesthood of Judaism in mute protest against the gay and festive garments of Passover pilgrims and the larger show of an empire’s might.

“A city of architectural contradictions,” my companion remarked as he gazed from palace to hovel and back again.

But I doubt that the architecture of the better sort impressed him until we came to the Bridge of the Temple that spanned the Valley of the Cheesemakers. Pausing at the western end of this bridge that arched the gashlike valley, the Emperor’s physician stared in some surprise at two buildings that crowned Hill Moriah—the Temple of the Jews and Castle Antonia, the seat of Roman authority. The Temple precincts held an impressive array of structures with gold-faced pylons and marble porticos—the latter a veritable forest of granite pillars. But Antonia—an irregular series of buildings with six uneven towers—frowned over the Temple area like a cliff of gray rock. In one portion of it were the barracks and in another the Praetorium where dwelt the Procurator while attending the festivals.

“Quite an architectural contrast,” Sergius Cumanus remarked as I made swift explanation of the fortresslike Antonia.

“In every way,” I stated in reply, “for the Temple and Antonia are symbols of conflicting worlds and there can never be peace between them.”

He was in no mood to have me moralize on the impassible gulf between the Roman and the Semitic social orders and we started over the stone bridge, thronged with crowds going and coming from the Temple area. But when we reached its center, bringing into view the four sections of the city, as one might view an apple cut into four equal parts with the bridge as the heart of the core, he paused and stared at a marble structure on Hill Akra that lifted southwest of Hill Moriah.

“And what is that beautiful building?” he inquired.

“The Theater of Herod,” I explained. “It was built by the first of the line and

sponsored by him until the day of his death. It represents the first steppingstone in the Hellenization of the city of Jerusalem, long impervious to Grecian influences and even opposing them with fanatical fervor.”

The structure was not large, seating no more than five thousand, but it was perfect in architectural design and acoustics and its stage had felt the tread of the Empire’s greatest artists in every phase of the amusement world. But its juxtaposition to the Temple had scandalized the priesthood of Judaism for half a century and would continue to do so until the theater, or possibly the Temple itself, became a pile of stones.

My colleague inquired about the kind of plays given in this theater and I had to confess that I did not know a great deal about the practices. But I said that I was certain that no performances were ever given during any of the great feast days of the Jews.

“For example,” I said, “the theater has never been open during the week of the Passover. But usually there are plays the nights preceding it and after its close. For it seems to be the aim of those who sponsor the theater to take advantage of the crowds that flock to Jerusalem for the Passover.”

“Then the Jews, as well as we of the alien races, attend this theater,” the Emperor’s physician commented with slight sarcasm in his tones.

“Not the pious, of course,” I replied. “But Jerusalem contains many Hellenized Jews and they, together with the families of the government officials and the merchant classes in general, have no scruples about attending.”

Then he asked me a question that I knew was in his mind. “Do you suppose the redheaded dancing girl will perform in this theater at this time?”

“Undoubtedly,” I replied.

He said no more on the subject and, crossing the bridge, we descended to the Street of the Temple and went on to the citadel portion of Antonia. On being admitted to the barracks we were escorted into the presence of its commander—Captain Titus, a soldier of lofty ideals and intelligence. He now commanded the Jerusalem Cohort, though once he had been at the head of the Ninth Legion in northern Syria, having been reduced in rank by Lucius Vitellius himself. In Jerusalem Titus acted both as Tribune and as Captain of the Cohort, for he was in permanent military command, since the Procurator was in the city only immediately before and after the great festivals. Although Titus could lay claim to higher rank, people at the Castle Antonia usually addressed him simply as “Captain.”

Captain Titus, a little older than myself, proved astonishingly sympathetic toward Rome’s Semite subjects and critical of many of the Empire’s policies in her eastern

provinces. He had been apprised of our coming and greeted us cordially. After personally conducting us from the barracks across a paved court to the atrium of the Praetorium, he excused himself and went in search of Pontius Pilate.

“There are many indications that the Procurator is well guarded,” my colleague remarked as we looked about the room.

“Necessarily so,” I returned, “especially during the great feasts, for it is then that the Jews are more keenly aware of their slavery to Rome.”

“They should be used to it by this time!” the Emperor’s physician said bluntly. “Think of the nations that have, in turn, ruled them: Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, Greece and now—Rome. Theirs has been a history of servitude.”

I made no rejoinder and we gave our attention to the architecture of the atrium. There was a gloomy magnificence about the place and we were staring at the rich furnishings when Pilate and Claudia entered, all but shouting their greetings. He apologized for having kept us waiting and explained that he had just rid himself of a deputation of Jews who “wanted the earth in exchange for their good will.”

“Nothing will please the ruling Jews from the hour the Passover begins tomorrow until it closes,” he growled. “They will make unreasonable demands and chief among them will be the High Priest who, speaking through Malchus, Captain of the Temple Guards, will insist on troops from the barracks to help protect the money-changers.”

“Who are the money-changers?” the Emperor’s physician inquired, for he was eager to learn all the manners and customs pertaining to the country.

“They are the cashiers of the Temple bank which supplies the Jews with the so-called sacred half-shekel used exclusively in the payment of the Temple tribute,” Pilate explained. “But there may be riots, regardless of the extra troops we furnish. For the Jews quarrel more and fight better during their religious festivals than at any other time, and I will be blamed and—”

But Claudia interrupted him, saying, “Inform the physicians of all this, if necessary, when we are dining. The meal will be ready by the time they bathe and change their travel-stained garments.” She turned to us and said, “I will have servants show you to the tower suite and the bath. You need not be unduly hasty, but I am sure you are too weary to stand here and listen to affairs of state.”

So the servants were called and we followed them up a winding stairway of stone to rooms that overlooked the courts of the Temple; we bathed and put on fresh garments, but before we descended to dine we stood at a window and looked out over the city. The Emperor’s physician commented on the compactness of Jerusalem, a natural fortress on three hills—a city that had survived the shock of centuries of war; and the Temple was the symbol of a religion that reached back into

an immemorial past. I found myself wondering why a mere Procurator, who would soon be gone, had been foolish enough to combat its venerable priesthood.

We descended to the atrium and joined the ruler and his wife and went to the dining room. There was an abundance of fish and fowl and fruit and plenty of wine and we were hungry and thirsty. But Pilate and his wife ate sparingly, though he drank heavily. The conversation changed, finally, from the politics of Jewry to our medical mission. It began with a guarded question from Pontius Pilate. “What was the condition of the leprous child of Vitellius when you left Caesarea?”

I deferred to my colleague who made slow rejoinder, saying, “There was no appreciable change. She may be incurable—much depending on how faithfully her household carries out the treatment we ordered.”

“I shall never get over my fear that the whole palace of Vitellius at Caesarea is contaminated by this dreadful disease,” Claudia suddenly cried. Then she paused in some embarrassment and, apologetically, said, “Not that I fear to have you physicians as guests, but I have a horror of catching leprosy.”

“You certainly have, Claudia,” her husband declared. “Just last week you had a slight eruption on your face and you wanted me to send to Caesarea forthwith and bring our guests to attend you. And now that the physicians are here you may as well have them examine you from head to foot and learn if your precious hide has any blotches.”

“I should never have consented to accompany you to this leprous land,” she cried resentfully. Then she looked across the table at the Emperor’s physician and added, “Sergius Cumanus, since I have been in this place I have learned of a strange tradition concerning the Jews—that they have been a leprous people from time immemorial and that the Egyptians drove them from the Valley of the Nile a thousand years ago because of their affliction. Is this truth?”

“Luke Galen must answer your question,” my colleague stated. “He is more conversant with Jewish history than anyone known to me.”

The curious and disturbed woman turned to me and I said, “Leprosy is older—much older—than the Jewish race. And their sacred books tell quite another story than the tradition now current in Roman circles that the Pharaohs drove the Jews out of Egypt because of their leprosy. The Jews, in a movement of great rebellion, escaped Egypt because of their slavery. I know it is quite fashionable for present-day Roman writers—now that Rome is having a world of trouble with the Jews—to seek to stigmatize them as a race of lepers. But there is no historical evidence that they were, through their own history, more diseased than other races. The graver truth is this: the Romans, indifferent to all things in conquered Palestine except its

wealth, have permitted the common people to sink into unspeakable poverty and misery and disease. That is my answer,” I concluded amidst a deep silence.

“When are you to begin your work in the province I rule?” Pontius Pilate inquired at length.

But before either of us could reply, his wife spoke up and revealed plans of her own—plans remote, so we thought, from our medical mission. “I desire the physicians to accompany me to the theater tonight,” she revealed, “unless Luke Galen has scruples against going the night before the Passover begins. But if he does, you will go with me, won’t you, Sergius Cumanus?”

“What is the performance?” my colleague inquired with a show of interest.

“The Dance of the Nations,” Claudia replied. “And you will see more beautiful dancing girls in one group than you ever saw in your life.”

“More naked ones,” her husband put in sourly, “which should not entrance a physician who has to deal with females, dressed and undressed, in the practice of his profession.” Then, with a gesture of impatience, he pushed his plate away and spoke sharply to his wife. “Your presence at the theater the night before the Passover will give the religious rulers another opportunity to berate me before Caesar.”

“Let them berate,” the woman snapped. “I am going to the theater, especially to see Mary Omri of Magdala dance, and the High Priest and Caesar together could not prevent me.”

“Not to speak of your lowly husband,” Pilate growled.

For reply, she got up from the couch, shook out the folds of her rich garments, and made a final appeal to the Emperor’s physician.

“The most beautiful dancing girl in the Empire is a Jewess and she is from a mere hamlet on the Sea of Galilee,” Claudia began. “She has the form of a Juno, eyes of fire and—”

“Very red hair,” my colleague broke in with a wink at me that was not lost on Claudia.

“Oh,” she cried in tones of disappointment. “So you have seen her dance. I had forgotten that she was in Caesarea during your sojourn there. But don’t you think she is the most wonderful dancer in the world?”

“I haven’t seen her dance,” Sergius Cumanus said as he got up from the table, continuing to stare at me. “But I have seen her, and Luke Galen may tell you the circumstances provided he wishes to do so.”

I rose likewise, though Pilate continued to recline and sip his wine, and I related the incidents of our chance meeting with Mary Omri—all of them. Pontius Pilate, who listened indifferently at first but who manifested deep interest at the close, arose

from the couch—a little unsteadily but with clear mind—and blurted, “The Emperor’s physician has made a bad start in Jewry, for Malchus has the mind of an assassin and the memory of an elephant, and he always works in the dark.” He hesitated and seemed to be debating something. “You both should arm yourselves,” he resumed. “And I will give you permission to do so.” He paused once more and then spoke directly to my colleague. “If you go to the theater tonight you will be seen by Malchus—probably the back of your head.”

“I would like to see the Dance of the Nations,” Sergius Cumanus remarked after a tense pause.

Claudia gave a little cry of satisfaction, flashing a look of triumph at her husband. He nodded dully but was clear enough in mind to say, “Then I shall see to it that half a dozen orderlies accompany you. Neither you, Claudia, nor the Emperor’s physician should be unguarded in the multitudes.”

It was then that I made a sudden decision. “I would like to go to the theater with you,” I said to the Procurator’s wife.

“There!” the woman exclaimed. “This leaves you a hopeless minority, my lord and master, unless we can prevail upon you to accompany us.”

“I shall go to bed, not to a noisy spectacle,” he growled. And, swaying a little, he stalked from the room.

## V

Captain Titus soon came and with him were members of his own guard.

“Do you prefer to ride or walk to the theater?” he inquired of Claudia.

“I shall walk,” she announced.

So we left the Praetorium and, trailed by Titus and his orderlies, went out upon the Temple Bridge and on to the theater of Herod. Several thousand spectators were already seated by the time we entered the semicircular structure and made our way to the stall of Pentillic marble seats. One was larger than the others and the name, “PONTIUS PILATE, PROCURATOR,” was carved on it in Greek letters. His wife now occupied it and we sat on either side of her with the guard near by. There was much whispering and the nodding of heads as we seated ourselves and looked toward the stage, which was close enough to our stall for us to see the eyes of the actors.

As a prelude to the Dance of the Nations a company of jugglers and acrobats performed, and there were bits of low comedy that kept the spectators in good humor. Then the dance began.

We were unable to distinguish one woman from another as twelve of them, heavily draped, and with wimples covering their heads, swayed rhythmically from the shadows of the backstage pillars into the dim light of the charcoal braziers burning at the front of the stage. Then all of the dancers retired into the shadows again with the exception of a woman from Alexandria who, dancing sensuously, slowly disrobed while the spectators applauded wildly. Next came a Greek woman of the Sybaritical city of Corinth, who brought the latest in posture and rhythm from this town of orgies to the half-Hellenized capital of Jewry. And so on, until eleven dancers had pirouetted across the stage.

But neither Sergius Cumanus nor I had recognized Mary Omri. As the show went on, I had fallen to thinking of the great changes that had taken place in Jewish life and thought since the spirit of the Herodian family burned its baleful way into the very soul of Semitic society. Somehow, the whole scene was highly incongruous if not repellent, for just across the Valley of the Cheesemakers was the Temple of Judaism—symbol of the soul of a people who had searched immemorially for holiness and not for pagan beauty. I was thinking on these things when Claudia cried, “Look! There she comes from the shadow of the central pillar.”

I looked, as did the Emperor’s physician, even as a burst of applause rolled through the theater, and then perfect silence reigned as the dancing woman of Magdala, wrapped in a robe as black as midnight and with her flaming hair concealed, swayed into the light of the oil cressets hanging from the pillars. Pausing momentarily near a low pedestal, she stared straight into the marble stall where we sat and across the space I thought her burning eyes and those of the Emperor’s physician met and held. Then she began to dance.

Slowly, rhythmically, she moved to the very edge of the stage and as the tempo of the percussion instruments increased she began to unwind the robe that swathed her beautiful body. Quite suddenly the garment fell away and she stood naked except for a girdle and a loin cloth; and when, with a quick movement, she removed a heavy comb from her hair and let fall a mass that flamed like an altar fire, the multitude roared and cheered. Then she began the most amazing dance that was to be seen in an empire.

It was a dance of contradictions, for two natures strove for expression and dominance in the soul of one woman; the sensual and the sacred blended astonishingly, even beautifully, and the throng became silent as if torn between conflicting emotions of pagan hedonism and religious desire and holiness. But there was an unexpected denouement to her dance, for, while spinning like a top, until she appeared to be a tapering pencil of white flesh crowned with a wildly burning torch,

she came to a full stop, clutched at her throat, gave an unearthly scream and fell to the stage. And the audience, believing that the scene was a portion of her dance, stood and cheered thunderously.

But we knew the truth, and the Emperor's physician vaulted the balustrade of the stall and, in half a dozen strides, was on the stage. Believing his act to be foolhardy, for the dangerous Malchus undoubtedly was present, I turned to Captain Titus and said, "Follow me with your men; there may be trouble." Then I started for the stage with the soldiers close behind. Just as we reached it I saw the big Idumean master of the dancing girl emerge from the shadow of the backstage pillars.

"Watch Malchus," I shouted to Captain Titus. But he needed no warning, for he knew all about the Captain of the Temple Guard and the dancing girl over whom the Emperor's physician was now bending. Quickly ringing the prostrate girl and my colleague, the Captain waved back a score of curious bystanders and took command. But Malchus pushed his way through the crowd and cursed bitterly when he found half a dozen broadswords pointing in his direction.

"Order your men out of the way, Captain Titus," he cried, "I will take care of Mary Omri."

"Stand where you are," Captain Titus ordered. "These men are physicians and know just what to do." And he indicated my colleague and myself.

"I don't want them to touch her," Malchus raged.

But the Emperor's physician already had Mary Omri in his arms and, lifting her up, he strode toward the seclusion of the backstage pillars. I followed with Captain Titus and the orderlies. Malchus, accompanied by fully a hundred persons—actors, stagehands and members of the now scattering audience—was at our heels, cursing at every step.

Sergius Cumanus, paying no attention to the general excitement, placed the dancing girl on a couch and gave orders right and left. He called for water and for shawls to cover her half-naked body. Out of his wallet he drew phials of medicine as if he had come prepared for just such an emergency. Receiving the water from a stage-hand, he bathed the face and neck and chest of the moaning woman and covered her with his toga, for no one had brought a shawl.

Mary Omri opened her eyes and confusedly cried, "They tear me—the demons—seven of them torment me." She struggled to rise but Sergius Cumanus held her firmly and whispered:

"I am the master of evil spirits. I will give you medicines that will drive them away." He now accommodated himself to her strange mood. "Will you take the medicine as you did yesterday at Caesarea? Don't you remember me?" he asked as



she stared up at him.

“Oh! The Roman physician.” The fear began to fade from her eyes and her mind cleared. “Why are you here?” she asked.

“I came to see you dance,” he told her. “But you should not have done so after your illness and the long trip from Caesarea. And now you must take another dose of medicine.” He held the phial up before her. “Will you do it?”

“Of course,” she replied. He administered the dosage and I gave her a drink of water.

A woman came with two shawls, and my colleague, removing his toga, wrapped her in them and told her to close her eyes. She obeyed, and knowing that he had given her a powerful sedative, I felt sure she would relax completely in a few minutes and perhaps go to sleep. But the Emperor’s physician was in no hurry and was as indifferent to the staring crowd as if he were alone with the dancing girl. He slowly and gently chafed her temples and throat with skillful hands and kept whispering to her while Malchus, just a few feet away but still held back by Captain Titus and his men, looked on in sullen silence. Suddenly the dancing girl began to breathe more naturally, ceased jerking, and slept. He watched her for a minute or two and then rose and walked straight to where Malchus stood.

“The woman should be allowed to sleep as long as possible,” he began in cold, professional tones. “And when she awakens you should not upbraid her for having fainted nor tell her that she is demon-possessed. If you are so ignorant and superstitious that you believe her to be, then you should keep your mouth shut. For she is ill and overworked and you are responsible for much of her condition, though she is an epileptic and should not dance professionally. The authorities should see to it that she does not dance, for the nervous strain of doing so brings on these attacks. They are bound to grow worse—much worse—and you may be responsible for her death.”

Malchus opened his mouth to reply, and everything indicated that he was about to be bitter and threatening, but the Emperor’s physician, donning his toga with a single movement of his muscular arms and shoulders, turned his back and strode across the stage toward the marble seats where we had left the Judean Procurator’s wife with two of the orderlies.

Captain Titus and I followed, his other soldiers bringing up the rear, and as we went he said, “That big Idumean seems to have met his master. But the young physician must be careful: Malchus is a murderer at heart. Your friend should not present his back to that fellow too often, and never in the dark.”

“Captain Titus,” I began in low tones, “something tells me that you are to be

trusted in all things, so I am going to tell you a secret: my physician companion is Sergius Cumanus, physician in private to Emperor Tiberius Caesar. So if Malchus lifts a hand against him Caesar would have the Idumean nailed to a cross head downward.”

The Roman officer gave an exclamation of surprise but at once said, “Malchus would strike even Caesar’s back with a dagger—in the dark. But I will guard your secret—and the Emperor’s physician as long as he is in this city,” he assured me as we climbed to the stall where my colleague already had joined the Procurator’s wife.

We were just in time to hear Sergius Cumanus apologize to her for deserting her so unceremoniously. “I regret it very much, fair woman, and I promise never to do it again.”

“Regret,” she said scoffingly, though in fair good humor. “And with that beautiful and naked creature in your arms. Why, she purposely wallowed in another spasm, having looked right into our stall and seen you as she started her dance. Oh, she knew what you would do when you saw her fall to the stage—just what you did when she tumbled off the camel’s back at the gates of Caesarea. Sergius Cumanus, you are not going to be very difficult for the exotic beauties of Judea to manage.”

My colleague smiled but made no defense of himself, and I, speaking boldly, addressed the Procurator’s wife in tart fashion. “The spasm of the dancing girl was not simulated,” I asserted. “She was the color of death and nearly as cold.”

“My dear Luke Galen,” Claudia said, “how little men know how much women simulate in order to attract and bind them. But what ails this woman?”

“A deep-seated epilepsy, doubtless congenital,” I stated, “augmented by very great fatigue due to dancing and a curious belief that she is possessed of seven devils.”

“She is beautiful enough to have twice that number,” Claudia declared as we started from the theater, stared upon from every direction.

So we went on to the Bridge of the Temple, crossed it and, passing the western wall of the Temple area, we made for Antonia, a dark, irregular mass against the star-studded April midnight sky.

But before we retired, and while discussing the events of the evening, the Emperor’s physician asked if I would have any objections if, before we left Caesarea, we located the dancing girl of Magadala and persuaded her to return to her home. “None whatever,” I said. “But do you suppose you can find her?”

“I am certain that Captain Titus can,” he answered, “and I am equally certain that he is not a friend of Malchus.”

## VI

The Procurator was provoked to learn that we were involved in a near-brawl in the theater with the chief servant of the High Priest and the dancing woman of Magdala, though he blamed his wife for the whole affair.

“If you hadn’t insisted on dragging the physicians to the theater none of this would have happened,” he growled at her as we were at the noon meal the next day. “The outcome will be another delegation of pious Jews protesting in the name of high heaven, and all that is sacred, over the secularity of my rule and my house.”

“Let them protest, lift their hands, shrug their shoulders and roll their eyes,” Claudia retorted in humorous mimicry of emotional and physical characteristics of excited rabbis. “Or let them choke with rage, for I am sure that the physicians will never forget—especially Sergius Cumanus—nor regret the incident. They should regard it as a contribution to their medical mission, for see what we have: a marvelously beautiful dancer conveniently has a spasm and the Emperor’s physician promptly administers to her. Everybody approves, everybody applauds—except the hideous Malchus.”

“The very point,” her husband insisted. “For the Emperor’s physician can ill afford to offend the family of the High Priest. They will blame Sergius Cumanus for the unsavory publicity that came to their head servant on the eve of the Passover.”

“Then let them,” my colleague said, injecting himself into the domestic controversy. “And as for this Malchus—well, I may provoke a quarrel with him before I leave the city and limber up my sword hand.”

His remarks were disquieting. Was he about to involve himself in the affairs of the beautiful dancer? I thought of his other affair with the young wife of the Roman official at Capri and wondered if he were going to repeat the trouble in Palestine. True, Mary Omri, so far as I knew, was the wife of no one; but if she were not the mistress of Malchus, I was certain that he considered her a chattel and would fight to the death to retain possession. But whatever Pilate thought he kept to himself and said no more, though his wife declared that it would please her if the Emperor’s physician used his sword—or his foot—on Malchus.

Another incident happened the very next morning, adding to the troubles of state of the harassed Judean ruler: there was a riot in the Court of the Gentiles and one of the soldiers from the barracks in Antonia was badly wounded.

The Emperor’s physician and I were fortunate enough to witness the scene from a balcony where we sat sunning ourselves while watching the Passover crowds thronging the Temple area. Having learned that disease always swelled in the city

when thousands of country folk streamed in, we decided tentatively that they must bring in the infection. We were talking over means of getting more accurate information and discussing our plans for the remainder of the week when Sergius Cumanus, whose vision was remarkable, leaned over the balustrade and pointed to a little knot of men sauntering toward the Porch of Solomon where the money-changers had set up their tables.

“If my eyes do not deceive me at this distance,” he said, “I see the Healer who took the crutch away from the lame man on the highway outside the city’s walls the other day. Are you able to recognize him from this height?”

Straining my eyes, I finally made out the figure of the miracle-worker, and replied, “Yes, I see him now. Why not go down into the court and note what he is about? You expressed a desire to see him again, you know.”

Hardly had I spoken when the man bounded up the steps of the great granite portico, followed by his friends, struck one of the money-changers with a whip and overturned his table of coins. In a twinkling there was a brawl with men shouting and striking one another.

Then came a fanfare of trumpets and the Temple Guard headed by the big Malchus, easily recognizable, came running from the stone guardhouse and attempted to quell the riot. But the crowds were too much for them, and a general riot call had to be sounded. Titus and fifty soldiers swung out of the barracks below and hurried to the Temple area.

“The soldiers! The Romans!” were the warning cries we heard, for the people, not much afraid of the Temple Guard, had a wholesome respect for the legionaries. At first the fighting became fiercer as the mobs were forced from the Gentile Court and many made their escape through exits that led to the Bridge of the Temple, and on to the city proper.

Wondering what had become of the Healer and his friends, we left the balcony and made for the scene. We could see the soldiers gathered about one of their companions who had fallen in the fray and we felt that our medical services would be needed. On reaching the Court of the Gentiles we saw the tables of the money-changers were broken and scattered and the cashiers of the Temple Bank were making frantic search for the precious half-shekels that had rolled down the pavement.

But we hurried on to where Titus, surrounded by his men, was kneeling beside the wounded soldier. The commander was glad to see us.

“I’ve got a man with a bad wound in his side,” he began as soon as he saw us.

The Emperor’s physician dropped to his knees and said, “Let me take a look.”

One glance at the wound was sufficient. It was made, apparently, with rather a blunt instrument and not bleeding. Getting to his feet, he gave instructions for the soldier to be placed on a litter and taken to the barracks with all possible speed. We went ahead with the officer to make preparation to receive the wounded man and found conditions none too good for caring for him. When they brought him in we did what we could to make him comfortable, though I was alarmed because the wound, instead of bleeding, had assumed a bluish cast and, on noting it, the Emperor's physician shook his head doubtfully. We administered sedatives, bathed the wound and set to work with all the therapy known to us to alleviate the man's suffering. As we left the ward, Titus followed us and asked, "Is there any hope for my soldier?"

"We are uncertain as yet," Sergius Cumanus replied.

Captain Titus stared at us for several minutes and seemed about to speak but, changing his mind, he went on to the cabinet of Pontius Pilate, for the Procurator had sent for him to hear his report of the riot. Thinking that what we had seen of the riot also might have its value for the Procurator, we followed.

Pilate sat at a marble desk and his humor was ill. The trouble in the Temple precincts, together with all its implications, gave him far more concern at the moment than he wished to betray.

"I may have to slaughter a lot of rebel Jews," he said after he had heard both the commander's and our report of the riot. "The attack on the money-changers will cost the Temple authorities a heavy sum. And this will cause the High Priest to demand that I crucify the chief offenders; then, throughout all Palestine the news will spread that my hands are red with the blood of the common people. Then Rome will hear and I will be called a beast and a devil."

He slumped down in his chair, his face dark with vexation, and at this juncture a guard appeared and said that Malchus desired an audience.

"Tell him to enter," Pilate ordered. But when we rose to leave he waved us back into our chairs. "Stay here," he said, "for this may afford me an opportunity to heal the breach between you, Sergius Cumanus, and the head servant of the High Priest. And perhaps to prevent a breach with the High Priest himself."

"But what if I desire the breach to widen?" the Emperor's physician questioned politely but coldly.

"Then you must abide the consequences," Pilate snapped and dismissed the subject.

But when the Captain of the Temple Guard entered the room and saw us he stopped short and snarled, "I will say nothing until these physicians leave."

And it was here that Pontius Pilate surprised me, for he said, "Then say nothing,

for these physicians are guests in my household.”

Malchus turned and started to leave the room, then wheeled and said, “The riot in the Gentile Court was caused by a band of Galileans—just as usual. You may have heard of their leader—a certain Jesus of Nazareth. He is winning fame by healing the sick and casting out demons. But he stirs up the multitudes by speaking treason against Caesar and ridiculing the High Priest.”

“If this is true,” Pilate said, “why did you fail to seize him? You are so empowered by me when the disturbance is within the Temple precincts.”

“I know,” Malchus began lamely. “But that fellow is in league with Beelzebul, and this prince of devils spirited him away.”

“Your guards were afraid of those big Galilean provincials who were with him,” Pilate accused. “Do you know where this Jesus of Nazareth sojourns in Jerusalem?”

“No,” Malchus confessed. “But with your permission I will scour the city from wall to wall until I find him.”

Pilate shook his head emphatically. “Keep to the precincts of the Temple with your guards,” he ordered. “I will have no armed Jews prowling the streets of Jerusalem. And you may return to the Temple walls and remain there—both you and your men.”

Malchus departed, but not until he cast a wrathful look at the Emperor’s physician, and when the swaggering fellow vanished the Procurator accosted Titus, who had remained strangely silent. “You saw this Jesus of Nazareth, did you not?” he asked.

“Yes, Excellency.”

“Would you know him if you saw him again?”

“Undoubtedly, Excellency.”

“Then make diligent search for him,” Pilate commanded. “And if you find him bring him to Antonia.”

Titus bowed and departed and I felt it was about time for us to leave also, for Pilate’s mood was surly. But my colleague had a different idea and he asked the Procurator what was so wrong with the business of the money-changers that a band of Galilean provincials would shield an itinerant Healer while he used a whip on the employees of the Temple bank.

“Nothing is wrong with the business of the money-changers,” was the Procurator’s irritated reply. “Didn’t I tell you once that the Roman government shares in the Temple tribute?”

“Yes, you told me, Excellency. But this fact does not justify the business if it is wrong.”

“Wrong!” Pilate exploded. “You speak like a Zealot—one of the party which makes more trouble for Rome than Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians together. Shall I permit a band of Galilean assassins to come down to this province and interfere with customs that have the full sanction of religious and civil authorities? Why shouldn’t I seize their leader and crucify him?”

So on and on he raged, or pretended to rage, though I thought he couched his language in too many questions to be fully convinced of all he said.

But as I was one who paid annually the half-shekel into the Temple Treasury—though I had been in Jerusalem only twice in nearly a decade—I felt entitled to speak. “Excellency,” I began with the boldness of conviction, “the people believe that the rate of exchange for the half-shekel is too high. Many of the leading families in Jewry so think. But the family of the High Priest and the Roman government ignore the clamor of the common people for a change. Yet, there will be a change someday and it may not be a peaceful one.”

“My troops will be ready—and I will be ready—when that hour comes,” the Procurator snapped.

The Emperor’s physician stared at Pilate in cold disapproval and his comment was biting. “You may not be Procurator when the change comes; but it would be an excellent thing if you would bring it to pass.”

Pontius Pilate started to make a retort which I knew would have been bitter, but he ended by slumping down in his chair in the petulant manner so characteristic of him when he was crossed. So we dropped the subject and soon found an excuse to leave his presence, for the atmosphere of the room grew more uncongenial every moment. I felt that my colleague’s remark was already written down in the Procurator’s book of acid memories.

## VII

We strolled across the paved court to the barracks and went to the bedside of the wounded soldier. There was little change in his condition. We were restless and soon left the barracks and wandered along the Street of the Temple and met a strange group of impotent people making their way toward the Sheep Gate in the north wall.

It was a pathetic-looking processional, with none of the pomp of the one we had seen traversing the Courts of the Temple earlier that morning. For the Temple processional was made up of the glad, the healthy, the chastely and beautifully

robed, and those in it had marched to the music of the harp and viol and the sackbut, chanting as they went. But here was a processional of the sad and hopeless, for in it were the maimed, the halt, the withered and the impotent of every sort, including the blind. There was no rhythmic swaying as they moved: only an irregular line, jumbled, uncertain and painful to behold.

“What have we here?” Sergius Cumanus inquired of a sight-seer like ourselves.

“The impotent of the city have just come from a Passover ceremony for themselves only. It is held each year and then they go to a pool near the Sheep Gate, just outside the walls. Sometimes it is called the Bubbling Bath, sometimes the House of Healing. It is said that an angel comes down and stirs the water at a certain time with a rod of gold and the first one into the pool is healed of any disease.”

My colleague looked at me and, speaking gravely—though I knew he wanted to laugh—inquired, “Shall we go and see the angel descend and disturb the waters?”

“By all means,” I replied with something more than professional instinct and curiosity.

But there was no need to hurry, for the impotent who made up the motley array would not reach the Sheep Gate for some time. So we sauntered out the Street of the Temple toward the northeastern corner of the wall, passing numerous markets, bazaars and workshops, and went on to the historic exit that opened upon the main highway to Jericho and beyond. Just outside the wall was the pool and built around it were five porticos. It wasn’t much of a pool but, according to Jewish tradition, it was centuries old, and the water was clean for the pool was spring-fed.

“Well,” my colleague began as he looked at the pool, “the waters are placid enough just now. What sort of legerdemain do you suppose they use to stir them up and cause the superstitious to believe an angel has troubled them?”

I shook my head, not being in a bantering mood, and we stood and talked of other things until the procession limped through the Sheep Gate and hobbled forward to where we stood.

There were many other sight-seers besides ourselves and one of them cried, “Here they come and none too soon, for it is nearing the noon hour.”

“What has the noon hour to do with it?” Sergius Cumanus asked of the man who had just spoken.

The man he accosted stared at my companion’s rich garments and Roman countenance and said, “You must be a stranger in Jerusalem, for it is at the noon hour that the angel comes down and disturbs the water. And if you have never witnessed this sight you will never forget it. Do you see all those people approaching—the lame and the blind and the sick?” he asked, pointing to the pathetic



procession. “Well, they all try to get into the pool at once.”

My colleague nodded abstractedly and looked once more at the bent, moving figures drawing closer to where we had halted. But a sudden exclamation from him caused me to glance at him inquiringly. “By Jupiter, Luke Galen,” he said, “here come the Healer and his band. They are rather bold, aren’t they? Do you suppose they are ignorant of the fact that the authorities, both civil and religious, are searching for them because of the riot in the Temple?”

But it was too late to do anything about the situation for here they were, in broad daylight, and they had traversed the city, south to north, passing within a stone’s throw of where the brutal Malchus was stationed with his lictors. Why had the Galilean come to this particular part of the city, in the very shadow of danger, both from the Temple Guard and—Pontius Pilate? A question from Sergius Cumanus was the very one that had framed itself in my own mind. “Do you suppose the Healer has come just to see all these lame and blind beggars scramble down into the so-called sacred pool?” he asked.

“It would appear so,” I replied.

On limped the crowd of contestants—it amounted to that—and the Galilean and his friends passed them and drew near to where we stood and we had our first close view of him. He wore a sleeveless close-fitting garment that reached to the ankles, fastened by a girdle under his breast; over this was a square outer brown cloak fringed with white threads. On his feet were sandals made for long journeys, and on his head was a bright-colored kerchief twisted into a turban.

“Well,” my colleague remarked as the Galilean paused within a dozen paces of us and looked around, “the Healer has been very careful of his attire this morning. Do you suppose he is to be chief guest at the Praetorium or the palace of the High Priest?” he inquired facetiously.

I made no reply; I was looking at the man and I was fascinated. I saw a face stamped with a wisdom not of the schools; a calmness rested there, neither studied nor pretended. His countenance revealed the majesty of a great inner peace that the world—the world of two certain physicians—could never bestow. And when he turned and looked at us—for it was inevitable that he see us in his panoramic gaze—I saw eyes, a beautiful brown, that held the paradox of magnificent distances and things at hand. Perhaps two paradoxical words best described his eyes—vista and nearness. Withal, there was something about this man that was a matchless blending of eternity and time—a blending in which neither the brevity of the one nor the timelessness of the other could baffle him or cause him to be afraid. So I found myself thinking, “Why should this man fear what other men may attempt to do to

him? Or how, by destroying his body, could they slay his spirit?"

I stole a look at the Emperor's physician. He had seen what I saw and he was so intent that he never knew that I looked at him. But when the Galilean turned his eyes away my colleague said, "I feel pierced. Now I have no secrets." And he gave an odd little laugh, half uneasy.

I was ready to admit that the man's eyes had penetrated to the depths of my own being, but a commotion in the crowd of the maimed and blind attracted my attention. One of the sightless men—a cadaverous fellow with fear in his manner and voice—jostled his way from the group and, with hands held imploringly to anyone willing to seize them, he cried, "Who will help me? Who will guide me into the pool? I am always last—last. And I never see the angel stir the water. Oh, in the name of the Lord God help me when the waters bubble."

The crowd—both the sick and the well—quieted and one of the group with the Galilean said, "Master, for whose sin—for his own or his parents'—was he born blind?"

"Neither for his own sin nor for his parents' was he born blind," was the unhesitant answer the Galilean made to the primitive concept implied in the question.

"Did you hear that?" my colleague said to me in low tones. "The Healer doesn't seem to hold the common view of the origin of physical maladies."

"Apparently not," I agreed, when I was interrupted by the loud tones of someone in the crowd of general sight-seers who evidently disagreed with the Galilean Healer's thrust at the old belief.

"Then tell us, O fountainhead of all wisdom," the critic demanded in challenging tones, "tell us just the reason for this man's blindness."

Jesus of Nazareth did not so much as look in the direction of his abrupt questioner; instead, he went and took the blind man by the hand and, lifting his voice that everyone might hear, he said, "I will tell you the reason this man was born blind: it was to let the work of God be illustrated in him. While the daylight lasts we must be busy with the work of God, for when the night comes no one can work. And now that I am in the world I am the light of the world." He ceased speaking, let go of the blind man's hand, stooped, picked up a piece of clay, moistened it with the saliva of his own mouth, smeared it on the eyes of the blind fellow and continued:

"Go down to the pool and wash and your sight will come." Then, without another word, the Galilean turned and started out the road that led across the Kidron to the Mount of Olives, and his friends followed him.

There was an amazed silence and then someone cried, "Why, it is the Healer of Galilee."

But the blind man did some crying of his own, wailing, “Oh, will someone guide me down to the pool that I may wash my face?”

Whether the blind man had cried for someone to help him remove the smear of clay from his eyes—for it was not time for the waters to bubble—or whether he had a sudden birth of faith in a healer of whom he never heard, I was unable to determine. But while the others hesitated, the Emperor’s physician acted. He sprang forward, caught the blind man by the arm and said, “I will take you down to the pool.”

But I sensed something in my colleague’s act wholly apart from any spirit of benevolence, and I joined him and took the other arm of the sightless fellow and we went down to the pool together, followed by all who could crowd to the water’s edge.

“How long have you been blind?” my colleague asked as we stopped at the pool.

“I was born blind,” the man replied.

“And have you never seen a single ray of light?”

The man shook his head listlessly, mournfully.

The Emperor’s physician took a kerchief from his toga, wiped the smear of clay from one of the man’s eyes and examined it critically while the people looked on wonderingly.

“Take a look,” my colleague said to me.

I did so and observed certain superficial symptoms of sightless eyes: reddish lids, yellow eyeballs, and a grayish film over the sight.

“Do you think he is totally blind?” my colleague inquired in the Roman tongue.

“It is difficult to determine,” I replied.

“Many blind beggars are not blind, you know.” I nodded and he went on, “These pretenders are numerous in Rome. Still, I think he has an eye affliction of some kind. But I wish I could be certain before he washes his face in this so-called sacred water,” he finished significantly.

I caught the drift of his thoughts: he doubtless had in mind the scene enacted on the road outside the walls of Jerusalem in which the Healer broke the lame man’s crutch and, in the sight of all, told him to walk. That man had walked. My companion had declared it to be simply a piece of “good theater.” Was he going to accuse the blind man of being in league with the Galilean who smeared his face with spittle-clay and told him to wash in the magic waters? I felt that I would know in a very few moments, for the Emperor’s physician had assisted the fellow to kneel at the edge of the water and told him to wash his face.

And while the people watched, the man washed the clay from his eyes with a nervous motion. He continued to kneel and my colleague, taking him by the hand, said, "You may get up now." The man did so, though with some reluctance, as if he were afraid to leave the sacred water.

Sergius Cumanus used his kerchief once more, carefully wiping the man's face, and once more we examined his eyes. I took far more time than did my colleague and, with some impatience, he said, "Are you expecting something to happen here and now?"

Something then and there did happen, for a wondering cry burst from the beggar's lips: "I see! Merciful God, I see!"

Instantly the place was in an uproar: those of sound limb and those who were impotent crowded toward us and we had to struggle to keep from being pushed into the pool.

"Stand back, you fools," my colleague roared, hurling some of the jostlers right and left. "Would you push us into the water?"

I joined him with all my strength and we halted them. At once some began to scream at us: "Let us see him. Let us see the man born blind. The miracle has been worked! We never saw it in this fashion before." So they raved and started to rush us once more. We seized the man by the arms and dragged him away from the water's edge, for we wanted to question him and submit his eyes to closer scrutiny. But the people had another idea, so they swarmed about us once more and we released our hold upon him and pushed our way out of the hysterical crowd.

As my colleague adjusted his disarranged toga he remarked, "Shall we remain and see the celestial visitor come down and stir the pool? Or have we had our daily miracle?"

His tones were caustic and I knew he thought the whole scene had been prearranged. "So you believe that the Galilean practices such deception, and just to gain a little fame," I returned impatiently. "I hold no brief for the man, but I cannot bring myself to believe that he is a charlatan. He has none of the characteristics of one.

"Surely you don't believe that you have just witnessed a miracle in which a man, blind from birth, was made suddenly to see, do you?" Sergius Cumanus said with increasing irritation. "And all by mixing spittle with clay, smearing the eyes and washing in a pool that is more filthy than sacred."

I matched his irritability when I replied, "Please don't impute such ignorance to me. Of course there was no healing property in the mud and the saliva, and none in the waters of the pool. These may have been mere accessories the Healer used to

increase the blind man's faith. But something happened."

"Nothing happened that was not prearranged," my colleague insisted. "I will hold this opinion until further evidence proves me false."

"Let's not stand in the street and argue the matter further," I begged.

He bowed decorously and we dropped the subject. But I could not banish certain conclusions that forced themselves upon me and among them were these: first, neither by temperament nor training could the Emperor's physician believe in the supernatural; second, by training—the training of my Roman school of medicine—I was not able to believe in it; but as for my temperament—well, I felt my mother's Semitic spirit hovering near me.

When we reached the entrance of the Praetorium my colleague did not wish to enter and suggested that we go down to the barracks and interview Titus again. "What about?" I inquired.

"Two important matters," he replied. "I am afraid that Titus' wounded soldier is going to die, so I wish to suggest a radical departure from any therapy we have used. That is, with your full consent."

"You have it already. But what is it?"

"Bloodletting. Have you practiced it on any of your patients?"

I shook my head but told him that I had heard it was being used in Rome with some success. "Yes," he revealed. "With some success, but none too pronounced. My father evolved the theory less than three years ago for bloodletting in cases of bad wounds that failed to bleed profusely. And that is the exact situation with Captain Titus' wounded man."

"Have you performed such operations?" I inquired.

"Three," he answered. "And two of them were successful."

"Then bleed our patient," I urged. "I would like to see the operation whether he recovers or not. But what is the other matter you wish to speak to the Captain about?" I asked pointedly, though I felt that I knew.

"About Mary Omri," he stated frankly. "For if he doesn't locate her by the time the Passover ends we may never find her at all." He ceased speaking and stared gloomily at the gray walls of Antonia. I waited, for I felt that he was about to propose a daring course. And he was, for he added, "I had hoped Captain Titus would locate her by this time and that we would be able to persuade her to return to Magdala as we go north to the regions of the Sea of Galilee."

"You may do as you please in the matter," I said, "but do not overlook possible complications."

"Complications," he echoed. "What kind of complications could rise out of

getting the dancing girl out of the clutches of a man like Malchus?"

I did not see fit to reply, so we stared at each other and I am sure that he tried to read my thoughts even as I believed I could read his own. Then we went on to the sick ward in the barracks.

We found the wounded soldier to be worse—much worse. In fact, he was unconscious, his breathing labored and no color in his face.

Captain Titus entered and came to the bedside. "Is there nothing more physicians can do?" he questioned.

His query provoked my colleague, who made sharp retort. "Yes, there is something more physicians can do: we can perform a bloodletting operation. For this man's wound scarcely bled from the beginning—you know all about that, Captain Titus. Well, the medical theory—and I hope it is more than a theory—is that when wounds of this kind do not bleed at all but become hard, turn blue and compress the opening too quickly, the cause may be a too rapid coagulation, damming up and poisoning the whole system."

The barracks commander was neither impressed nor interested in my colleague's detailed medical explanation; indeed, he was so indifferent that I remarked, "Don't you want the bloodletting operation performed, Captain Titus?"

He made a singular if not enigmatic reply. "There comes a time when human help is, well, helpless. Then our fate is in the lap of the gods." He ceased speaking so abruptly that I felt he had withheld something he intended to say. Perhaps it was my colleague's irritating manner that caused the soldier to hesitate. "But go ahead," he finally said. "For whether you fail or succeed, I have greater faith in you than in anyone of medical skill I have ever known."

"Your faith in me or in my colleague has nothing to do with the case in hand," Sergius Cumanus retorted. "It is all a question of science."

"Then you may fail," the Captain said.

I gazed at him in some surprise. Was the barracks commander thinking in terms of the possible fusion of faith and science in the art of healing? But the strident tones of my colleague broke in on my cogitations. "I shall prepare for the operation at once, Luke Galen," he snapped. "And I want you to assist me."

It was after sundown by the time we finished the bloodletting surgery and then the Emperor's physician gave orders right and left. "Give the man a hot bath every hour," he instructed Captain Titus. "It may overcome the deadly chill in his body. If he becomes restless and regains consciousness, give him a double dose of the drug to induce sleep. And call us in the night if we should be needed."

Captain Titus bowed gravely but made no reply, and his manner puzzled me. But

it was past our dinner hour, so we hurried to the Praetorium, offered our apologies to the waiting Procurator and Claudia and went to the meal without taking our customary bath. While dining the aggrieved Pilate informed us that Captain Titus had failed to apprehend the Galilean Healer—a fact, of course, which we knew. The Judean ruler was moody and irritable and we were glad when the meal was finished. Afterward we lingered in the atrium only a few minutes. Pleading weariness, we excused ourselves and ascended to our apartment in the tower.

“You forgot to say anything to Captain Titus about Mary Omri,” I reminded my companion as we undressed for bed.

“I intend to make it the sole topic of my conversation when I see him tomorrow,” Sergius Cumanus declared as he stretched himself on his couch. “But tell me, you prudish Semitic,” he went on banteringly, “just what complications you fear if we succeed in taking the beautiful dancer with us on our northward journey?”

“Oh, the usual kind,” I returned as I sank into my own couch across the big room. “Trouble travels with a lovely woman, you know.”

He made no reply but, stretching his arms above his head, was soon asleep.

## VIII

We hurried from breakfast in the Praetorium to the quarters of Captain Titus and inquired about the condition of our patient. “He is much better,” he stated, “and will live.” His remarks seemed too sanguine and I was ready to question him further when he informed us that Mary Omri had been located at a small inn near the theater.

“I knew you would not fail us, Captain Titus,” my colleague said warmly. And I knew his chief interest was in the dancing girl and not the condition of his patient.

“Did you find any traces of the Galilean Healer?” I inquired.

“Yes,” he replied, then added a remark that puzzled me. “I knew just where to go to find him.”

“Is he a prisoner in the barracks?” I questioned regretfully.

“No,” the commander returned. “He isn’t a prisoner anywhere.”

It was my colleague’s turn to put a question. “Weren’t you ordered by Pontius Pilate to apprehend and imprison the man?”

“Yes,” he answered frankly. “But I had no intention of doing so.”

We looked at him in questioning surprise. “But those were the orders of the Procurator, weren’t they?” my colleague asked.

“Yes.”

“You mean you secured him only to let him go?”

“Yes.”

“Well, aren’t you afraid of being accused of treason?”

“No,” Captain Titus said, “I am not afraid.”

My colleague seemed slightly embarrassed and put another query. “Would you mind informing us why you failed to bring the Healer to the barracks after you found him?”

“I did bring him here.”

“What! And then you let him go? You let him go without informing the Procurator? What made you act that way?”

“My conscience,” was the calm answer. “Besides, he had performed the mission for which I brought him to the barracks last night—he healed the wounded soldier. Then I returned him to the place where I knew, even before the riot in the Temple, that he sojourned.”

In the tense silence that followed I was uncertain whether Sergius Cumanus was attempting to work himself into a passion or to subdue one. Noting that he was disinclined to speak, or would not trust himself to do so, I asked Captain Titus if he cared to make a full explanation.

“Certainly,” he said.

And then he told us an amazing story. He said that a certain Zebedee—who operated fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee—furnished the Jerusalem garrison with dried fish from his market at the foot of Hill Akra and that his two sons, John and James, generally made deliveries. On one occasion they spoke of a cousin of theirs who was stirring some of the common people of Galilee with miracles of healing. “I became interested at once,” Captain Titus said in the course of his narration, “because I was suffering from a persistent attack of trachoma I contracted while on military maneuvers in the hill country of Judea. Zebedee’s sons, observing my inflamed eyes, declared that this Galilean had cured several persons of this same malady in the very region where I became infected. They confided to me also that he was a guest in their home near the fish market and persuaded me to go with them and meet the miracle-worker. I did so and he healed me,” he concluded in simple fashion.

Thus far my colleague had listened with interest and patience but now he said, “So, on the basis of your experience with the Healer, you decided, after the bloodletting last night, to bring him here and have him perform. Is that it?” His interrogation was sharp. “And you didn’t even wait to see whether the soldier, after



our operation, would grow better or worse.” The final statement was an accusation.

But Captain Titus, speaking with unmistakable sincerity, said that the soldier grew weaker after the second bath was given him and began to sink rapidly. “Fearing that he would die before midnight,” he went on, “I decided I would go and bring the Healer to his bedside. I had really thought of this before,” he confessed, “but I hesitated to do so for fear of wounding your feelings.”

“And now that the soldier has taken a sudden turn for the better you conclude that the presence of the Healer had something to do with it. Is that what you believe?” My colleague spoke with a sarcasm that bordered bitterness.

Captain Titus started to reply but checked himself and stood in calm dignity before us.

“Conduct us to the man’s bedside,” the Emperor’s physician said almost demandingly. Captain Titus obeyed gladly, eagerly, and we followed him to the soldier’s bedside. One glance at him was sufficient for us to realize that a decided change had taken place since the bloodletting. He was conscious, quiet, and looked at us with interest in his questioning eyes. We began a more minute examination. The bluish cast of the flesh around the wound had disappeared, and the gash itself appeared less ugly. His body was warm and the color had returned to his face. He told us that he felt very well and asked if he might have food.

“Captain Titus will attend to your wants,” Sergius Cumanus said, as he turned away from the bed. But the barracks officer followed us as we left the ward.

“I trust you are not angry,” he began, in humility that amazed us, when my colleague surprised me by a sudden change of manner.

“Captain Titus,” he said, “Luke Galen and I have decided to make an inspection of the conditions in Galilee after the Passover ends. Reports that come to us indicate there are hundreds suffering with fever in that area. And now that you have succeeded in finding the dancing girl we wish to take her with us, for her home is at Magdala. If we can persuade her to return and get beyond the reach of Malchus her health will be greatly improved. Will you assist us?”

“In every way possible,” Captain Titus promised.

“Then have someone guide me to the inn where you located her and I should be able to do the rest,” my colleague said.

It was clear from his remarks that he did not wish me to accompany him so I did not volunteer. But I felt I should warn him to stay clear of Malchus if possible. “He may have Mary Omri under surveillance most of the time,” I said. “Or he might even be at the inn when you arrive.”

But Captain Titus spoke reassuringly, saying, “Malchus is on duty at the Temple,

for his guards were never so busy. So I think the Emperor's physician can go and come in safety. But to make doubly sure I will accompany him and have a guard trail us until our return."

So I bowed my consent and left them and went to the Praetorium. Ascending to our living quarters, I sat down to bring my diary up to date. For, occupied as I was with notes of interviews with doctors and priests charged with inspecting diseased persons, and with the singular events that were taking place so rapidly, I had failed to keep up my diary. I took my pen and began to write down in order the salient features of our Jerusalem experiences and I was still at work two hours later when Sergius Cumanus bounded into the room, animated and flushed as if he had been on the run.

"Mary Omri will go with us into Galilee the morning after the Passover," he cried. "Captain Titus will have her at the Sheep Gate when we start our journey in the caravan bound for Damascus. She has an aged aunt at Magdala and is anxious to return to her house."

"Your persuasive powers are very good, my dear Sergius," I remarked as I laid my pen aside. "Tell me all about your visit with her and how you secured her consent to free herself from the mercenary grasp of Malchus."

He complied, going into detail, and his enthusiasm for his plans to spirit the dancing girl out of Jerusalem had—so I began to feel—quite overshadowed our reasons for journeying to the regions of the Sea of Galilee. I wondered, with the dancing girl at Magdala, practically central in the district where we were to work, how often she would cross our path.

But I made no objections to any of his plans involving the woman, for after all he was the real head of the medical mission and it was my function, chiefly, to defer to his wishes. Still, I suggested that we live more quietly in Jerusalem for the next forty-eight hours until the Passover ended. He saw the wisdom of this and agreed.

The day the Passover came to an end found us in secret consultation with Captain Titus, for we were to leave Jerusalem at dawn the following morning. After we discussed all the details for getting away from the walls of the city with Mary Omri, the conversation turned on the movements of the Galilean Healer and his friends. The commander told us frankly that they were to leave the city under cover of the night after the eating of the Paschal Supper.

"It is eaten after sundown," he stated, "and, aside from the lighted candles in each home, the whole city is in darkness. Sometime between the close of this supper and midnight Jesus of Nazareth, accompanied by the sons of Zebedee and others, will leave through Gate Gennath, going the hill-country route to Capernaum."

Thus, it was evident that Captain Titus had planned to assist the Healer to escape the city where he was hunted by the Judean Procurator and the Temple authorities for causing the riot in the sacred precincts. But now we better understood the officer's actions and offered no criticism, though we knew that he was almost certain to involve himself with Pontius Pilate.

I knew that Capernaum was on the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee, only a little way above Magdala, and curiosity prompted me to ask, "What takes the Galilean and the sons of Zebedee to Capernaum?"

"A multitude of the sick on land, a multitude of fish in the sea," Captain Titus replied knowingly.

And then my colleague and I got another interesting story. For the Captain told us that the sons of Zebedee were to operate their father's boats on this inland sea, as the fishing season was at hand, while he would remain in Jerusalem and manage his market. Jesus of Nazareth, accompanied by his mother, would make his headquarters in Capernaum and tour the regions roundabout, "teaching and healing," the soldier explained.

"Teaching what?" the Emperor's physician questioned.

Captain Titus was slow to make reply; either he did not quite know or was reluctant to tell, though he finally said, "The friends of the Healer say that he has good news to tell."

"Good news," my colleague echoed, smilingly. "I would like to hear it, for about all I ever hear is bad news." He regarded the Captain inquiringly. "What kind of city is Capernaum?"

"Beautiful and peaceful," he answered.

"And what kind of places are Magdala and Tiberias?"

"Magdala is a busy, noisy town," he said. "It has great mills, dyeworks, and looms which turn out rich shawls and rugs. Herod Antipas has made Tiberias a showy city, full of soldiers and harlots and official pomp. It is the most Hellenic city in Palestine—even more so than Caesarea—and full of evil of every sort."

My colleague turned to me and asked, "Luke Galen, shall we make our own headquarters in Tiberias, Magdala or Capernaum?"

"Suit yourself," I replied, though I confess that I was rather anxious about his choice.

"Capernaum," he finally said, greatly to my surprise.

It was well after sunset that same day when we descended from our apartment and joined Pontius Pilate and Claudia for a farewell banquet.

And what a feast it was: roast lamb cooked with tender vegetables; quail, a

golden brown, served on silver platters; figs in honey; wine-soaked dates; toasted walnuts and almonds; Pontic pastries—made by Claudia’s own hands—and a northern vintage said to be a century old. I drank of it sparingly, as did Claudia; but her husband and the Emperor’s physician imbibed heavily—the former, I suspect, because another Passover was history; the latter, perhaps, because memory was strongly at play.

After the meal we retired to the library and sat down for a final conference before our leave-taking on the morrow for Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee in the province of the same name ruled by Herod Antipas. Of course we told Pilate nothing concerning the Galilean Healer, but the moody Procurator did not appear pleased that we were beginning our medical mission in Galilee beyond his own jurisdiction.

“At Capernaum is a man named Chuza—Herod’s steward,” Pontius Pilate told us. “He was in my employ the first year I came to Palestine, for he knew a great deal about the provinces I rule, especially Judea. He is a Greek but his wife, Joanna, is a Jewess and is a lineal descendant of an old Maccabean family. In fact she possesses a small estate in the Wilderness of Bethaven, not far from Jericho—a mountain-concealed valley of great mystery that is said to have been the hiding place of the sons of Mattathias in the long wars with the Syrians and the Greeks.”

“And a stone house is in that mountain fastness,” Claudia spoke up, “a house said to be two hundred years old. It sheltered, so Joanna told me, many prominent Maccabean families whose men were fighting. I begged her to take me to it but she always refused, saying that the Maccabees swore to the God of the Jews that none except Jews would ever be shown the spot. She said that nothing short of the Deity would ever make her break that vow.”

I was fascinated by all this and asked Pilate if he would give us letters of introduction to Chuza and his wife, and getting up at once, he went to his desk and wrote them.

When he handed me the letters he said, “Chuza is a Greek proselyte to the Jewish faith; the beautiful Joanna had very little trouble in winning him over from false gods.”

“And she may so win you, Sergius Cumanus,” Claudia warned. “For she is a charming matron schooled in all the arts of making handsome young men forget their sweethearts.”

Her husband frowned and spoke hurriedly, as if she had not injected herself into the conversation, saying, “You should count yourselves fortunate that Herod Antipas is in Rome. For if he were in Tiberias he would insist upon your making it your headquarters while in his realm. He would want you under his watchful, jealous eyes.

I doubt that you would get past Tiberias if he were there.”

“And you won’t get past Magdala—the home of the beautiful dancing girl—if she happens to be there and should see you, Sergius Cumanus. Magdala is halfway between Tiberias and Capernaum, with a wonderful beach and medicinal springs, and it would be a glorious place for a long summer of love-making to the redheaded beauty.”

Claudia chattered so swiftly that her husband did not attempt to check her; but I noted that my colleague was annoyed and I knew that the woman was becoming obnoxious to him.

“Now that the Passover is ended,” I said to the Judean ruler, “when do you expect to return to Caesarea?”

“As soon as possible,” was his answer. “I am thankful that I will not have to smell Jerusalem until autumn when I must come here for the Feast of the Tabernacle. And I may not come even then unless Lucius Vitellius insists.”

His remark about the Roman Legate of Syria led Claudia into another session of chattering, and she concluded by saying, “I wonder if Vitellius is still angry with me because I feared the leprous contagion of his house. What is your opinion, Sergius Cumanus? Was my conduct such that he will never forgive me?”

“You may settle the whole question by going to his house on your return to Caesarea and not only manifesting real concern over his child, but expressing a wish to visit her,” my colleague said in tones that bordered on rebuke.

“Merciful Jupiter!” the woman exclaimed. “I would not go near that leprous girl for half of Caesar’s realm.”

“Then you should think twice before paying her father a formal call,” the Emperor’s physician concluded shortly.

I was fearful that the woman and my colleague might become involved in an unpleasant exchange of words, so I hastened to say that the hour was late and we would be traveling in the first Jordan Valley caravan that left Jerusalem at dawn.

My words proved the signal for rising to ascend to our tower quarters and, bidding both Judean Procurator and his wife farewell—for we would breakfast before either was awake the next morning—we left the library.

We went to our rooms and before going to bed we stood at the window and looked out over the city. It was dark and still and lonely, like a great black, barren rock in the midst of a darker sea.

“Sergius,” I began at length, “why not leave the caravan at Tiberias, spend the night there and next day visit the only real Aesculapian temple in all Syria?” And as he made no reply I hurried on. “Mary Omri, the dancing woman—if she really joins

our caravan in the morning—will be well out of reach of Malchus by the time we arrive at Tiberias and can go on to Magdala, only five or six miles farther, in perfect safety.”

“Aesculapian temples do not interest me,” he finally replied as we disrobed. “They are places of superstition and their priest-physicians are on a par with the so-called miracle-men of the highways—the fakirs who pretend to heal the sick but without the medical pretensions of the Aesculapian cult. So why waste time in one of these temples?”

“Because I want you to see the great contrast between the care of the diseased rich and the diseased poor in Palestine,” I contended. “For you are going to see things between Jericho and Tiberias that will live with you for a long time—scores of sick and demented people who have less care than swine—and at Tiberias, if you consent to linger, you will witness the power of wealth and military pomp to protect the few at the expense of the many—especially if the few are the Hellenized in Palestine, or Romans like yourself, and Greeks.”

“But what has the Aesculapian temple at Tiberias got to do with all this?” he questioned as he got into bed.

“Just this,” I replied: “the Aesculapian cult of this land is far more exclusive than in other parts of the Empire and the priest-physicians are devoid of any social outlook in their practice. The Aesculapian temple at Tiberias is hardly a place of compassion. Only gold, and plenty of it, will open its doors to the sick. But linger with me at Tiberias and you will learn what I mean.”

“Very well,” he said reluctantly. “But I will do so only on condition that the final stage of Mary Omri’s journey to Magdala can be made in safety. She, also, is among the ill—remember that, Luke Galen.”

“I shall not forget,” I promised him, “and I shall not forget that her personal physician is now the Emperor’s physician. Doubtless this dancing woman is to have all the care of the Emperor himself.”

“She will have more—more than I ever gave Tiberius Caesar, for I never cared whether he lived or died, but I shall devote all my skill—if any—to the healing of Mary Omri.”

“Very well,” I said. “But tell me now—will you stop over in Tiberias with me?”

“Of course,” he replied, and turned his face to the wall.

Dawn was bringing Jerusalem into soft outline as we left the Praetorium and went out the Street of the Temple toward the Sheep Gate, with two porters bearing our luggage. There was no sight of Captain Titus as we passed the barracks, and the guards at the entrance paid no attention to us. Both of us were more anxious than either would have admitted, for the whole situation was not without its gravity. We had connived—it amounted to that—with the Commander of the Jerusalem Cohort to spirit the dancing woman out of the city—a woman who may have belonged to the head servant of the High Priest; and we possessed knowledge—tantamount to guilty knowledge—that Captain Titus had disobeyed the Procurator’s orders and permitted the Galilean Healer who caused the riot in the temple to escape into Galilee.

“Pontius Pilate may crucify us before this is over,” I whispered to my colleague as we trudged after our porters toward the Sheep Gate.

“It will be worth it if I can get Mary Omri beyond the power of Malchus,” he declared.

“Two crucified physicians could not prevent Malchus from securing the dancing woman again,” I reminded him.

“How cheerful you are this morning, Luke Galen,” he growled. And then we came in sight of the Sheep Gate in the north wall of the city.

There was quite a crowd at the gate, for many were to journey in the Jerusalem-Damascus caravan, with halts at Jericho, Archelais, Scythopolis, Tiberias, Magdala and Capernaum and beyond. This was the largest caravan, and the richest, of all the northern routes in Syria and Palestine, chiefly a caravan of the merchant and the official classes, and the main highway up from Jerusalem had its paradox both of safety and danger.

On arriving at the gate we saw nothing of Captain Titus and his bodyguard and, of course, nothing of Mary Omri. But we did not linger; instead, we went directly to the head camel driver and learned the position of our camels in the irregular brown line crouching beyond the city’s walls. After having the porters place our luggage on the backs of the indifferent beasts, we stood beside them and waited. Presently we saw Captain Titus and a woman, heavily veiled, closely followed by his guard, emerge from the gateway and approach where we stood. Paying no attention to us, the barracks commander assisted the dancing woman to the back of a camel that knelt just behind the one the Emperor’s physician was to ride and then, with his orderlies, drew apart and waited for the starting signal.

When it came—a high-pitched cry from the mouth of the head driver—Captain Titus, without a sign of recognition, turned and stalked toward the Sheep Gate.

If the barracks commander gave us no sign of recognition, Mary Omri ignored us as completely, and not until the caravan was descending the rocky road to Jericho did she lift her veil and smile at the Emperor's physician who kept turning and looking back. Still, when we reached Jericho, where the caravan halted for half an hour, the dancing woman did not dismount as did practically all the other travelers, though she had danced more than once in this gay resort town where Egypt's lovely queen, who nearly wrecked the Roman Empire, had sported with two Emperors.

But when the caravan swung northward from Jericho, traversing the western side of the Jordan River Valley, Mary Omri and the Emperor's physician called to each other repeatedly and now and then their laughter rose above the *crunch-crunch* of the hoofs of plodding camels. For they were young and the day was beautiful. The Jordan, on our right, was a silver ribbon twisting southward to the Dead Sea; on our left an irregular line of cliffs, green with pines and firs, ran northward nearly to the Sea of Galilee.

The day of wearying travel passed uneventfully, and when at last we reached the caravanserai some miles beyond Archelais where we were to spend the night, there was little inclination to linger. The innkeeper, apprised in advance of our coming, had a simple but satisfying meal prepared, and we soon scattered to our rooms, ready to rest from the day just past and to refresh ourselves for the last half of the journey on the morrow.

In the morning we resumed our way soon after sunup. As we advanced, the scene grew wilder and we saw increasing numbers of haggard, filthy creatures who cried from every hilltop. Eerily and monotonously their wails floated down to us—"unclean, unclean"—and we knew that we were traveling deeper and deeper into the most diseased portion of Palestine, a land of lepers and lunatics, of the blind and the lame, and there were none to pity.

So the long day wore on, and by the time we sighted the south shore of the Sea of Galilee, with Mount Tabor on our left and an inhospitable tableland wilderness on our right, we had seen more diseased and outcast mortals than we believed could have existed in a territory so small.

"No wonder Palestine is filled with social and political problems," the Emperor's physician remarked as our caravan halted briefly at a village called Sennabris at the southernmost tip of the heart-shaped inland sea. "I have seen greater misery, and more of it, in a journey of a few miles than I ever saw in all my life."

I nodded and said, "East of here a few miles is a district known as the country of the Gerasenes where there are more of the insane to the square foot than in any known portion of the Empire. The city of Gerasa—the largest in Herod Antipas'



province of Perea—keeps its gates bolted against them night and day, so it is said.”

“I have danced in Gerasa,” Mary Omri said, after she had listened to our conversation, “and as the noble physician says, it shuts its gates in the faces of the diseased multitudes and they starve in the wilderness. Gerasa has no heart of pity and is wicked above any city in which I ever danced.”

I was surprised to hear the dancing woman of Magdala speak reprovingly of wickedness; not that I believed she was a wanton woman just because she was a dancer nor because she had a keeper like Malchus; but she had impressed me from the first as being a woman lethargic toward either good or evil, pursuing neither, and unmoral rather than immoral. Here she was expressing a positive side, a conviction that wickedness was hateful to her, that compassion was a part of her nature, no matter how hidden.

If the Emperor’s physician sensed this new attitude in her, and cared, he gave no indication of it. He left me with the impression that it made no difference to him whether Gerasa shut its gates in the faces of the sick and the demented it had cast out or whether its citizens were moral or immoral. More and more it became evident that he leaned heavily upon his materialistic science and believed, in the final outcome, that it would work the only real miracles in Roman society.

In late afternoon we reached Tiberias and gazed upon the most ostentatious and artificial city in all Rome’s borderlands. It was the very newest of the larger towns, being only a score of years old. For Herod Antipas had built Tiberias that it might, from the beginning, be shaped to his heart’s desire, and had transferred the offices of the government from the historic city of Sepphoris, a few miles to the west, to his new capital. It was Hellenized above any place in Palestine—so much so that only Jews who had lost their national pride and racial honor could live there. It was a town predominantly Roman and Grecian; but its spirit was the spirit of Tetrarch Herod himself—cruel, suspicious and boastful.

It was not until we entered the city, halting just outside its ornate south gate, that we told Mary Omri we would stop there for the night. “And we would like to have you remain with us unless you prefer to go on to Magdala before sunset,” my colleague spoke up, greatly to my surprise.

She shook her head slowly and her words betrayed deep emotion. “I would rather dance in Gerasa than slumber in Tiberias,” she declared. Then, as if she regretted her remark, she added, “I am anxious to see my aged aunt; but I hope the noble physicians may find time, while sojourning at Capernaum, to visit Magdala and my household.”

“We will make it a point to do so,” Sergius Cumanus said warmly, “and before

many days.”

“You may not find Magdala to your liking,” she warned, “for it is a poor town in the midst of a beautiful setting. The mills and the dyeworks blotch the landscape and discolor the waters along the beach. But there is a great cliff just back of the place and from its top one can trace the entire shore line of the sea. A dozen hamlets nestle in the coves and the hills; some magnificent estates run down from the hills to the shore; and there are great houses that stand in orchards of many fruits.”

We listened in growing wonder at her simple but colorful recital; it was almost poetic. Here was a woman of remarkable personal beauty on whom the beauty of nature was not lost. My colleague said, “I hope to climb that cliff with you before another week shall pass.”

“And I hope you may—both of you,” she added as we prepared to leave the caravan. “And when you come to Magdala just ask almost anyone for the house of Rebecca Omri, my aunt.” She hesitated for a moment and then made a revelation that intrigued us. “The Omri name is old in Galilee and, though the fortunes of my family are fallen, our name lives on.”

She turned to remount her camel and the Emperor’s physician was swift to assist her. Then we secured porters and entered the capital city of Herod Antipas.

“It is just a cheap imitation of Rome,” my colleague remarked as we traversed the streets to an inn. And so it was, for Tiberias looked as if it had been built elsewhere and moved to its site beside the lovely sea. The city was too new, from wall to wall, to have either a history or an atmosphere; its cosmopolitan ways were affected; its life was wholly out of keeping with the environment in which it stood; and its labored show of military glory and new riches was both crude and vulgar.

But we were weary—too weary to be as critical as we felt—so we entered the inn, secured rooms, and lay down to rest before the evening meal. Before we retired we inquired about the Aesculapian temple and learned that it was in a wooded grove atop a hill a mile southeast of the city. Then I recalled seeing it before it was half completed. This was twelve years before—the year I returned from Rome to begin my practice at Antioch, for I had gone up to Jerusalem to attend a Passover after an absence of several years, and on my return journey I traveled up to Tiberias and spent a day in the city which, then, was still being built. The sound of the hammer and saw had been heard every hour of the day and night, for Herod Antipas was driving his workmen to build him a city and a temple that would house the cult of Aesculapias, in which he had taken a deep and sudden interest.

As we made our way the next morning toward the Aesculapian temple, climbing a pebble road, the porticos of the marble structure gleamed in the sunlight as if a fire.

The wooded hill on which it stood was a veritable Grove of Daphne and there was a solemn hush over the whole scene that stilled our tongues. So we climbed the great marble stairway in silence and paused for breath.

“A truly beautiful building,” the Emperor’s physician said at length, “as lovely as the Aesculapian temples at Athens, Delphi, Pergamos or Cindus.”

“And fully as efficacious,” I remarked. “Don’t you suppose so?”

He gave me a sidelong glance of doubt—one that I was beginning to fathom. “Surely you don’t believe that the cult of the Aesculapians ever healed anybody—at least not of organic diseases?”

“Perhaps not,” I conceded. “But no man of medical science should ignore the fact that the priest-physicians of such temples have developed a healing technique for those suffering from nervous disorders which physicians of our own school might do well to copy.”

“Including prayer, sacrifices and the use of the sacred snake, I suppose,” he enumerated caustically. “Don’t omit the snake.”

“You may leave out the healing reptile,” I retorted, thinking of the age-old superstition, even among the Jews, of considering the sight of a snake on a staff to have healing properties. “But you must admit the therapy of prayer and of sacrifices to the gods, even if there are no gods. And combine these with the art, the use of music so important in the practice of the Aesculapian guild, and you have a rational medical system that cannot be gainsaid because of certain superstitions—like the use of the snake—that have, somehow, become interwoven in the methods of this cult.”

“I accept all the necessary accessories of the Aesculapians—catharsis, emesis, inunction and the bath, including massage and the gymnasia,” he went on to enumerate in his clear manner. “But I exclude all religious connotations and consider any priestly approach to the healing art as charlatanry.”

There was a finality about his manner and in his words that caused me to turn and lead the way to the deeply recessed portico where we saw statues of Apollo, Hygeia and Aesculapius, but the latter was central, leaning upon a staff entwined with a snake, immemorially connected with the healing art of the race itself. As we stood looking at these figures, symbols of beauty, health and strength, we were accosted in gentle tones by a white-robed priest-doctor who emerged from the shadows of a marble pillar.

“Do you come for healing?” he inquired, half doubtfully.

“No,” the Emperor’s physician was quick to reply. “We come as visitors, for we have heard of the fame of the Aesculapian temple of Tiberias.” After a brief pause he added, “We are physicians from distant lands.” I forgave him for the lie concerning

myself even though Antioch, my home city, was not more than a journey of three days to the northwest.

“Physicians!” he echoed suspiciously. “Do you come as cynics, critics or friends?”

“As students,” I answered promptly, fearing that my colleague might make a tart rejoinder.

He bowed and said, “Then I will guide you wherever visitors are permitted to go.”

So we followed him into the temple, noting its shrines, and the votive tablets that were really clinical records. We saw rows of clean beds in dimly lighted corridors, heard the sound of music and running water, and smelled the odors of burning spices and flowers. There were no grating sounds, and even when we came to the House of Death—a separate structure in a garden—where one had just died, there were no lamentations. The House of Birth, in another corner of this garden, was a place of wondrous beauty combined with utility. For to it came expectant mothers of the merchant and official classes and in it I saw a prophecy of the future when rich and poor alike might come within the range of its benefactions.

Higher up the wooded slope was another garden, screened from the temple proper—a garden of pools, fountains and sweet-smelling pines. We saw a score of people sunning themselves or wandering about, with white-robed attendants ready to serve them; and there was a musical waterfall that let down its silver flood into a flower-rimmed pool where the convalescent bathed. Unbidden, another picture rose before me: the wretched and diseased creatures we had seen along the Jericho-Tiberias highway—a multitude who would never enter the beautiful and restorative place where we now stood. For they were doomed to drag out their existences among the rocks and tombs of a land whose rulers had long ago forgotten them.

“What are you thinking, Luke Galen?” the Emperor’s physician suddenly asked in the Latin tongue.

His question startled me. Was he thinking the same thing? I would find out. “I was thinking of something written in one of the sacred books of the Jews,” I said, “the words of one who was lamenting over the sorrows of Judah; over the poverty and the diseases of the people. And he—Jeremiah was his name—asked, ‘Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?’ For all we now look upon is not for the common people of this land, but only for the few. The poor creatures we saw yesterday, crying to us from the hilltops, have neither a balm nor a physician.”

“I am thinking of them,” he admitted. “Thinking of how hopeless their diseases are and the conditions under which they will always live. Shall we go?” he inquired

abruptly.

I nodded, and after thanking the priest-physician for the privilege of entering the temple, we started on our return to Tiberias. But, halfway down the great marble stairs, we paused by mutual consent and looked toward the city whose walls, rising like a gray prison, shut in so much of the evil of the realm of Herod Antipas and shut out so much of the good latent in the multitudes of the impoverished and the sick. As if aware that I was thinking of the Tetrarch and his cunning and cruelty, my colleague said, "It remained for a Herod to go the Greeks one better and build and equip the finest Aesculapian temple in the Empire."

"And the most exclusive," I added, as I thought of the more democratic ways of the Greeks and of the wider use to which they had always put their temples that housed their healing cults.

His reply was thoughtful. "Upon the health and the well-being of the common people depends the strength of the state. Rulers are only dimly aware of this and do not know how to proceed. And our own mission, Luke Galen, in the light of what we will be able to accomplish, will be but as a drop of water in a great sea of misery and tears."

I thrilled at his words—words so unlike him, too; and I felt encouraged to say, "Perhaps our mission will lay the foundation. For we have seen enough already to reveal to Rome the volcano over which the procurators and petty princes of this land are now treading. Perhaps the Caesars will heed us."

He shook his head gloomily, saying, "It is too much to expect of the Caesars; too much to expect of Tiberius, now sunken in hate and lust; and too much to expect from anyone on whose head the crown of the Caesars will descend. Rome, Luke Galen, is doomed, for its soul is as sick as the bodies of the lepers who wailed their warnings to us from the wilderness."

I made no reply and we descended the last flight of the stairway and went out on the white, pebble road toward the capital city of one of the Herods. As we walked, my thoughts were on the Galilean Healer and his power; for I could not escape the conviction that fate, or the gods, or perhaps the Lord God himself, had given the world in its greatest crisis a personality whose works and words might be the birth of a new hope. Or was I just dreaming again—dreaming as Jews had dreamed immemorially—of the coming of one who would be the Great Physician to all the world?

We were glad when we rode out of the swaggering, patronizing and artificial city of Tetrarch Herod that afternoon, northward bound for Capernaum. And the last thing we saw was his gilded palace, as pretentious as himself, rising above the town like a grim fortress—which it really was—frowning over a lovely sea and landscape. But we had been told that this haughty ruler had a summer home on a great estate east of Capernaum on the northern shores of the sea and its overseer was Chuza, once in the employ of Pontius Pilate.

But Magdala lay between Tiberias and Capernaum and we reached it in less than an hour. As Mary Omri had told us, it was little more than a hamlet. Yet it was the third commercial place in the province of Galilee, for here were the greatest mills and dyeworks in all Syria and its products—shawls, rugs and carpets—were famous throughout the Empire. But there were few attractive houses in the place, for the families who owned the mills and dyeworks dwelt at Tiberias, and Magdala was the home of the laborers and the small merchants.

“I wonder where Mary Omri lives,” the Emperor’s physician called to me as our camels threaded the narrow streets and moved on toward a curving beach road.

I shook my head, making no reply, but I noted that he stared at every flat-top house in sight and paid no attention to the interesting mills and dyeworks that lined the beach.

As we left the town the great cliff overshadowed us and hundreds of pigeons and sea gulls flew about it until its peak seemed in motion, and I knew that the Emperor’s physician was thinking of the hour when he would climb it with the dancing girl and they would look seaward together.

From Magdala to Capernaum was seven miles and, not long before sunset, after following a curving beach road of sand and pebbles, we reached a smelly but picturesque suburb at the water’s edge, where fishing was the main occupation. But beyond and above it rose the clean, attractive town with an astonishing number of lovely villas, a synagogue of classic lines and gardens and trees of every variety.

On the quay was a large customhouse, for Capernaum was the center of a great tax-collecting business and a Jew named Matthew Levi, notorious in the eyes of the other Jews who often felt the lash of his tongue, was the chief publican of the district. But there was little activity either on the quay or along the beach, for the day’s work was done and the fishing boats, like clusters of great white and brown-winged butterflies, were coming to anchor or to be beached.

We dismounted and left the caravan before reaching the customhouse and, guided by porters with our luggage, began the gentle ascent toward a fortresslike hostelry known as the Inn of the Sea. It stood on an abrupt knoll and had a clear

view of a thirteen-mile stretch of water. It stood in a wide court and its architecture was that of a peristyle, with cool and spacious rooms. On gaining the terrace we paused for breath and looked in every direction, but it was a scene eastward less than a mile that held our attention. In spacious gardens that lifted from the water's edge to a vast forest of cypress and pines stood a great house and, instinctively, we knew it to be the summer home of Herod Antipas. How well the Tetrarch lived in the midst of great poverty and misery among the common people: a detestable character descended from a line of Idumean parasites who, by kissing the sandals of successive Caesars, got themselves called "kings."

We followed our porters to the inn and were pleased with the whole establishment. Being weary, we ate a light supper and went to bed, lulled by the *lip-lap* of the sea.

We rose late the next morning and had our breakfast on the terrace, looking out over the charming little city and across the deep blue inland sea. Fishing fleets—probably Zebedee's was among them—were going out; the quay had come alive; the whole town, moving under the bluest of skies, was teeming with activity. But there was none of the pomp of Tiberias, nothing of the poverty of Magdala, and a total absence of the conventional religious atmosphere of Jerusalem. Instead, there was a kind of joyous hum in the air, both of bees and men, as if each found the nectar of the flowers of Capernaum satisfying for the hive and the house.

After breakfast we questioned the innkeeper about Herod's steward, Chuza, and were told that he dwelt in a house on the great estate between the Tetrarch's palace and the stables. "But," said the innkeeper, "Chuza's son is very ill and none except servants are permitted to come and go."

Nevertheless we made preparation to go to his house and my colleague assembled medicines and instruments, saying, "The child's illness may prove our fortune."

On our arrival at the entrance of the garden in which stood Chuza's attractive place we were accosted by a guard who would not permit us to enter until word came from the steward. So we handed over our letters the Judean Procurator had written and waited. A gardener took the letters and went to the house and in very few minutes, much to our surprise, Chuza himself hurried down to the gate and greeted us with warmth and sincerity. He was a fine Greek type—almost noble in look and bearing—and he bade us enter the grounds.

"It is providential," he said as we approached the house, "that two of the Empire's most illustrious physicians should come under my roof at this hour. For my son is ill and we are beginning to fear the outcome."

I informed him that the innkeeper had told us of the boy's illness and asked, "What is the nature of the disease?"

"A terrible burning," was all that Chuza could explain. "The physicians of Capernaum, like most of them in all Jewry, are incapable when confronted by deep-seated maladies."

"We will attend your son at once," the Emperor's physician said as we crossed the court and went up the portico steps. We entered the house and Chuza told a servant in waiting to call his wife from the child's bedside. And when Joanna came, despite her eyes that were red from weeping, we saw an interesting Semitic type. She was tall, with smooth olive skin, fine glossy hair, black and severely combed, and a mouth that was at once expressive and tender.

"The Lord God has sent you," she cried on being introduced, "for I have prayed hourly for help."

She led the way to her son's couch—a wan little fellow who was too ill to notice when strangers entered the room. He did not even look at the Emperor's physician as he bent over him and touched his forehead and flushed cheeks.

"I never felt a hotter face," my colleague said to me as I bent down beside him.

I placed the palms of my hands on the child's breast and listened to the swift, convulsive breathing. "The fever is pronounced," I said. "What do you suggest first of all?"

"This," he replied, as he took a phial that contained a white substance and held it up for me to see. "It is a medicine my father used with striking success in miasma treatments. Shall I administer it?"

"At once," I urged, for I was more than willing to defer to him if he wished to give a medicine used by my illustrious instructor.

He called for water and, with a skill that was a joy to see, he forced the half-delirious boy to swallow the potion and then take a drink.

My colleague gave swift orders to the servants, saying, "Bathe the child in cold spring water every hour; moisten his lips every time you see him stick out his tongue; keep a gentle breeze stirring above his naked body with palm fans; and see that a cold cloth is kept over his eyes." The servants moved swiftly and intelligently to obey and he addressed the parents. "You do not need guests in your house," he said, "so Luke Galen and I will go for a stroll and talk things over. We will return in two hours and repeat the medicine. But I expect the fever to be slightly reduced by that time."

The grateful steward followed us from the house, and down into the garden. He said that he would be pleased to discuss our mission to Galilee if we wished to do so, but Sergius Cumanus shook his head. "Later," he said. "Your son is too ill for



you to spend any time with us today; besides, we have already begun our mission in your household.”

As we left the garden I could not help but meditate on how singular were our experiences in each household we entered: We had been physicians to the leprous child of the Syrian Governor; to the wounded soldier in the cohort of Captain Titus; to the epileptic dancing woman, both at Caesarea and Jerusalem; and now we had just left the bedside of the little son of Herod’s overseer. The Emperor’s physician must have been thinking the same thing for suddenly he said, “We have no difficulty in securing patients in this country, do we, Luke Galen?”

“No,” I replied. “And how fortunate we have been, for each experience has opened doors that might have been closed to us for all time. Had you thought of that?”

“I am thinking of it,” he replied as we walked on toward the city proper.

But we returned to Chuza’s house within the specified time for the second dose of medicine and found, as my colleague had predicted, a slight decrease in the child’s fever, which was evidenced by his restless manner. Evidently both the baths and the potion were getting in their work. So we administered the medicine again, repeated instructions about bathing and fanning, informed Chuza that we would return before sunset and give the final dose of medicine, and went to our inn for the noonday meal. But on returning to the house in the later afternoon we were surprised and disappointed to note that the boy was not improved.

“Please remain and dine with us,” the anxious Joanna urged after we administered our treatment once more and made ready to leave.

“Yes, do,” her husband insisted. “We will give you the finest fish in the realm—caught just before you came this afternoon. The fish of the Sea of Galilee are unexcelled for size and taste.”

Nor did we need a third invitation.

Fortunately the sick child became better at sunset and I felt confident that the powerful drugs administered, combined with the nearly ice-cold baths, would break the fever in another hour or two, and we dined with the family more at ease. Quite naturally, the conversation turned on our medical mission and both Chuza and Joanna confirmed all we had heard of the widespread maladies, congestion and poverty among the common people.

“And there seem to be few, if any, competent physicians in the land,” the steward said complainingly.

“But there are plenty of charlatans, are there not?” the Emperor’s physician inquired. “So-called medicine men, exorcists, thaumaturgists and the like.”

“Many,” Chuza agreed. “And all of them are, as you imply, ignorant, superstitious and even tricksters. Now and then one rises who is shrewd and unscrupulous and preys on the masses.”

“Did you ever hear of a Galilean Healer—whose home seems to be in Nazareth—who is said to be different from the common run of fakirs?” my colleague asked.

“Yes,” the steward replied. “But I know little or nothing of him as a healer, though the common people speak of him as a wonder-worker. I know more of him—or at least of his kinsmen—who foment trouble in Galilee. They seem to be a family of Zealots or Nationalists, fanatically patriotic, and at odds with the rulers, both civil and religious.”

This was disquieting news and I thought of the incident of the driving of the money-changers out of the Temple, but I refrained from comment, and my colleague changed the subject abruptly by suggesting that Joanna tell us something of her Maccabean lineage and of the old stone house in the Wilderness of Bethaven. She appeared startled at first but we told her of the Judean Procurator’s revelation of her honorable line in Jewry and of the remnants of her people’s one-time vast estate in the rugged country west of Jericho and she cast aside all reserve and became quite explicit. We were interested—I deeply so—in her narration, for she unfolded a fascinating story of the great stone house, a century and a half old, hidden in an almost lost valley of this mountainous section of northeastern Judea.

And at the conclusion of her vivid historical narration this daughter of the original Maccabean line gravely said, “I have sometimes thought that this mountain retreat may, in some crisis in my own family, become a sure refuge, even as it did years ago for my oppressed and struggling ancestry.”

After the meal we repaired to the plain-furnished living room and conversed until it was time for us to return to our inn, but before we did so we paused at the bedside of the boy and noted his condition. It seemed fair and, after informing his parents that we would come if needed in the night, we left and strolled along the curving shore of the moonlit beach.

We were not disturbed that night, but a messenger from Chuza came early the next morning and announced that his son was in critical condition. We hurried to the house. The parents met us in the court and Chuza cried, “Our son may be dying.”

We went at once to the sickroom and saw that the child was unconscious and breathing with difficulty. My colleague, lifting the eyelids, examined eyes that appeared set.

“The fever is consuming him,” he whispered to me as we bent over the bed. “Just feel his body—it is like a heated oven.”

But we set to work and did what we could. The baths were increased to one every thirty minutes and the boy's head was kept swathed in cold-water bandages. It was impossible to give more medicine, so the hours wore on with no change for the better and we both knew that failure was about to overtake us. Joanna, with a mother's strong intuition, sensed the hopelessness of the struggle we were making and lifted up her voice and wept. Her lamentations were heard by a maid who entered with another amphora of cold water. In an unforgettable gesture of womanly sympathy she placed an arm about her mistress and said, "Jesus of Nazareth heals the sick, nor does he ever fail."

I looked at the Emperor's physician; his eyebrows were lifted superciliously. But the steward and wife exchanged startled glances. The servant had referred to the very Healer whom we discussed the day before—the man whose acts were already interwoven with our mission.

"Would the noble physicians be offended if I sent for this Galilean Healer?" Chuza interrogated hopefully.

As it was evident that my colleague would not reply—for he had a look of cold disdain on his face—I told the steward that he must do whatever he thought best. "The child is your own," I reminded him. Still, he hesitated and gave the Emperor's physician another appealing look—which was in vain, for his manner was unchanged.

But Joanna, indifferent to all the amenities that may have been involved in the situation, wailed, "Oh, my husband, send for this Healer. Is not a miracle our only hope?" And her frantic words stirred her husband to action.

Calling sharply to the maid who had started to leave the room, the steward asked, "Do you know the whereabouts of this Healer? Speak, girl," he demanded frantically. For she was strangely silent.

"Speak, Susanna," her mistress implored. "Tell us where this Healer may be found and we will pay him a great sum to come to the bedside of our child."

"He would not come for all the wealth of Herod unless you had faith—great faith," the servant stated. "For you must believe," she concluded knowingly.

"Believe!" echoed Chuza in increasing agony of spirit. "Believe what?"

"That the Master is able to heal your son," was her mystical answer.

But now the Emperor's physician took a hand. Seizing the girl by the shoulder he gave her a shake. "Do not answer your real master and your mistress in such fashion," he snapped. "And listen to me: did you ever see Jesus of Nazareth heal anyone?"

"Yes, noble physician," the maid replied in some fright.

“Where? Whom?”

“In this city, sir. He laid his hands on a woman and drove out the demons that were burning her body. She is the mother of Simon Peter’s wife—one of the fishermen who works with the sons of Zebedee.”

And now it was my colleague’s turn to glance at me, and he did so in some surprise; but when he spoke he addressed the steward and what he said must have been a greater surprise to the frantic parents. “Luke Galen and I have seen this Galilean Healer. He was in Jerusalem yesterday. We were told that he started for Cana last night. You may find him there if you wish to bring him here.”

“And you will not be offended, noble physicians?” Chuza’s question was entreating.

“Not in the least,” my colleague asserted. But he could not forbear to add, “The Healer is a curiosity to me. He is a shrewd and calculating opportunist. And I am sure he will come to the bedside of your child if you inform him that two physicians are already at work on the case.”

I could see that the steward was puzzled at the final words of the Emperor’s physician, but he was elated to know that we would not be offended if the Healer came. Chuza was in a hurry. “Cana is twenty miles distant,” he cried as he started for the door, “but I will speed to bring the Healer here if I must wind a score of horses.”

“I will go with you,” I volunteered, running after him.

“And I will remain here and work over the child,” my colleague called after me. “My act will be more in keeping with rationality.”

I did not have time to reply to his biting remarks, for Chuza was out of the house and on his way to the stables. I caught up with him and asked, “How will we travel?”

“In Herod’s lightest vehicle,” he announced, “and drawn by his swiftest horses.” And on we raced to the stables. “Out with the black stallions and Herod’s road carriage,” Chuza shouted to the stablemen. They sprang to obey.

## XI

Cana was southwest across the Plain of Aschois in the foothills of the mountains of Lebanon.

“We go the beach road to Magdala,” the steward explained as we waited for the team and the vehicle. “From there we cross a plain and then take a hill-country highway between Mount Tabor and the Horns of Hattin; then we climb to Cana over a steep and rocky road that runs to Nazareth, the Healer’s home. Near by is Cana.

But here is our team,” he broke off as the stablemen emerged with two magnificent stallions harnessed to a gold-painted vehicle, light and strong of wheel.

We got in; the attendants passed the reins to Chuza and released the heads of the spirited animals. They leaped away, but he checked them with a master hand and trotted them through the streets, not wishing to attract too much attention. But on reaching the beginning of the beach road, he let them out and we sped southward to Magdala in less than an hour. When we rolled through the dusty streets, in the shadow of the great cliff, I thought of Mary Omri.

Chuza did not spare the horses of Herod, nor exhaust them with poor driving, and on we rolled over the plain and into the hills. The Horns of Hattin loomed; Mount Tabor grew clear and lofty; ahead was Nazareth and then—Cana.

We had conversed very little, but as we paused to let the horses get their wind—the steepest portion of the road being just ahead—I asked Chuza if he believed in the miraculous. The question may have been superfluous, for he was driving like Jehu to secure the help of a reputed healer, but his answer was immediate and frank. “Isn’t a miracle—a miracle of some kind—the only hope for my son?”

“Perhaps,” I replied, thinking of Captain Titus’ wounded man.

But I knew that a miracle—whether within or beyond the laws of nature—was the only hope remaining. I decided to tell him of what our eyes had seen during Passover week in Jerusalem. He listened in eager, hopeful silence; then—suddenly tightening his hold on the reins—he spoke to the horses and they plunged ahead. Up we went, but the team was tiring and Chuza, unrolling the whip for the first time, cracked it with precision between the black heads and they responded with stout hearts, yet not a lash fell upon them. So we took the last and highest hill of the journey and, at the top, the steward cried, “Cana!”

At the bottom of the hill I saw a town of no great size nor beauty, but in it was one we both were anxious to see. Down we plunged and the spent horses could hardly keep out of the way of the swaying vehicle. Our noisy arrival brought a considerable portion of the population to the streets, though it was the supper hour.

The natives were quick to recognize that no ordinary equipage had rolled into the village and they gathered about in great curiosity as we stepped from the carriage. “Here,” said Chuza, tossing the reins to a heavy-bearded fellow. “Take care of these jaded horses and I will pay you well. They are from the stables of Herod.”

There were excited exclamations and others were eager to help; while the steward gave instructions I turned and addressed another provincial. “Do you know a certain Jesus of Nazareth—a healer?” I inquired.

“Who does not?” was the quick reply.

“Where is he to be found?”

The man turned and pointed to a group of men in the street near a well from which water was being drawn. “He is yonder in that crowd. But does Herod Antipas want him?” he asked suspiciously.

“No,” I said. “Herod’s steward, Chuza by name, wants him to go on a mission of mercy.”

Others heard my remark and all appeared satisfied; but as we started up the street many followed us. Then came the real excitement, for as we approached the group at the well, half a dozen big fellows stepped in front of a man I recognized as Jesus of Nazareth. He was travel-stained and weary, as were his friends, and it was evident that they had just arrived in Cana after the night flight from Jerusalem.

“We wish to speak with Jesus of Nazareth,” I announced, wondering whether he, or any of the group, would recall having seen me near the Sheep Gate at the pool.

“What do you want?” a stockily built fellow questioned, as he confronted us suspiciously if not belligerently.

I thought I recognized the man who caught the coin the Emperor’s physician tossed from the back of his camel the day we entered Jerusalem. They had called him Simon Peter.

“We want him to go with us to Capernaum to see a sick child,” I said.

“Capernaum is far, night is at hand and the Master is weary,” was the discouraging reply.

Then I erred in saying, “But the sick child is the son of Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas.”

There were muttered imprecations and the men grouped about the Healer moved restlessly.

“Then let the child’s father send for Herod’s physician—he has plenty of them,” the spokesman said. “Or did he take them to Rome with him to keep life in his miserable body while he is away?” he questioned, with keen understanding of the Tetrarch’s movements.

“I know nothing about Herod nor his physicians,” I replied, “for I live at Antioch in Syria, and I am a physician myself.”

“Then why don’t you heal the son of Herod’s steward?” the Jew interrogated contemptuously.

I replied that I had attempted to do so but failed. “And at Capernaum with the sick child is another physician and I think he has failed also.”

“And who is he?” the fellow inquired in tones of mild interest.

“He is a Roman, Sergius Cumanus by name,” I answered. “And he is the personal physician of Emperor Tiberius Caesar,” I added as impressively as I could.

The street became as still as the slowly setting sun, but the silence was broken suddenly by a singular act on the part of Chuza: he rushed forward, dropped to his knees before the Healer and cried, “I am Herod’s steward and it is my child who is near death. Oh, come with me and heal him or he will die.”

The Galilean gazed down on the kneeling man in the dust of the road and said, “Are you like the others who seek signs and wonders before they will believe?”

I knew that Chuza did not grasp the Healer’s meaning; but I felt I had. Here was no mere miracle-monger, eager to exhibit his magic; instead, here was one who was attempting to make clear to Herod’s steward that he would satisfy no vulgar curiosity nor be moved by his rank and position. But Chuza’s cry rang out once more, “Sir, go down with me or my child will die.”

The manner of the Healer changed at once and, stooping, he lifted the steward to his feet, saying, “Return to your house, and as you journey have faith that your child will live. For all things are possible to one who believes in me.”

And the Galilean started to turn away. Realizing that he had decided not to accompany us to Capernaum and that I was about to lose a great opportunity to put his reputed powers to a test and observe his methods once more, I pressed forward and added my plea to that of Chuza’s.

But to all my overtures the Galilean Healer gave a negative reply, though his manner was friendly—deeply so. When he invited the steward and me to go with him to the house of a man called Bartholomew, and rest and refresh ourselves with food before starting on the return journey, I felt that here was a rare opportunity to learn more about the Healer and his ways.

“Have we time to visit with these men,” I inquired of Chuza, “or do you wish to start for Capernaum at once?”

“We need not return until tomorrow,” he declared. “The road is long, the way dark and robber-infested. Besides, I have faith that my son will recover.”

I was astonished, for he gave every evidence that he believed the Healer had healed the boy at a distance of twenty miles. So we accepted the invitation and accompanied the Healer and his friends to Bartholomew’s home and learned that he was of the little band of Galileans who had been in Jerusalem with the man they called “Master.” Bartholomew, a guileless fellow, welcomed us sincerely. His wife and other women, including the Galilean Healer’s gentle-minded mother, were preparing food, which we were invited to share.

Then, in the dim light of the candles—for the sun had gone down while we stood in the streets—we sat and conversed. At the feet of Jesus of Nazareth sat another young man whom I recognized as the quiet-mannered youth with the intellectual countenance who was with Simon Peter that day when the lame man walked. He was called John, the son of Zebedee.

John was a serious, lovable youth and I observed that the others deferred to him a great deal, and to Simon Peter. But these two were as unlike as a rose and a rock. Some of them were curious—notably a surly fellow named Judas and a fierce, fanatical-looking bearded man called Zelotes—concerning the presence of the Emperor’s physician in Jewry. So I made a full and frank explanation, emphasizing that the Roman government had sent him to discover, if possible, why the land was filled with the diseased and the outcasts and the very poor, and that I had been chosen to assist him.

None made any comment but all, when I ceased speaking, fixed their gaze on Jesus of Nazareth and waited. He sat quietly, with his eyes looking into my soul, though he had nothing to say about the medical mission authorized by the Roman government and headed by the Emperor’s personal physician.

When I revealed that we knew Captain Titus of the Jerusalem Cohort and admired him very much, they gave little exclamations of satisfaction and Simon Peter made bold to say, “Captain Titus is the only Roman soldier in Jewry who is too noble to be a Roman.” Then I felt that I should tell of our connections both with the Syrian Governor and Pontius Pilate. The name of the former seemed vague to them, but that they disliked—and mistrusted—the Judean Procurator became so obvious through their murmuring that the Healer rebuked them, saying, “Pontius Pilate is cruel but Herod Antipas is a fox and his heart is full of evil of every kind.”

I was surprised at the outburst of the Galilean and stole a look at Herod’s steward. He was unperturbed and smiling. Later I was to learn that the Tetrarch of Galilee held the cousin of Jesus of Nazareth—a certain John the Baptizer, as he was called—in prison and might execute him. But the Healer gave no explanation for his personal dislike of the ruler whose subject he was; instead, he began to speak of deeper things and I marveled at his understanding of the whole of life itself. Through his eyes I caught a glimpse of a new world in which dwelt righteousness. It was so unlike the world that was, so different from the world that rulers were content to live in, and so strange to the thinking of most men that I marveled.

But he left me with the feeling that he was too great for my own soul, and I had a sense of bewildered helplessness when he said that all men should help him fashion a God-ruled, God-inhabited society. As he closed he fixed his luminous eyes upon me



and said, "Remember the sick need a physician, not the well."

It was late—late for Galilean peasants—when Chuza and I departed and sought an inn for the night. Our pallets were in the same room, for the inn was small; but this we did not mind for we both were weary and soon fell asleep. I awakened before the dawn and fell to thinking of all I had seen and heard since entering Jewry, and especially of the words of the Galilean Healer in the house of Bartholomew, and I strove to grasp their deeper meaning in relation to my profession and the medical mission of which I was a part.

Of course I had little faith in the medical science of the Healer—if science it could be called—and I was wholly out of sympathy with any therapy and method of absent treatment of the sick. But I struggled to account for Chuza's simple faith in the power of the Galilean to heal the sick boy; moreover, I marveled at the naïve belief the Healer possessed in which he calmly linked himself with the Deity and the realm of the miraculous. In nothing did Jesus of Nazareth betray the slightest awareness of science: the achievement of the Greek and the Roman world in the realms of medical science was a closed book to him. And natural law—so I was bound to infer—was to him something to be transcended by spiritual law, or perhaps nothing more than the shadow of spiritual law. True, in this he approximated Plato, but I believe the Galilean was unconscious of such approximation. Perhaps he had never heard of the eminent Greek thinker, much less of Hippocrates, founder of Greek medical science, from whom the Romans had borrowed so much. But the Semitic world, from which the Healer sprang, had borrowed little or nothing from this science, though more than four centuries had passed since it was born. Instead, the world of Jewry, medical science considered, was almost as primitive as in the days of the prophets. Hellenic influence, in the realm of the healing art, had left the masses untouched.

Thus, back and forth through my brain shuttled many pictures, but, singular as it may have been, the chief one was of the Galilean Healer's face and I found myself wishing that I could, someday, persuade him to sit for a portrait.

When morning came and while Chuza and I were at breakfast, his mood was a study within itself. Not only was he calm, he was confident, and he ate the coarse food with relish. I felt that he was in for a severe shock when we reached Capernaum, but I tried to match his mood, although I think I failed.

It was not more than an hour after sunup when we drove out of Cana, waving our farewells to the Galilean Healer and his friends. They stood and watched us from a hilltop until we were lost to view. We drove leisurely, for the man who held the reins was in no hurry whatever. More and more did his manner baffle me, for he was a man of some education, of common sense, of a certain cultural background.

Doubtless his wife, through the happy years of their marriage, had schooled him in many things. Her own descent from the Maccabean princes of Judah, bestowing the best, intellectually and socially and culturally, enabled her to rank with any of the women of Jewry, and all of this must have been lavished upon the man she loved with a devotion that was beautiful to behold. So Chuza was no provincial type, nurturing superstition, and certainly not ignorant of the abyss between thaumaturgists and men of medical science. Still, here he was, serene and even happy, driving slowly toward—what?

Even as I asked myself the question I saw a courier galloping toward us from Nazareth. His horse was foaming and the rider excited. Leaping from his steed he dropped to one knee as Chuza drew quick rein. “Your son lives,” the man cried. “The fever has left him and he has taken food.”

But instead of asking questions the steward burst into loud praise of God, while I, almost amazed beyond words, managed to ask, “When did the fever leave him?”

“Yesterday,” the courier replied. “At the going down of the sun.”

## XII

“Of course I reject the theory that the son of Chuza was healed by the Galilean Healer at a distance of twenty miles, or twenty paces for that matter. Our own therapy finally got in its work on the boy, so if there is any credit to be given it shouldn’t go to a Jewish miracle-man who was shrewd enough not to come to Capernaum and pit his sorcery against medical science. And more than this, I am certain that he was nimble enough in his wit to know that the treatment we gave Chuza’s son probably would break up the fever, and by pretending to give the boy absent treatment the Healer could claim to have effected the cure.”

The tones of the Emperor’s physician were irritable as he strode up and down the arcade of the Inn of the Sea near the close of our first sharp controversy, which took place shortly after Herod’s steward and I returned to Capernaum and found his son rapidly recovering.

“I cannot bring myself to believe that the Galilean Healer is as intellectually dishonest as you charge,” I said, as my colleague concluded his diatribe and dropped into a chair. “But I am willing to admit that your redoubled efforts over the sick boy, after we started for Cana, probably produced the desired results.”

“I seek no glory, medical or otherwise,” Sergius Cumanus said impatiently. “But I do not intend to concede healing powers to a fellow who need not get within

twenty miles of his patient. No, my dear Luke Galen,” he went on with conviction, “there is little to be commended in the art of the Healer except his striking ability to include himself, at most opportune times, in our own therapy.”

“I shall continue to live with an open mind toward all phenomena, whether in connection with the ignorant or the learned,” I informed him. “I so interpret my part of our mission.”

“Very well,” he returned gravely. “But do not expect me to live with an open mind toward sorcery and superstition. And I hope that I will never forget my medical training to the extent of believing that natural law was suspended in the case of Chuza’s son just because a Semitic miracle-monger invoked his God.”

“Please do not impute to me such thinking,” I implored him. “But has it ever occurred to you that the miraculous may be the fulfilling of natural law and not its suspension?” He made no reply and I continued. “And may it not be true that there are spiritual laws higher than natural laws and prior to them? And if this is true, may it not also follow that medical science is but the partial uncovering of spiritual laws—great laws which, if fully known, would supplement natural laws and all but perfect medical science?”

But to all this my colleague simply said, “There is no place for miracles in my thinking. I am wedded to my science and, if I may so speak, it is my religion. Can you allow for it as I do for your own, Luke Galen?”

“Of course,” I replied warmly. “But two things may destroy the Roman empire—great fevers and little faith.”

“What kind of faith?” he asked.

“Faith in the existence of God,” I emphasized, “which simply means faith in love that woos and watches over the world.”

He made no reply. I was left to my own thoughts and they were none too comforting, for I felt that he was in the grip of scientific materialism which, someday, might prove his undoing despite his brilliancy, or at least prevent him from attaining the highest goal.

But on one phase of the Cana incident we were fully agreed: Chuza and Joanna believed that the Galilean Healer had performed a wonderful miracle and we would not disillusion them. Yet, with charming tact, both parents were ready to concede that our own part in the boy’s recovery was indispensable. I think the Emperor’s physician felt on the outside, for he could not accommodate himself, as could I, to the naïve manner in which the steward and his wife accepted, without any mental reservation whatever, the supernatural agencies in the recovery of their child.

But there was another outcome to the Cana-Capernaum incident on which no

one had counted: the healing of the son of Herod's steward by Jesus of Nazareth brought the Healer to the attention of the wealthier classes and his fame spread into official households, no longer being confined to the common people of Galilee. Capernaum was stirred more than any other place, not only because it was the home of Chuza and Joanna but for the deeper reason that the Healer had come to this city to dwell.

From the lovely Joanna we learned of his presence in Capernaum and we were greatly interested. His mother came with him and they were in a house on the very outskirts of the city proper. Joanna sent them fruit, vegetables, milk and cheese. She informed us that other women—all of whom she said had been healed by him—likewise sent many gifts.

All this information affected my colleague and myself somewhat differently. He believed that these women were simply under the spell of the Healer's magnetic personality. Still, I was glad to have him concede that the Galilean's personality was unusual and he even admitted that the man's psychic powers were far above the normal. But he was willing to do one thing that pleased me: keep close to the Galilean and cultivate him and his friends whenever possible.

To do this, we decided one morning to stroll down to the beach near where the Healer and his mother were staying. There we found the fishing industry at full tide. The curving, pebbly beach was alive with fishermen working at their nets. Offshore, the boats were scudding in every direction, and at the end of the longest dock we saw a boat nearly twice as large as the others. In it were three men and as we drew near I recognized Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee. I conveyed this information to my colleague and said, "Shall we join them?"

He nodded agreement and we went out on the dock. They saw us approaching, and recognizing me, they climbed out of their boat and stood on the quay smiling a welcome. I introduced the Emperor's physician and they regarded him with deep interest.

"Where is Jesus of Nazareth today?" I inquired.

John turned and looked toward the city before replying and then he said, "He should be here shortly, for he is setting sail with us."

"To fish?" my colleague asked.

"No. To heal the sick and tell the good news."

"I would think your Master, as you call him, would teach you how to heal the sick and to cast out demons," Sergius Cumanus remarked in a way which indicated he might undertake to bring up the whole subject of healing.

But the gentle-mannered John removed all danger of any harsh argument by

saying, “The Master has tried to teach us how to heal the sick and cast out demons, but we are not apt pupils. For upon more than one occasion, when not in his company, some of us have tried to heal the sick and failed. We failed, so he told us, because we did not have faith, nor had we fasted and prayed enough.”

Faith and fasting and prayer—here was the simple technique, for both Jesus of Nazareth and his little company. I thought I understood, but my colleague either did not or professed ignorance of John’s meaning. “Faith in what?” he questioned.

John looked at him in surprise and answered, “Why, faith in God.”

“And what has fasting got to do with the power to heal?” was the next pointed query Sergius Cumanus put.

The inquiry confused John and it was evident that he never had thought it through. But I came to his rescue by saying, “I think the Galilean Healer holds that there is a preparation the physician must make as well as the patient. For example,” I went on, greatly to the mystification of the three fishermen, “a physician about to operate or to give medicine to a patient should be at his best. He should not be drunken, nor suffering from its effects. Nor should he be so stuffed with rich foods that he is drowsy. And so on, my dear Sergius,” I concluded.

Sergius Cumanus chuckled over my remarks and said, “Why not go on, my dear Luke, and give the Oath of Hippocrates and have done with it? Do you suppose the Healer ever read that oath?”

“Perhaps he didn’t need to read it,” I asserted. “Its ethics may inhere in the very nature of the Galilean.”

“Perhaps,” my colleague said absently, and turned away.

But my thoughts were on the journey the Healer and his friends were about to make, so I asked, “Where are you to go in the boat to heal the sick and tell the good news?”

“Down the coast to Magdala,” John replied.

Instantly the Emperor’s physician wheeled and said, “What sick are at Magdala?”

But before John could specify, his brother James broke into the conversation with a tart observation. “Magdala is filled with the sick and demon-possessed,” he declared. “No place in Galilee holds so many of the wretched.”

“Why is this?” my colleague was quick to ask.

“Because they are overworked in the mills and so poorly paid that they cannot buy the food they need for their bodies. Woe to the rich!” James said suddenly and in bitterness of spirit. “Their gold will canker.”

John remonstrated with his brother, but Simon Peter, speaking for the first time,

growled, “James speaks the truth. The rich of Tiberias, who own the mills of Magdala, are responsible for much sickness. God will cast them into hell and he will burn the world with a fire that cannot be quenched.”

The Emperor’s physician laughed and, speaking to me in the Latin tongue, he said, “There you have it: The world is going to burn like a cinder and we with it. What’s the use of a medical mission? Let’s go fishing and drink a lot of wine.”

But I thought of how interwoven were the sociological and the pathological problems of Jewry, and I wondered if Roman rule could last unless both were solved. “But haven’t we just heard something quite basic in the Empire’s difficulties?” I said to my colleague.

“Undoubtedly,” he replied. “But what can we do about it?”

“Why, I thought you came to this unhappy land to see if you couldn’t do something about it,” I reminded.

Then, in one of those sudden changes of front which made his nature the deepest of paradoxes, the Emperor’s physician replied, “You are right, Luke Galen. You are always right. I must not forget my task and remember only difficulties.”

“Yonder comes the Master,” John spoke up, breaking the silence that followed my companion’s admission.

We turned and saw the Galilean, accompanied by half a dozen other men, and on joining us he smiled a welcome but expressed no surprise over seeing me. But when I presented my colleague the Healer simply said, “We should never forget that the sick, not the well, need a physician, nor forget the saying, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’”

This was all he said to us. But I could see that, in one swift glance, the Galilean had seen to the soul of the Roman.

“He is a phrase-maker,” Sergius Cumanus remarked as the Healer and his friends got into the boat and made ready to push off.

“And apt at quoting, don’t you think?” I said.

He nodded and replied, “Quite so, Luke Galen. And in his two remarks he just about comprehended the whole duty of a physician. For the sick do need a physician, not the well; and the man of medical science must heal himself before he undertakes to heal others—especially in a task as great as the one we have undertaken,” he added solemnly.

“How would you like to go down to Magdala today?” I asked as the boat moved out from the quay and the occupants waved to us. “Chuzza will lend us horses.”

“The very thing,” he replied with animation. “And I sense adventure.”

“So do I,” I said, with my eyes on Zebedee’s craft.

We returned to the steward’s house, made known our wishes, and two beautiful pacing mares were placed at our disposal. Mounting, we rode off down the curving beach road which afforded a full view of the sea the entire distance to Magdala. As the day was clear we felt that we could keep in view the boat that held the man we were really following.

But we had not counted on the sudden squalls that, with little warning of approach, come and blot the waters of the Sea of Galilee, and one came just before we reached Magdala and we lost sight of Zebedee’s fishing boat that held the Healer and his friends. So we rode on into the town, found an inn with stables and established both ourselves and the horses. Then we engaged the innkeeper in conversation concerning the family of Mary Omri, the dancer. Like most innkeepers, he knew everyone in the community except the more itinerant of the workers in the dye mills and rug and shawl factories. And he knew the dancing girl.

“But her parents are dead,” he revealed. “Benjamin Omri was a shawl and rug merchant and fairly prosperous at one time. His wife was a Greek and a dancer when he married her,” he stated significantly. “He met her in Damascus, so they say, and brought her here, much to the scandal of his own family and the synagogue. He might have been ostracized by his parents and expelled from the faith except for the fact that the Greek woman became a proselyte of Judaism. But she clung to some of her Greek ways, taught her child dancing and educated her in things Grecian as well as Jewish, and Benjamin Omri never allowed the synagogue rulers to interfere. So Mary grew up reading the Psalms and learning Greek dancing, and then she lost her parents.”

“Then what happened?” the Emperor’s physician questioned, and I knew that his interest was deep.

“The usual thing,” the innkeeper said with a shrug. “A kinsman of Benjamin Omri got hold of the rug and shawl business and, two years later, when Mary was seventeen years old, she found herself practically homeless except for the charity of an old aunt. Then something came to pass that decided her future: she was summoned to join a number of dancers and musicians to perform before Herod Antipas at Tiberias, and there it was that Malchus, Captain of the Temple Guard at Jerusalem, saw her and persuaded her to place herself in his charge and dance professionally throughout Syria.”

“How long has she been a professional dancer?” my colleague asked.

“About two years,” the innkeeper said.

“Has she danced beyond Syria?”

“Yes. At Alexandria, Tarsus, and Salamis in the Island of Cyprus,” he replied knowingly. “And Malchus has made a great deal of money out of her dancing, though I suspect that about all Mary Omri has is fame. For she is said to be the leading dancer in all Rome’s colonies.” He checked himself in his free recital of the dancer’s career and then asked, “Have you seen her dance?”

“Yes,” Sergius Cumanus stated. “At Jerusalem recently.” Then he indulged in a little subterfuge. “You haven’t seen her lately, have you?”

“Oh, yes,” the innkeeper revealed. “She came to Magdala after the Passover and is now at the home of her aged aunt; Mary Omri supports this old woman with money she makes dancing. We hear she became ill while dancing at Jerusalem and Malchus consented for her to come here and rest.”

“Consented,” murmured my colleague. “How kind of Malchus. But where can we find her? We may be able to offer her a dancing engagement in Rome.”

“In Rome!” the innkeeper ejaculated. “And you would pay her well, of course.”

“Very well,” the Emperor’s physician returned, “if she consents to go. And if Malchus would consent to have her go,” he added with a sly look at me. “Now tell us where her aged aunt lives.”

He gave us careful directions, but as the noon hour had come we dined at the inn before setting forth. My colleague was not very hungry and seemed preoccupied. His mood surprised me, for he had been, up to this time, rather gay, which I knew was caused by the thought that he was to see the lovely dancer once more. But now he was silent and brooding, as if he had sensed some approaching disappointment. Or was his mind on another woman—one in far-off Capri, a woman who belonged, legally at least, to another man?

After the meal the innkeeper sent a porter with us to the home of Mary Omri’s aunt and there we saw the dancing girl under quite different auspices; for her aged kinswoman, a sister of Mary’s father, was a devout, modest person who manifested deep interest in our visit.

The truth about ourselves and our mission on behalf of the Roman government had to be revealed, but when Mary Omri learned that Sergius Cumanus was the Emperor’s physician and no ordinary medical man she grew shy and began to avoid his eyes, which were often upon her. And now came the most difficult part of our visit, for we had agreed to approach the subject of her spells of sickness and I, being older than my colleague and of her identical racial strains and religion, decided that I should broach the subject.

But no sooner did I begin than Mary Omri, giving her aunt a quick glance, rose and said, “I feel the need of the sun. I go each afternoon to the beach and it is my



hour. Perhaps the noble physicians will accompany me.” She looked from Sergius to me and back to him again and waited.

“Assuredly,” he cried, rising and bowing.

“Then wait until I change this smock for another garment,” she requested. And she vanished into an upper room.

“She has always been a strange child,” the old woman remarked after her niece left the room. “But this is because the evil spirits sometimes vex her. Ah,” she said with a deep sigh, “how true it is that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. None in all our family line was demon-possessed until my brother Benjamin took a Greek girl to wife and then his offspring, Mary, was punished for the sin of her father.”

The Emperor’s physician gave a little chuckle and said to me in the Latin tongue: “Ah, Luke Galen, I now know where you get your devils: from the mixed marriage of your own parents.”

I laughed with him but shook my head warningly, for the elderly woman was frowning and staring questioningly at us. Then Mary Omri came. She had changed the brown garment to one of sky blue and wore blue sandals—the first I had ever seen—and over her head she had flung a blue scarf, which I was sure she would remove when we got out of sight of her orthodox relative. So we left the house and sauntered down to the beach and then walked along the curving shore until we were all but out of sight of the town.

The squall had blown itself out and the sea was clear, but great combers were rolling in and at times the spray came to where we sat in the sand. While my colleague and the dancing girl talked, I gazed seaward at the bellying sails of several crafts and tried to make out the one that belonged to Zebedee. Finally I sighted it, for it was a large and distinctive boat. It was beating down the coast and I was sure it had been blown off its course. Suddenly I became aware that the Emperor’s physician was discussing Mary Omri’s illness, and I observed she was intent on every word.

“As I have told you before,” he was saying, “there is no such thing as demon-possession. All ideas of this kind originated in a dark and superstitious past. All diseases are but the natural results of physical being itself; sickness is as old as the human race and, as I just said, is natural; it is never supernaturally imposed, as punishment for sin, and never supernaturally healed. No, my dear Mary Omri, you have symptoms of being an epileptic and I believe Luke Galen and I—if you will become our patient—can do a great deal for you. But as for being possessed of seven devils—well, you must rid yourself of all such notions.”

And then it was I made the discovery that the dancing woman of Magdala was far above the intelligence she manifested on the two occasions, brief as they were, in which we had dealt with her. She was no longer the docile, consenting creature she seemed to be when under the influence of Malchus; instead, she was alert to all the Emperor's physician said and eager for more light on the problem of her own personality; and they, I believe, would have sat on the sands and conversed until the going down of the sun if it had not been for Zebedee's boat heading for the very portion of the beach where we had gathered.

"Look!" I exclaimed to my colleague. "The Galilean Healer and his friends have turned the prow of their boat this way and are going to land."

Sergius Cumanus and the girl ceased their conversation and stood up with me. We watched the craft ride the breakers and, skillfully handled, weave closer in. When still in fairly deep water, four of the crew went over the sides and sought to check its too great speed, for the heavy waves swished past its stern with power and it rolled dangerously. They daringly rode the final breaker and the boat shot up on the beach, careened, and its bottom gripped the sands. All tumbled out with the exception of the Healer.

"The man in the boat is a so-called miracle-worker of Nazareth," my colleague remarked to Mary Omri. "He probably believes—or pretends to believe—in demon-possession. Do you remember the incident just outside the walls of Jerusalem—the one of a so-called healer and a lame man?"

"Yes," she returned absently.

"Then the famous dancer of Magdala is about to meet the famous fakir of Nazareth. Are you interested?" he said.

She made no answer but stood and watched every movement of the Healer as he got out of the beached craft, and motioning the others to follow, came toward us. Mary Omri moved restlessly and I heard her breath coming in short gasps. Alarmed, I turned toward her just in time to see her clutch at her throat and stagger. But before I could reach out a hand to catch her she cried out as if in great pain and fell to the sand, moaning and beating her breast. The Emperor's physician—who had been absorbed in the approach of the Galilean Healer—wheeled and uttered an exclamation. Simultaneously, we dropped down beside her.

"Heavens, Luke Galen!" he ejaculated. "Here is another spasm. Do I bring them on?" His tones held irritation and I thought of the charge of Pilate's wife that the girl might simulate attacks.

But he seized her wildly beating hands and, calling over his shoulder to the approaching fishermen, he shouted, "Fetch drinking water from your boat if you

have any. This woman is ill.”

One started to obey but was checked summarily by the Healer, who quickened his pace and reached the spot just in time to hear Mary Omri cry, “Merciful Jehovah! The demons—they tear me—seven evil spirits torment me—Satan has my soul—I am tormented forever.” She lost consciousness again and all but writhed out of our hands as the Galilean suddenly bent over her.

“By the living God,” he cried. “I charge you that torment her to come out. Out, out!” His voice rose commandingly as the dancing girl opened her eyes. Then he gazed into them, spread his hands above her and lowered his voice—a beautiful, soothing voice—and said, “Daughter, be of good cheer and fear not. For those that tormented you will torment you no more forever. Rise up and follow me; it is the will of my Father.”

And I beheld a sight that was to become a living memory: The eyes of Mary Omri lost their strange fire; her bosom ceased its wild heaving; and a calmness, strangely like the sea that had suddenly calmed, seemed to possess her. She sat up, brushing away the hand of the Emperor’s physician as he started to assist her; then, slowly but steadily, she got to her feet and, as if we no longer existed, followed the Galilean and his band into Magdala.

The Emperor’s physician broke the long silence that followed the departure of the dancing girl. “I have learned one thing about this Healer that I suspected: he knows the fine art of touching the emotions of women,” he said.

“Did you learn nothing else from this singular incident?” I demanded in tones of irritation.

“What else was there to learn? Her spasm was over—it happened to be a brief one—by the time he spoke to her. She heard his voice as she was regaining consciousness and now she believes that he has actually driven seven devils out of her. But such is her background and faith. Was there ever a greater opportunist than this fellow?” my colleague asked in vexation of spirit.

“Perhaps we should take our cues from him,” I remarked in my flattest tone as we started back to the town for our horses.

“I may do so,” he said with some degree of irrelevancy, “for she is worth fighting for. But she changes masters with considerable ease,” he added a trifle cynically.

### XIII

We rode back to Capernaum in comparative silence that bordered dejection.

We were not only fatigued but chagrined, for the incident that took place on the beach at Magdala left us in eclipse: at least so my colleague interpreted the outcome. I knew he felt himself to be in some kind of healing competition with the Galilean, who had scored heavily when Mary Omri left the Emperor's physician and followed him. Such thoughts must have been uppermost in my colleague's mind for, after a bath and change of garments, he came to me and said, "Why not test our skill on some of the diseased of this district without the timely intervention of an itinerant magician?"

"What do you suggest?" I asked as I stretched myself on a couch in the upper portion of the inn's arcade and looked out over the saffron-colored sea.

"You do the suggesting," he said, almost peevishly. "You know the country."

"All right. How about a journey across the water to the disease-infected district of the Gerasenes? Perhaps you would be interested in seeing some of the demoniacs, as the insane are called in this country."

"Nothing would be more interesting from a scientific point of view," he declared. "Shall we start tomorrow?"

"If possible," I replied. "But we should plan to be gone a week, perhaps two, and this means full preparation. I suggest we go by boat, taking camping equipment and two servants who are also good sailors. Chuza's own fine craft may be placed at our disposal, for he wishes to assist us in all things. Maybe he will let us have his own boatman as well as a servant."

"Maybe," the Emperor's physician echoed indifferently.

I knew, in spite of his interest, that he still had the dancing woman in mind, and I confess that I could get neither her nor the Healer out of my own thoughts. When I retired I lay and indulged myself freely in a review of the singular experiences my colleague and I had undergone within a few days. I had about concluded that the Galilean was no mere divinator with designs upon impressionable women; but just who he was and what he was I did not know. Still, with my penchant for tracing lineage, both family and national and racial, I was already formulating a plan to trace his antecedents. I had even thought of asking him to sit for a portrait, knowing that if he did so I would have full opportunity to learn a great many things about him. So here I was, as Lucius Vitellius once told me, thinking of writing family histories and painting portraits instead of practicing medicine. "But who hasn't the right to pursue hobbies?" I said to myself. And with such thoughts thronging my weary brain I fell asleep.

Morning found us active and eager and Chuza was co-operative in all things. He may not have thought our therapy benefited his child but he would be grateful forever

that our presence under his roof in the crisis contributed much to making contacts with the Galilean Healer. So his fine craft and a capable seaman were placed at our disposal, and in addition to these he secured a servant who once had lived in the Gerasa district and one who knew the limestone cliff country.

We set sail a little past noon, taking a southeasterly course in a choppy sea. We made the coast of the Gerasene country while the sun was still high and, running into a cove overshadowed by high irregular cliffs, anchored the boat and went ashore. Gloomy ravines extended in every direction and caverns yawned on either side of the narrow path that lifted from the beach to a tableland. On gaining this height we had a commanding view of the sea and we thought of pitching our tent and camping for the night when our guide, pointing to the face of the cliff just below us, indicated a large cave that we had not seen in our ascent.

“The cave would make good shelter, and we would be safer from wild animals and wilder men,” he said knowingly.

We could see that he was uneasy, but his suggestion was good, so we descended by another path, came to the entrance of the cave and looked in. There were the ashes of old campfires but no sight of any campers and we entered and took possession. There was abundant room for ourselves and the great amount of food we brought along; also, there were many nooks in which we could store luggage that held medicines and instruments.

We built a fire, the ravines containing many dead trees, and prepared the evening meal. Later, after the servants went to sleep in a recess of the cave, we sat before the fire and conversed; my companion became highly communicative. Finally he got round to the old Emperor and the society of Capri and neither picture was pleasant.

“Caesar is pleasure-loving and depraved,” Sergius Cumanus said, “but he keeps a tight rein on governmental affairs, even in the remotest province. For example, he is conversant with affairs in Jewry and, as a consequence, my father had no trouble to convince him of the necessity of some kind of mission like our own. In fact, Caesar will manage to keep in touch with our coming and going—through Vitellius, Pilate and Herod Antipas—and if anything happens not to his liking—” he paused and grinned—“well, I hope nothing will happen not to his liking.”

“There is no necessity of anything coming to pass in our work that will bring down the wrath of the Emperor,” I said. Then I stopped short and thought of the Galilean Healer; of his connection with the riot in the Temple at Jerusalem; of his family which, according to Chuza, was of the revolutionary party in Jewry. And the Emperor’s physician and I were already bound up, through certain experiences, with the Healer and his group. As if reading my thoughts, my colleague went on to say

that the old Emperor's system of espionage was flawless, reaching down to the least and up to the greatest in the realm.

But my companion surprised me when he suddenly returned to the moral conditions of Capri, for moralizing was not his forte. "Capri," he declared, "is a symbol of Roman society at the top and it is—to keep in the atmosphere of our profession—leprous. And here we are, Luke Galen, on a mission that has to do with physical maladies among those who are at the bottom." He paused and drew his cloak closer about him. When he again spoke I was amazed, for he said, "I am thinking of the Galilean Healer saying, 'Physician, heal yourself.'" He shifted his position restlessly. "Rome's moral diseases are far deeper and more foul than the physical afflictions of Jewry, and far more inimical to civilization."

I made no reply after he closed, hoping that he would say more; but he was not so inclined. So a silence fell between us and the fire burned low with diminishing shadows.

A wind rose and whistled from the sea, moaning up the ravines like the despairing wails of the demoniacs themselves; the waves ceaselessly pounded the sandy beach below and the ageless war between the sea and the sand—like the conflict of human wills—went on.

Finally, from my own brooding as I stared into the fire, I stole a glance at the Emperor's physician. He was nodding and I was about to suggest that we wrap ourselves in our shawls and lie down to slumber when there came the scream of a thing untamed—whether of beast or man I could not tell. But the sound cut through the night air, vibrating along the walls of the cliff, rising and falling as if a voice possessed wings, dying finally with a shuddering, metallic note.

My colleague lifted his head with a jerk, but made no remark, and back in the cave I could hear our servants, who had been aroused, whispering uneasily.

"It is one of the demented," I said. "He sees our fire and—which is characteristic of his kind—fears, but is drawn to it."

"Here he comes," Sergius whispered, getting to his feet.

I rose and stood beside him, listening intently, for I also heard the peculiar flap of a heavy, naked foot along the ledge pathway that led to our cave.

Then, with startling suddenness, a massive figure, almost naked, leaped into the firelight and shouted incoherently. Our servants, who had crept forward, cried fearfully and shrank back into the darkness of the cave. But Sergius Cumanus, lifting his hand in what appeared to be an odd salute, said, "Welcome to our shelter and food."

But the man's reply was enigmatic, for he asked, "Have you come to torment me

also?”

“No,” my companion returned quickly. “We torment none.”

“Then have you come to bind me and beat me? Are you men of Gerasa?”

“We have come to heal you,” I put in, “for we are physicians.”

“Do you have the roots and herbs and potions?” the man inquired.

Drawing hard on my knowledge of the beliefs of the demoniacs, I replied, “Yes, we have them, and even the magic draught from the fountains of far lands.”

My words acted like magic on the demented fellow, for, now unafraid of the fire, he came closer and cried, “Be quick and give it to me.”

“Sit down by the fire and I will get it for you,” I coaxed. And when he obeyed I hurried to our medicine case and secured some mandrake, a powerful potion that would deaden the man’s consciousness if he could be persuaded to take it.

“Here it is,” I told him as I returned to where he sat watching me with burning eyes. “Now open your mouth and drink it down and those that torment you will flee away.”

The fellow became as obedient as a child. He opened his mouth, threw back his shaggy head and, as I poured a double dose of the sedative into his throat, he gulped greedily. But he started to rise and I had other plans for him. I put out a hand and checked him, saying, “You must not move for an hour. You must give the evil spirits time to race far away; then you can conceal yourself and they cannot find you when the day returns.”

Again the massive lunatic became obedient and drawing his knees up under his chin, he clasped his hands across them and stared into the flames. I called to the servant to bring more wood and put it on the diminished fire and he did so, but in some trepidation.

In the increasing light we sat and studied the features of the insane man. Beneath the shaggy beard and mottled face and miry mouth was evidence of something better—nobler. For his forehead was high and the mouth, for all its sagging, was expressive. His eyes snapped like the sparks from the fagots as he glanced from the fire at us and back again.

“What is your name?” Sergius Cumanus asked.

“Legion,” he replied. “For we are many.” He lifted his head, listening intently. “I hear the cry of the nightbirds,” he hurried on restlessly. “The white flock will soon fly. It is almost the hour. See!” he cried as he leaped to his feet. “The broken moon sinks into the sea.”

We got up almost as quickly and blocked his way. “No, no!” I exclaimed. “Because the moon is broken the white flock cannot fly. You must sit by the fire and

wait for the sun. Sit down and I will give you another draught from the magic fountain.” And I held the phial before his eager eyes.

But it was with reluctance that he obeyed and I quickly administered another dose, though I was surprised that the first had not taken hold of him sooner. But soon the mandrake began to take effect and he grew quieter. In a series of questions, my colleague drew from him certain things that clarified the odd working of his mind.

“Many of the dead are within me,” he began as if speaking to himself. “In me are kings and counselors; soldiers and merchants and priests. And in me is Satan and a legion of devils. They war in my heart, fighting out the unfinished battles of the ages.”

We both were amazed at the lunatic’s fine phrasing and we sat almost breathless, hoping that he would say more. He did, for he continued in the same strain.

“I stand between these raging armies; my body receives the arrows of all; their wars have no end and so my torments are everlasting.” His voice faltered and he began to nod; the shaggy head drooped lower and, with a long shuddering sigh such as men give just before they expire, he slid to the floor of the cave and slept.

I covered him with a shawl and said to my colleague, “Shall we retire also? For this fellow will not awaken until after sunup.”

Instead of replying, the Emperor’s physician gazed moodily into the fire and when he did speak he gave no reply to my question. “I never heard words more weirdly beautiful,” he began, “nor have I ever observed one more obsessed. If we can detain this fellow for several days we may see him in moods of greater rationality. For the insane, at times, are clothed in their right mind, aren’t they?”

“Yes,” I returned. “One as demented as this fellow may have rational moments. For there is no temporary mental aberration about his case as, for example, that of Mary Omri.”

“I was thinking of her,” the Emperor’s physician admitted frankly. “Hers is an aberration that rises out of the shock of epilepsy while this fellow may be the victim of a head blow or some hereditary affliction that has driven away his memory and scattered his wits. I would not be surprised if he was once an educated man.”

“Why?” I echoed in some surprise. “What leads you to think that?”

“His beauty of speech,” my companion replied thoughtfully. “Once I handled a case that reminds me very much of this man. My patient had been one of the finest intellects in Rome and when his loss of memory degenerated him to a most pitiable specimen there were times when his speech, like the speech of this man, revealed his antecedents. Consequently, I shall not be surprised—provided we are able to assist this fellow back to rationality—if he turns out to be well born.”



I made no rejoinder to his learned observation, for I was certain that his grasp of the subject was greater than my own, and I was willing to sit and listen. But he was disinclined to say more and again I suggested that we sleep; this time he consented. We wrapped ourselves in our shawls and lay down on either side of the slumbering lunatic.

In the days that followed we gave our undivided attention to the man we came to call Legion, managing to keep him with us by drugging him almost every day. Through kindness and food and wine we lessened his fear of us and of the unnamed forces that seemed to control him.

Deferring to my colleague's own experience in the treatment of the insane, and eager to note the outcome of certain remedies that had been used with striking success by his illustrious father, I became, in those days, more of an observer than a physician. But the insane patient's reactions to the medicines given were rather negative aside from the powerful drugs that induced slumber. Of course I knew that the time element was important in an affliction as deep-seated as this one and I practiced the utmost patience toward my colleague's experiment. But it was at the end of a full week's effort that Sergius Cumanus was ready to admit that nothing he had done had cleared any portion of the cloud from the man's mind.

"I am afraid the fellow's mental state is darker than before," he stated gloomily.

"What makes you think so?" I questioned.

"Because he doesn't even watch the flight of the birds and is less afraid of the water. I persuaded him yesterday, while you slept, to go down to the beach with me. He consented readily, nor did he say that he was afraid of the evil spirits in the sea."

"Perhaps this is a good omen," I contended. "At least we might persuade him to bathe and sun himself."

"An excellent suggestion," my companion declared. "And one that may prove therapeutic. Did you ever see a filthier human being?"

We prevailed upon the lunatic to plunge into the sea with us and then we lay down on the sands in the sun. Day after day we repeated this routine and I thought I noted improvement in Legion's condition. Then, one evening while he slept under the influence of the drug we usually gave him, I suggested something to my colleague that had been in my mind from the first—a religious experiment. He was surprised but gave his consent and said, "I will assist you as far as one can who is skeptical about religious experiments."

We erected a crude stone altar and Chuza's boatmen, skillful in the use of the bow, slew a mourning dove, numerous on the cliffs about us. I dressed it and after making ready for the sacrificial ceremony, placed it on the altar-bed of fagots while

Legion still slept.

“I don’t expect you to share my worship,” I remarked to Sergius Cumanus. “For the act is far more than an experiment with me. As a devout Jew I shall seek to worship in spirit and in truth. Besides, I cannot forget that the science of medicine had its origin in part at the altars of the primitive worshipers. They made their burnt offerings and cried for supernatural aid. They may not have received it—though I believe they did—but in the act they took the first steps out of animism in the long ascent toward faith in higher powers.”

The Emperor’s physician listened in silence and then surprised me by saying, “Luke Galen, irrespective of what I believe or do not believe, I know that you are sincere in your religious thoughts and practice. Moreover, you may possess a technique in the practice of your profession that is far in advance of my own. I am beginning to think you do.”

I thanked him and then we talked of other things.

It was near the noon hour before Legion awoke and when he beheld the completed altar I noted that he was interested. My colleague, quick to observe all the fellow’s symptoms and reactions, whispered: “The altar stirs something imbedded in his memory. This is going to be highly interesting and perhaps far more illuminating than an old dogmatic skeptic like myself could ever imagine.”

I nodded and lighted the fagots and as the smoke ascended in a straight line—for there was no wind—I turned and spoke to the lunatic. “Behold!” I cried. “The smoke of our offering rises straight to Jehovah. He looks down and sees us and will hear us when we call. Come, let us bow down before our Maker, for he is good and his mercy endures forever.”

I sank to my knees before the altar and the Emperor’s physician, greatly to my surprise, did likewise. Then, as if being aroused from something more than a drugged sleep, Legion dropped to his knees beside us and crossed his hands over his hairy chest as I began to chant one of the oldest hymns of the Jewish faith:

O Lord, rebuke me not in anger,  
neither chasten me in hot displeasure;  
but have mercy upon me and heal me,  
for my bones are vexed;  
return, O Lord, and deliver my soul;  
and drive from me all the spirits  
that work evil in my flesh.

At the conclusion of the hymn of supplication the Emperor’s physician asked me

if I was repeating a ritual prayer from one of the sacred books of the Jews or speaking extemporaneously. “For,” said he, “the words were truly beautiful and the philosophy of undoubted value to anyone distressed by things beyond his control and who believes that there are higher powers that will come to his aid.”

I hastened to assure him that the words were from the devotional literature of Judaism, though I thanked him for believing that they might have been original with me.

“May it not be that the writers of olden times—the priest-physicians—understood the psychic value of prayer, conjoined with medical treatment, in the healing of disease?” I suggested.

But my colleague—who often was strangely silent in the face of my interrogations—did not reply but stood and scrutinized Legion, who had risen and was standing quietly with his eyes still fixed upon the ascending altar smoke.

The wild man of the Gerasene country had, to all appearances, become tame. What were the factors that had contributed to the change? Had the medicines and the baths and the sun’s rays upon his flesh been basic? Had the simple altar service been of additional therapeutic value? It was my own conviction, at least, that the altar and the burnt offering and the ritual hymn had opened a window in this man’s soul—one long closed—and light and healing entered. But would it last? I now made up my mind to test the change in Legion by refraining from giving him the customary sleeping potion an hour before sunset. To the interest and delight of both my colleague and myself, the big fellow partook quietly of the evening meal and, within an hour, was sleeping soundly. True, he had spoken nothing rational since the altar service, nor had he spoken irrationally. He had not spoken at all, but we noted that he gazed a great while at the reddening sea as if his sense and appreciation of beauty had returned.

It was that night we decided, as we sat beside the cave fire, to broaden the scope of our research and experiments in the limestone country and seek others who were demented. So, leaving Legion in the custody of our servants—who no longer feared him—we went down into a narrow valley of tombs, a mile from our camp, and were shocked by what we beheld.

We saw, literally, the living among the dead: lunatics who dwelt in the tombs, and many of these sepulchers were foul with odors. Some of the wretched creatures, on seeing us, crept back into the deeper darkness of these burying places that were nothing more than holes dug into the cliffs; sometimes they darted from them and, in ragged bands, ran away screaming at the top of their voices. We knew that neither the civil nor the religious authorities of the land cared for these benighted creatures

who had been herded into the almost inaccessible hills and left to perish. There were scores of them, both men and women, and there were children—demented offspring of the demented; but why they lived and how they lived was beyond us.

On our return to the cave, feeling our helplessness to cope with the situation, and quite uncertain as to any immediate course we could pursue in which we might interest the authorities of Gerasa in a more humane policy toward this colony of lunatics within four miles of the town, we decided to return to Capernaum, taking Legion with us, and prepare a detailed report for the authorities in Rome, describing the deplorable conditions we had found and recommending measures for their improvement. Legion had become more restless and less susceptible to our renewed treatments. One night when the moon rose above the cliffs and a flock of birds—strangely night flying—winged past crying eerily, he leaped to his feet and sped down the cliff path, shouting wildly that the “white flock” was calling.

We gave chase but the wild fellow, leaping from crag to crag, raced along the edge of the deepest ravine without a single slip of foot. Once he paused beside a sharp boulder and, looking back at us, screamed his old fear and defiance and vanished, leaving only the echo of his cry reverberating up the limestone canyons.

We returned to the cave, and being weary, sat down in gloomy silence, for we both felt the sting of defeat. Moreover, the enormity of our task had dawned upon us. So we conversed far into the night, speaking of the little we had done over against the much that we would have to do if we ever hoped to return a report to the Senate and the Emperor.

Suddenly the Emperor’s physician clenched his fist and, as if about to strike an unseen foe, cursed a government that had, through two full generations of dominance in Syria and Jewry, been so blind to a vassal people’s plight. His words were burning and bitter and I had a new revelation of the real heart of the man—one that he had kept concealed—and I loved him for what I now knew. For, after all, whether he held that life and the universe were accidents in time and space or whether he was among the most devout, I knew that nature had endowed him not only with a superior mind but with a great heart that could be opened to all the suffering of life.

## XIV

When daylight came we made diligent search for Legion, but the caverns concealed him as if he did not exist at all; then we knew that we had failed in our first experiment with one of the so-called demon-possessed. So we returned to the cave

and prepared to break camp. Gathering storm clouds caused us to hesitate about sailing; gulls were racing in before a whistling wind that churned the sea into foam and the waves were leaping to astonishing heights against the limestone cliffs.

“This is going to be a bad one,” my colleague remarked as we stood at the cave’s entrance and looked off toward Capernaum.

Far out—too far for safety—we saw a boat, but we could not tell in which direction it was going. We called our boatmen and when they sighted the craft they shook their heads. One pointed to a line of rocks jutting into the sea from the shore a quarter-mile north of where we stood. “The boat blows that way,” he said.

We understood perfectly and the Emperor’s physician suggested that we go down to our own craft, riding securely in the cove, and make ready for any emergency. “The risk is great, but we should do all within our power to aid them if their boat strikes yonder reef,” he said. His anxiety over the occupants of an unknown craft was one of the sudden and singular contradictions in his nature.

We descended to the cove, boarded our stanch craft, short-hauled the mainsail and otherwise made ready to battle the sea, though we knew the storm’s violence must abate before we could leave the cove without great risk of being capsized. And the force of the wind did subside, almost suddenly, as it does on this inland sea, and there were faint signs of clearing; then the storm-tossed boat came into full view.

“Her mast is down!” Chuza’s skilled boatman cried. “She’s going on the rocks.”

The battered craft, with broken mast and shredded sails, was in the grip of wind and tide and was driving straight to her doom.

“All hands into the water!” the Emperor’s physician shouted, and he was the first overboard.

We quickly followed and pushed our craft toward the open sea, clambered in as it nosed the first strong swell and began our battle with the storm. Fortunately for us it was steadily abating, though the waves seemed to mount as high as ever. Scarcely had we pointed up the coast toward the line of rocks when our chief boatman cried, “Zebedee’s big boat!”

Startled, my colleague and I strained our eyes to see. He was the first to speak. “There may be women aboard, Luke Galen,” he said. And I knew whom he had in mind, but I gave him no answer, for my eyes were on the helpless craft heaving toward the jagged reef. And then she struck. Horrified, we could do no more at the moment than cling to our own rolling boat and watch.

“She’s wedged between two big rocks,” my colleague shouted, “and is going to break up.”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the wind died completely and a

strange calm came to the sea—so much so that our boat all but ceased its forward motion. We hurriedly let out more sail, for we were yet more than a hundred yards from the reef. Suddenly the sun broke through the clouds and a shaft of gold struck down on the deck of the smitten ship, bringing its crew into clear relief, and in their midst, clinging to the broken mast, were two women. One of them had a head of flaming hair.

“Mary Omri!” the Emperor’s physician cried anxiously. And he seemed about to leap into the sea and swim toward her.

“Wait!” I exclaimed. “They are in no immediate danger. Their ship is wedged firmly and, in this calm, will not break up for hours. We will stand by and take them off with no great difficulty.”

And we did, for the water was not more than five feet deep with the sea as calm as our cove. We let our own boat rock gently to a position within a stone’s throw of them and their rescue was fairly simple.

They all were drenched, but none was excited; indeed, they were as calm as the sea all about us, but overjoyed to board our craft, and their expressions of gratitude were warm and sincere.

“Where were you bound for when the storm struck?” the Emperor’s physician inquired of Simon Peter as he wrapped his cloak around Mary Omri while I performed a similar task for the Healer’s mother, for she was the other woman.

“To this very coast,” Simon Peter answered, staring at the limestone cliffs as our boat moved slowly in toward the cove.

“On a mission to heal the sick and cast out demons,” the saintly-looking John added as he stood wringing the water out of his garments.

My colleague frowned and gave me a knowing look and it was not difficult to read his thoughts. Had Chuza told the Galilean and his friends of the very place to which we had sailed and had they deliberately followed us? But nothing more was said on the subject, for the Healer stood near, though he appeared indifferent to all that was being said or done. Finally he and his mother retired to the stern of the boat and his friends went forward to its prow, leaving my colleague and me alone with Mary Omri.

“All of you would have been drowned if the storm had not abated and the sea become calm,” Sergius Cumanus said to the girl. “For if it had continued to rage after your craft struck I do not believe we would have been able to reach you.”

“We were in no danger after the boat struck the reef,” she declared, “for the Master spoke to the wind and the waves and they ceased.”

I shall never forget the look that came to my colleague’s face—a look of

astonishment mingled with fear; and as he fixed his alert eyes on the girl's unperturbed face I knew that he was troubled. And I felt he was ready to say, "You are ill again, Mary Omri." But whatever may have been in his thoughts, he made no comment. I left them and never knew the end of their conversation.

Our boat moved into the cove and the Healer's friends, hardy fishermen, leaped out and pushed its prow upon the sands and we assisted the women ashore. The sky had become overcast again and another spring storm was sweeping out of the southwest.

"We have shelter and food a little way up this cliff," I told the Galilean Healer, "and we wish to share it with you and your friends."

He smiled in his incomparable manner, bowed, and, without waiting for anyone to guide him, began the ascent of the faint path that led to the cave. We followed as if we were the guests and he the host. Our fire was still burning; the servants piled on more fagots and the party from the wrecked ship of Zebedee stood round and dried their garments.

When we started to prepare food both Mary Omri and the Healer's mother insisted on helping. Soon we spread a meal of roast doves, killed by our servants that very morning, barley loaves and cheese, olives, dates, figs and honey; and there was plenty of good wine. All ate ravenously and Simon Peter became voluble and we laughed at his jests.

But the Healer had little to say and as the night came on, bringing a misty rain and intense darkness over the sea, he withdrew into the depths of a mood which could have been either melancholy or boredom. He seemed far away from his rather garrulous friends, even from his mother who sat with dark eyes of expectancy upon him as if awaiting a command. I was where I could study her eyes; they were like her son's, color and luminosity considered, but they did not mirror eternity as did his own. But they had great depths—depths that might conceal great and intimate experiences which most women never reveal to those they love most.

The fire and the food caused several to doze, though Mary Omri and the Emperor's physician were not among them; instead, they sat side by side on the floor of the cave and conversed in low tones; they must have been disputing something at times, for the girl would shake her head emphatically, and the flame of her hair was almost as deep as the fire itself. Then her laughter, subdued like the ripple of a brook, told me that there was another side to their conversation.

But we all were startled by a wild cry that broke suddenly beyond the entrance of the cave. The nodding fishermen awoke with exclamations of fright and more than one knife flashed in the light of the fire as they scrambled to their feet. They stood

tense as if expecting an attack. But I saw that the Healer had not so much as shifted his position.

“The lunatic,” my colleague said to me in low tones. I nodded and moved toward the cave’s exit when the wild cry came again, instantly followed by the shrill and demanding voice of the demoniac who had escaped us.

“What have we to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High?” came the startling question as the insane fellow strode from the shadows into the light of the fire.

The friends of the Healer recoiled before the massive, wild-looking man, but the Galilean, rising quietly, simply said, “What is your name?” It was the same question the Emperor’s physician had put to him when we first saw him, and his reply was the same.

“Legion,” he answered. “For we are many.”

“Then let the many depart from you,” the Galilean commanded. His voice rose in compelling majesty. “Away, spirits of darkness! Depart from Legion and enter into the swine. Out, out!” And now the Emperor’s physician and I, as men of science, were alert to every phenomenon.

For one breathless moment the massive body of the lunatic twisted fearfully and he clutched at his breast as if in terrible pain; then the muscles of his arms and legs relaxed; the fires of insanity seemed to burn themselves out in his eyes and, giving a deep sigh, he began to look about the cave in obvious amazement.

“What place is this?” he exclaimed.

We waited for the reply of the Healer, but he simply turned and resumed his seat and the women quickly sat down beside him again.

“Where am I and who are you?” came a second question from the shaggy fellow as his eyes traveled from face to face.

“You are among friends,” the Emperor’s physician suddenly spoke up. “Don’t you remember me?”

The man who called himself Legion shook his head slowly, replying, “I never saw you before. I never saw any of these people before. I never saw this cave before. In what direction is Bethsaida, my home? And how came I to this place?”

My colleague looked at me and he seemed as puzzled as Legion. I took up the questioning.

“What is your real name?” I interrogated.

“Benjamin,” the man replied without hesitation.

“But you have told us it is Legion.”

“Legion,” the fellow echoed in perplexity. “Why, I never heard, the name.”

Then my colleague asked, “Are you demon-possessed?”



“What!” the man ejaculated. “Benjamin, chief of the olive growers of Bethsaida, possessed of evil spirits? What a question!”

“Well,” Sergius Cumanus insisted, “you have been demented, and physicians have been treating you for many days.”

“Demented,” the man echoed. “Why, fellow, you are demented yourself.”

In the laughter that followed, the Emperor’s physician scowled momentarily and then joined in.

Benjamin cast a doubtful look about him at the wild countryside, and slowly the realization grew in his countenance that my colleague must be speaking the truth. “Then it was not a dream . . .” he murmured as if to himself. He sat silently, contemplating first one of us, then another, trying to recall the events of the days just past. Now and then he drew his hand across his brow as if to brush away a veil of obscurity. But when wine was passed to him, he came out of his reverie, joined in the laughter and conversation, and there was greater ease among all. When bedtime came my colleague and I gave up our pallets to Mary Omri and the Healer’s mother, and the others wrapped themselves in their cloaks and stretched out on the cave’s floor.

Morning brought certain problems my colleague and I were anxious to solve and chief among them was: What did the Healer and his friends propose to do? For their boat was wrecked and our own would not hold both groups. It was while we were at breakfast—fish that our servants caught at dawn in the cove—that we raised the subject.

“We are returning to Capernaum today,” I said, addressing the Healer, “and we have room in our boat for the two women and yourself. Will you return with us?”

He shook his head and told us that he would walk the shore line of the sea, visiting other towns en route to Capernaum—Bethsaida-Julias, Gerasa and Chorazin. And when the healed lunatic heard the name of his home city he cried, “I will walk with you, and you shall be guests in my house, and my people will welcome you and give you shelter and food as long as you wish to sojourn there. For you have driven evil spirits out of me and brought me peace.”

I glanced at the Emperor’s physician; a cynical smile hovered round his lips and I knew he would debate with me and accuse the Healer of being the greatest opportunist in the world, pretending to heal a lunatic whom we, through our medical science, already had started on the road to recovery.

It was less than an hour after breakfast when the Galilean led his party down to the curving shores of the sea and turned northward, but not before the Emperor’s physician made a final effort to get Mary Omri to return to Capernaum in our boat.

Although they conversed out of the hearing of all of us, I knew what he was attempting to do, and the almost constant shaking of her red head—sometimes with great emphasis—revealed to me that my colleague was failing. So we stood and watched the Healer and his friends—and Benjamin of Bethsaida-Julias—as they, unhurried, went up the beach. We watched until the flaming hair of the former dancing woman of Magdala faded slowly like a dying fire.

“I once heard my father say,” my companion began as we mounted toward the cave, “that high-strung women, ostensibly healed by thaumaturgists, follow them out of fear.”

“Fear of what?” I inquired.

“Fear that their old maladies may return. Have you ever heard of this theory?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “Nor is there anything very singular about it. All physicians know that patients afflicted with nervous disorders return to them time and again, and after all symptoms of their illness have passed.”

“I am not at all certain that Mary Omri follows the fakir from Nazareth because she is afraid of a return of her old spells,” he went on to say. He spoke haltingly as if he wished me to interject confirming ideas, but I kept silent. “It is now clear that she prefers his company to—to our own,” he resumed.

Thinking that here was a good opportunity to drive the woman out of his head as well as to focus his attention on the importance of our own mission, I said, “Certainly she does. But why not? She believes the Healer cured her, and here is one case in which we can lay no claims to our own therapy, for our ministrations, at best, were only superficial.”

He turned on me angrily, crying, “Surely you don’t believe that this Jewish sorcerer has permanently cured Mary Omri of congenital epilepsy. Or do you?” His tones were coldly suspicious.

I was slow to reply, for my confused brain was filled with conflicting thoughts, nor did I answer him until we reached the entrance of the cave and stood looking out over the sea, now shimmering in the morning sun. Then I said, “Something has been shaping itself in my mind for days, Sergius Cumanus. Did you ever hear of the Jewish dream of Messiah?” He shook his head, nor did his thoughts seem to be on what I was saying. “It is an old, old dream of the coming of a rare personality who, through supernatural agencies, will confuse the foes of the Jewish people and bring in the Kingdom of God,” I resumed. “In this kingdom, in contradistinction to all others, there is to be neither poverty nor disease—twin evils of older kingdoms among men.”

“An iridescent dream,” he put in with emphasis. “Unless science, not the so-called supernatural, brings it to pass,” he added characteristically.

Paying no attention to his cynical interruption, I kept to my theme, saying, “In one of the sacred books of the Jews—that of the prophet Isaiah—there is a pen-portrait of this gifted person—of his miraculous work, of his message of hope, of his humility of spirit and tenderness.” I paused to let my words sink in and then, swiftly, I concluded thus: “In a word, the Jewish Messiah would have characteristics not unlike the Galilean Healer.”

My colleague emitted a short laugh. “So the Nazareth fakir has become, in your estimation, the realization of the foolish dreaming of the Jews,” he retorted. “Such a concept, Luke Galen, is not worthy of your fine intellect.”

He was aroused but I stood my ground, for I felt that a most critical hour had arrived in our relationship. “What if the one you insist is a fakir should prove to be all, and more, than the prediction of Jewish literature?” I questioned. “What then?” But my query did not erase the look of cold contempt stamped on this Roman’s face, so I took another direction. “Surely, you are not unacquainted with the same concept that appears in the poetry of one of your own race—the gifted Vergil. For his dream of one who should come—one he called the Golden Son—is not unlike the Jewish dream of Messiah. Only great poets like Isaiah, the Semitic, and Vergil, the Roman, could envision such a person.”

“What has poetry got to do with life,” he retorted bitterly, “with a civilization diseased and decaying? And what has a Jewish sorcerer in common with medical science at grips with maladies that may destroy society?”

“Jesus of Nazareth is far more than a sorcerer,” I argued. “And you, in your better moods, will admit it. What if he does have the power to cast out the demon of insanity, or to cause people to believe they are healed, or to bring hope to the hopeless of this sad land—would you then admit that he is more than a mere divinator?”

“If, if!” he cried impatiently. “All I know is that at this hour I believe the man to be little more than a clever opportunist whose ability to influence women is his chief characteristic.”

“So you persist in dragging the dancing woman into everything you say,” I charged, now thoroughly angered.

“Why not?” he demanded. “Isn’t she central in our experiences? Let’s reconsider her case. She is a congenital epileptic; she was reared in an atmosphere of superstition; she is the child of a mixed marriage; and she, according to Jewish thought, was punished because her father, a devout Jew, married a heathen Greek.

So she lived under this curse until another Jew—the fakir of Nazareth—came along, forgave her the sin of being born from the womb of a Grecian woman, and cast out seven devils who had tormented her all her life. What a notion! What ignorance and superstition! And you, Luke Galen—you who sat at the feet of my father and learned medical science—are asking me to surrender my mind to all this darkness of the dead centuries.”

“I am not asking you to surrender your mind to anything,” I replied in gentler tones. For the mentioning of his father’s name stirred precious memories. I must not quarrel with the son of my old teacher. “There is only one thing I do ask,” I hurried on to say—“that you live with an open mind toward all phenomena. Your father would.”

He gave me a startled look and his manner changed. “Yes, he would,” he said softly. “And I shall. Pay no more attention to my rude ways. I am a Roman, you know.”

## XV

Disquieting news awaited us on our return to Capernaum, for while dining with Chuza and Joanna we were told that Malchus had been in Galilee during our absence, in secret council with the Herodians, the dominant political party in the realm of Herod Antipas.

“Malchus plots mischief, you may be sure of that,” Chuza said.

“Has he troubled Mary Omri?” the Emperor’s physician was quick to inquire.

It was Joanna who made reply, saying, “He has talked with her, seeking to persuade her to return to her old life of dancing. But she refused and he may have threatened her, though she made no admission of it.”

“If he bothers her I will kill him,” my colleague declared rashly.

“Which would end our mission and probably your own life,” I reminded him in tones meant to be sarcastic. And noting that Chuza seemed troubled about other things I pressed him for an explanation.

“I fear for the Galilean Healer,” he admitted at length.

“Do you mean that Malchus might assassinate him?” I asked.

The steward shook his head. “The Healer may become involved with the rulers, both religious and political,” he stated.

“Why? What has he done?” I questioned. And then I thought of the incident in the Temple—the attack on the money-changers.

But Chuza's reply touched another phase of the subject. "The Galilean has become too popular with the multitudes," he explained. "His power with the common people is his power to heal their diseases. Certain officials in Galilee are already complaining that he stirs the multitudes. I fear their next complaint will be that he foments rebellion against Caesar. Matthew Levi, the chief tax-gatherer of the Capernaum district, with offices down on the quay near the fishing establishment of Zebedee and his sons, hinted to me the other day that Jesus of Nazareth had not paid the tribute money. This tax collector, a Jew and the most hated of all Rome's hirelings in Galilee, is a friend of Malchus," he concluded significantly.

The Emperor's physician, quick to analyze all that Chuza revealed, now spoke contemptuously of the religious and the political authorities in Jewry. "For if men like Malchus and Matthew Levi can represent the High Priest and the procurators and the tetrarchs, then to what depths have religion and the State sunk in Rome's Syrian colonies!" He glared at me for some reason and went on. "The atmosphere of Capri may become less poisonous than that of Jewry, and I am beginning to think that I—if I were religious at all—would rather engage in the Dionysian orgies than pray in the Temple at Jerusalem."

Here was commendable frankness if nothing more; but I felt constrained to reply to his strictures for they may have been directed at the Jewish people as a whole. So I said, "Why indict a whole race and a venerable priesthood because of the sins of two or three religious rulers? Take the present High Priest for example: your own nation elevated him to this highest office in Judaism even as Rome deposed his father-in-law, the aged Annas. Now Annas sometimes refused to do the bidding of Caesar, but Joseph Caiaphas—never! He has betrayed his own people and for this reason the Galilean Healer struck the backs of the money-changers with a whip."

"Oh," my colleague interrupted impatiently, "I applaud the Healer for that."

"You should," I declared, "for it was his way of cleansing the Temple that even a Roman might pray there instead of reveling in Dionysian orgies."

He laughed good-naturedly but was obstinate enough to give the conversation an unfortunate turn, for he said, "But you must not ask me to believe in the Healer's art just because he caused a riot in the Temple at Jerusalem."

It was the first time that this subject had been broached in the presence of Chuza and Joanna since the recovery of their little son and I knew that my colleague had gone out of his way to introduce it. For he felt keenly the simple belief of the parents that the Healer—not medical science—had cured their child.

It was tactless of him for, with fine discretion, they had avoided any reference to their child's recovery which might reflect on the medical skill of the Emperor's

physician. But now the mother of the boy accepted my colleague's challenge—it amounted to that—and said, "What if your medical training leaves no room in your heart for the slightest belief in the healing power of Jesus of Nazareth—should you think of him, or speak of him, as a charlatan?"

"Certainly, if I think he is one," Sergius Cumanus replied. "Would you have me less honest intellectually, fair woman?"

"I would have you honest enough to admit your reasons for threatening to kill a man over a woman who was healed of a great affliction by Jesus of Nazareth," she thrust back. "How can you think of the Galilean Healer as a mere sorcerer after he brought health and happiness to Mary Omri?" she demanded.

My colleague flushed deeply, though his reply was calm and filled with perfect assurance. "Because an impressionable woman chooses to follow a thaumaturgist who has some great influence over her is no reason for me to believe she is cured of the epilepsy that afflicts her," he argued. "So far as I know she may have had half a dozen attacks since that day on the beach at Magdala when she, like quite a few other women, began to follow him up and down the land. May I state my case from another point of view?"

"Certainly, noble physician," Joanna answered.

So my colleague became quite pedantic in manner and rejoinder, and I could not determine whether it was to mask his emotions or to inform Joanna, once and for all, that he rejected the Galilean Healer as a medical colleague. Lifting his glass of wine, he stared at its rich color instead of drinking it and said, "Lovely woman, the Persians, in the days when the Jews were captives in the Tigris-Euphrates country, believed that evil spirits—demons—entered human bodies and caused them to act abnormally. They had a divinity they called the 'Div of Concupiscence'—one who was responsible for most of the hysterical afflictions of women." He paused and asked Joanna if she were conversant with this portion of Persian history.

"No," she admitted. "But I would like to hear more about it if my people are involved in its history."

"They were," he stated emphatically, and I marveled at his grasp of the subject. For he went on to say, "The Jews, probably during their exile, adopted this divinity and called him Asmodeus. This adoption of a foreign god was quite natural if not inevitable, for the captive women of your race, probably harassed beyond endurance by bitter experiences with Persian men, became the victims of all forms of hallucinations. Here was the beginning—at the least from the standpoint of medical history—of beliefs concerning demon-possession that are now common in Jewry." Once more he paused, giving any of us opportunity to speak, but none cared to do

so.

“Now to return to the case of Mary Omri,” he resumed after he emptied his wineglass. “As my esteemed medical colleague knows, she is a congenital epileptic; but more than this—she was educated in the singular belief that, for her sins or the sins of her parents, she was possessed of seven demons. Living in such superstitious fears, combined with later harsh experiences as a professional dancer, she doubtless grew much worse, and at the time the Galilean Healer met her she was ripe for his magic formula. And that is all,” he concluded dogmatically.

“No,” she cried. “That is not all. I care nothing for the old beliefs about demonism and less for the divinity, Asmodeus, who is said to preside over the disorders of my sex. But I do happen to know that Mary Omri has not had any of her old spells since she became a member of the Healer’s household.”

The lovely Joanna ceased speaking and the dining room became silent, broken at last by a singular admission on the part of the Emperor’s physician. “I myself am possessed of an evil spirit, fair woman,” he said to Joanna, “the evil spirit of prejudice. And I fear most Romans have it. You must forgive me if I have been rude—all Romans are rude when crossed.”

“I think you are the finest Roman in the world, Sergius Cumanus,” Joanna cried warmly. “And Mary Omri thinks the same,” she added with a little laugh.

“Then with the two most beautiful women in Jewry in accord over a Roman, perhaps there is hope for me,” he said.

“Great hope,” she declared. And there was double meaning in what she said.

But before we started for our inn Chuza, accompanying us to the garden gate, quietly said, “I did not want to speak of it in the presence of my wife, but I am under suspicion from certain of the court of Herod Antipas at Tiberias. When he returns from Rome—he is now on the high seas—I may have trouble.”

“Why—what have you done?” I questioned.

“I have befriended Jesus of Nazareth and—the Emperor’s physician,” he answered.

“What is the meaning of all this?” I cried in alarm.

“It means that Malchus is plotting to destroy the Galilean for causing the riot in the Temple and the Emperor’s physician for spiriting Mary Omri out of Jerusalem.”

“Having a common enemy,” my colleague remarked, “the Galilean and I should be friends.”

“Having a common enemy, who may represent both the High priest and Herod Antipas,” I said, “you and the Galilean should get out of Jewry.”

The Emperor’s physician laughed contemptuously. “Not until I conclude my

mission and kill a certain Idumean,” he growled. And I knew he meant what he said.

Yet it was only a week later and immediately after the return of the Healer and his friends to Capernaum that the Emperor’s physician got his chance to kill Malchus.

On learning from Chuza that the Healer had returned and was occupying his house in Capernaum we lost no time in calling, for my colleague was eager to see Mary Omri and warn her against Malchus. But we found only the Healer’s mother, who told us that the younger woman had gone down the beach toward Magdala. So we left the house, passed the quay and a group of fishermen mending their nets, and went on down the shore line. We saw no one until we came to some rocks that marked the beginning of a reef; beyond them we sighted the redheaded girl and with her, much to our alarm and astonishment, was the huge-bodied Malchus.

My companion uttered an oath and was about to scramble across the line of boulders and make for where the pair sat on the sands when I seized him by the arm. “Wait,” I begged. “Something tells me that the meeting was not by appointment. That fellow has been spying on her from the moment she returned to Capernaum and has followed her.”

So we crouched behind the rocks and did a little spying of our own. While we could hear nothing they said, we saw that Malchus was making some emphatic plea. Suddenly Mary Omri sprang to her feet and started running up the beach. Malchus leaped up and ran after her, shouting and gesticulating, and with long strides he overtook her when she was within fifty yards of where we crouched.

But even as he laid hands on her, which brought a frightened cry, the Emperor’s physician leaped over the line of rocks and ran toward them, and as he ran he cried, “Jackal! Release her. I am going to kill you!” And out came his sword.

The girl’s joyful cry of recognition was drowned in a bellow from the Idumean. “So!” he screamed. “The fool Roman again.” He jerked out his own sword. “This is the hour,” he yelled.

Sergius Cumanus doffed his toga. “Yes, the hour,” he echoed as he lifted his sword.

I had run forward and now Mary Omri slipped to the shelter of my arms as the swords clashed. “God have mercy!” she exclaimed, and I knew it was a prayer for the Emperor’s physician.

The sound of the surf, of the oaths of the fighters, of metal against metal intermingled strangely. But the end came as suddenly as the beginning, for the loose sand was against the massive Idumean; also the swordsmanship of the Emperor’s physician. Side-stepping a bull-like lunge of Malchus and darting in with a speed that



caught him off balance, Sergius Cumanus struck his foe's sword from his hand. And Malchus, defenseless, turned to flee. He slipped and fell. Even the pebbles on the beach had fought on the side of the Roman. Up came his sword to cleave the skull of the beastlike fellow who had cleaved the skulls of others. "Mercy!" he screamed as he tried to shield his head from the blow.

"Mercy!" cried Mary Omri, breaking from the shelter of my arms. "Have mercy on him, noble physician," she cried again. And she caught my colleague's sword arm and clung to it.

Aggrieved, the Emperor's physician stepped back, and as the Idumean scrambled to his feet, Mary Omri, speaking swiftly, said, "You must not, shall not kill him, Sergius Cumanus. Be merciful and you shall obtain mercy, even as the Master teaches."

"But often he has killed and without mercy, Mary Omri," my colleague declared in hurt tones.

"Have no blood on your own soul," the girl pleaded. "You are too noble for that."

Then I saw my proud colleague wilt, surrendering to a woman, but he stooped, picked up Malchus' sword and threw it into the sea, crying, "Now slink away, you dog, before I ignore this woman's plea for mercy and slit your throat and throw you where your sword has gone."

Malchus backed away and then turned and ran; but when he was at a safe distance he stopped and shouted, "Jerusalem will nail you to a cross someday. And with you will be Jesus of Nazareth. Mark that, you wolf-suckled Roman."

"Excellent company in life or death, this Jesus of Nazareth," the Emperor's physician shouted in return.

I looked at Mary Omri and she at me, and when our eyes met we smiled our happiness over his words.

## XVI

Capernaum was strangely astir. The Galilean Healer, after a week's absence in the towns along the north shore of the sea—Bethsaida-Julias, Chorazin and others—returned with a fame that was circling the district. Scores of the lame and blind and deaf and dumb, and others with all sorts of diseases, flocked to the city from the towns that ringed the Sea of Galilee—all eager to come within range of the healing powers of Jesus of Nazareth.

It was a new and unexpected sight and, for physicians on a medical mission, there was interest and opportunity. The climax came on the sacred Sabbath of the Jews, which caused a protest from the synagogue rulers. But the officials of the city did nothing more than send a few soldiers into the fishing district, where the congestion was greatest, for they did not want to risk a popular outburst by scattering the crowds gathering in the street in which the Galilean Healer dwelt.

Chuza had told us of the return of the Healer but it was our innkeeper who excitedly informed us of possible trouble in the street before the Healer's house. We hurried down there, not only because we desired to note all phenomena but out of alarm for the Galilean and his household. We found the street of the Healer's house a festering lane.

Never had I seen, at close range, the diseased in droves and the sight, even for the hardened physician, was appalling. There were worn, disheveled women with children at their breasts; toothless, red-eyed women with torn and soiled garments, barefooted and with the odor of dung about them. There were women heavy with child, waddling ducklike to and fro with their clothes streaked with sour vomit and hair matted as if filled with burs, like the tail of a dog. There were men bent double—and some actually crawled—with every manner of limb deformity: vacant-faced men with lusterless eyes and maggoty heads and miry, drooling mouths; sightless men holding on to one another and to the crowd, breathing hard or calling plaintively; dumb men giving forth weird, pitiful sounds that brought shudders to the normal who heard them. And in that crowd were the border-line insane men and women who, unless relief came, would soon be wailing in the wilderness among the demon-possessed. Here was a vast diseased composite; a wide segment of life rotting under the sun; an appalling multitude of the world's impotent wedged into a narrow street before the house of a Jewish Healer whose wonder-working had, at last, brought him more patients in a day than some physicians have in a lifetime. And what was he doing about it? Much and in every way, for even the little we were able to behold was astounding.

Our first glimpse of the Galilean revealed him in the street, near the entrance to his house, and he was, literally, healing right and left. People pressed upon him, reaching out crooked fingers to touch him, and when they did so his very presence irradiated healing. It must have been so, for many of them turned away with strange cries of wonder mingled with joy, and others, who had tottered or swayed or crawled to him, rose up and went away, giving place to an unending line of expectant people.

But, quite suddenly, an end came to this singular street scene. From the house

rushed the sturdy fishermen friends of the Healer, led by Simon Peter and John. They bored into the crowd; there were oaths and blows; they surrounded their Master and cried to the crowd to let him rest; and he, as if very weary of it all, nodded consent. They led him into the house and shut the door. Then the people in the street, as if weary as he was weary, dropped to the ground, staring at the house and—waiting.

“Well,” Sergius Cumanus remarked as all action ceased and the street became as quiet as it had been tumultuous, “I guess it is the end of the show. Eh?”

I nodded and replied, “What do you make of it?”

“It was excellent theater.”

“Is that all?”

“It was an excellent study in mob hysteria.”

“In which the hysteria gave place to calm assurance,” I reminded him, pointing to little groups of people who were now quiet and in repose. “Isn’t this a miracle within itself?”

“Indeed it is,” he returned warmly. “The man certainly is master of mobs. He knows how to make them forget the misery of their poverty and all the dangers that beset the dispossessed,” he went on with fine awareness of the sociological factors involved in disease. “But surely you don’t believe that you have witnessed a single miracle wherein organic disease was present, do you?”

“Well,” I replied as I looked up and down the street, “some of the lame now walk much better; the blind do not appear to be so helpless; the dumb have ceased their strangled gurgling; the hysterical no longer claw at themselves and at others; and the poor seem not to mind their rags. Of course,” I went on as he nodded approval, “there are no lepers and lunatics among them, but they are diseased whether organically or otherwise. And the Galilean has arrested—at least for the hour—the progress of their ailments. So—”

“What have we coming here?” my colleague interrupted as four men, bearing a litter on which lay a youth, pushed up the street toward the Healer’s house.

“Maybe an organic case—for your particular benefit,” I remarked in my best vein of sarcasm.

Just then the litter passed us and we caught sight of a dissipated-looking young fellow with what appeared to be a pair of useless limbs.

“It certainly looks so,” my companion said as the men carrying the youth went on toward the house. “Let’s follow them,” he hurried on to suggest, “for I think they are going to attempt an entrance.”

I was quick to assent and we dropped in behind the group. Many others did the

same, and on to the house we went. But, sensing what was about to happen, many crowded into the small court—so much so that the progress of the men with the litter was completely checked. Nor would those crowded at the door give way, for all wished to enter the house. But the friends of the helpless youth were resourceful: they turned suddenly and went up an outer stairway that led to the flat-top roof.

“Come!” my colleague said, seizing me by the arm. “They are going to lower that fellow through the skylight.”

So we ascended the stairs, practically at their heels, unmindful of their scowls. Placing their burden down they quickly removed their belts and sashes, tying them to the four corners of the litter; then they opened the skylight and turned and took up their burden again and started to lower it into the house.

With characteristic boldness my colleague knelt at the edge of the skylight and peered down, and I followed suit. Were we not present in the capacity of physicians observing all healing phenomena? So we could have argued if our act had been questioned. But no one objected; all were too intent on the scene below. And what a scene it was: The Galilean stood in a circle of the men who followed him everywhere and he and they were looking upward as the litter slowly descended. As it did so the men who were letting it down shouted, “Master! Have mercy on him also. Master! Forgive his sins and heal him. Master! We have faith or else we would not bring him to you.” Then the litter touched the floor at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth.

Suddenly the Galilean began to speak, though what he said may have been of no great moment to the Emperor’s physician, for the Healer said, “My lad, your sins are forgiven and according to your faith, and the great faith of those who brought you to me, so shall it be done to you.” Then what we saw was an amazing exhibition of power. Taking the paralytic by the hand—for such I am convinced he was—the Healer began to lift him up, speaking words of encouragement. Finally he stood the youth upon his feet and in tones that were commanding he said, “Now take up your bed and walk.”

And the young man did so.

We followed the four men from the housetop, for they hurried down to greet the youth they had brought on the litter, and as we descended the stairs the Emperor’s physician sought to engage them in conversation. But to all his swift questions they gave no reply, which did not tend to lessen his natural suspicion that there were hidden factors in the incident—factors well understood by the patient, the four who had carried him, and the Galilean himself. So I surmised certain things I knew Sergius Cumanus would say. But, to my surprise, he did not say them; instead, he simply suggested that we get out of the crowd of the halt and blind and stroll the

beach where nature was more perfected than in the wretched victims of disease we had looked upon.

But on the road to the quay we met Malchus and with him was a man who had been pointed out to us as Matthew Levi, the chief publican of the Capernaum district. He was an aggressive fellow, of dominant personality, intelligent and bland, provided you were not in arrears with your tribute money. Like all of Rome's Jewish tax collectors he was despised by the common people and we had heard threats against him. And now it was evident that he was on a mission of tax-gathering, for he and the Idumean head servant of the High Priest were making for the house of Jesus of Nazareth.

"Ah!" sang out the Emperor's physician as Malchus and the publican crossed our path. "The jackass from Jerusalem! The beast that trails helpless women! Are you looking for me that you may renew the duel, you sulking leopard?"

Malchus promptly got out of the way as Matthew Levi held up his hand and cried, "We seek no quarrel. We are on business of State. Caesar would not be pleased if we were detained: you should know that."

"Caesar would feel disgraced if he knew one of his publicans keeps company with a murderer," my colleague shot back viciously.

"The accusing Roman may have to prove his charge someday," Matthew Levi warned.

"I shall not leave Jewry until I prove it or slay your vile companion," my colleague taunted rashly.

But the pair hurried on and we started toward the quay once more. Suddenly the Emperor's physician halted and put out a detaining hand. "Why," he began excitedly, turning to watch Malchus and the publican as they entered the street in which stood the Healer's house, "why, they may be going to stir up trouble for our friends. For I'll wager a gold talent against a silver sesterce that neither the Healer nor his rebel companions like Zelotes have paid the annual tribute money."

I was of the same opinion, but as fearful as I was for the household of the Galilean I was more afraid of what would happen if the Emperor's physician returned to the house and mixed in such affairs. So I said, "Let them dispute it out. I am in no mood to join in a quarrel over the things that belong to Caesar."

"I am," he snapped. He started back toward the house of Jesus of Nazareth and I was only one step behind him.

By the time we pushed our way through the crowds to the Healer's house, Malchus and the publican were there and knocking on the door. Some had recognized the chief tax collector and there were jeers and accusations. "Matthew

Levi, the publican, Caesar's sandal-kissing thief," someone yelled. And only the presence of half a dozen soldiers prevented a scuffle; but there was no abatement of mocking cries. The publican, used to hostile demonstrations, paid little attention to the ridicule and knocked more loudly. This time he got an answer, for the door opened and Simon Peter stepped out, closing it behind him.

"Must you breach the walls?" he demanded of Matthew Levi, while the crowd roared at the sally.

Ignoring the query, the publican said, "Go and call Jesus of Nazareth who, for more than a year, has dwelt in Capernaum and paid no tribute to Caesar."

Simon Peter's slowness to reply projected Malchus into the discussion and revealed to my colleague and me that he had pressed the investigation. "And it is rumored that he denies the right of Caesar to impose the tax. So if you speak for him tell us whether it is right to pay tribute to Caesar or no."

The Emperor's physician, too eager to participate in the controversy, broke past the thin line of soldiers, who made no real effort to prevent him, and confronted the astounded Malchus. "By what authority does the hiring of the High Priest question a Jew concerning tribute to Caesar?" he demanded.

Malchus, both fearful and disconcerted, recoiled and cast an appealing look at the tax collector who, calm and cold, answered the query. "By the authority that I, chief publican of the Capernaum district, bestowed upon him," Matthew Levi said. "For I deputized him this day to assist me. Malchus represents the Temple."

It was a quick lie and I saw through it. "The tax you would collect has nothing to do with the Temple payment of the half-shekel, and you know it, Matthew Levi. Not even the High Priest, were he here, would have legal authority to assist you, in the name of the Temple, to collect the Caesar tribute. But why not let Jesus of Nazareth come forth and speak for himself?" I asked pointedly.

"Willingly," the publican agreed, after scanning both my colleague and myself from head to foot. Then to Simon Peter he added, "Now go and fetch Jesus of Nazareth to me."

The fisherman spat contemptuously, barely missing the tax collector's sandals, and re-entered the house. He took his time in returning and when he did so his speech was mocking. "The Master will pay the tribute money," he announced, "but he does not wish to see you. I will pay it for him."

"Then do so," the publican demanded impatiently. "Caesar does not expect me to coax it from you but to take it from you."

"Then come with me down to the water and I will get it out of the mouth of a fish," Peter asserted with calm confidence.

But Matthew Levi, tapping the huge wallet at his belt which bore the imperial insignia, issued a final warning. "Produce the tribute money forthwith or I will order the soldiers to imprison Jesus of Nazareth," he snapped.

We could see that the fisherman was temporizing and we grew alarmed, for the publican was whispering to the soldiers. We both opened our purses at the same time, fumbling for gold; but the Emperor's physician was the first to ask, "What is the coin Jesus of Nazareth must pay?"

"The imperial stater," Matthew Levi answered.

"Then here it is and go your way," my colleague said as he held up the shining coin in his fingers and started to toss it, unceremoniously, to the surprised publican.

But Simon Peter checked Sergius Cumanus and shouted, "No! The Master pays his own debt to Caesar. I will get the coin out of the mouth of a fish, even as I agreed. Let all come and see." And he turned, pushed his way through the willing onlookers, and strode down toward the water with a mob, including ourselves and Malchus and the publican, at his heels.

The nearest wharf stood at the eastern end of the storehouse where Zebedee and his sons kept their fish, and the ubiquitous Simon Peter turned toward it and stalked out upon it. But he waved back the rest of us saying that we would scare the fish away and, kneeling down, he carefully lifted a portion of a fishline fastened to the dock. "See," he called to us as we stood on the shore. "I have my line in the water and a well-baited hook—a fine, glistening bait that should catch the eye of a musht." He ceased speaking in the Aramaic and pronounced the name of the fish in Hebrew, which I, and many others, well understood, but which was strange to the Emperor's physician.

"The musht is a fish with a very large mouth," I said to my companion. "It is—"

"Keep quiet," Simon Peter demanded, "else I cannot hear the fish swimming this way." But not until he cupped a hand behind an ear, pretending to listen intently, did we sense that he was out to deceive.

"You act like a fool and I think you are one," Matthew Levi shouted, while the crowd roared and jested.

"But I am no robber publican," Simon Peter called in return. "And I never kissed Caesar's great toe." The people yelled their approval of the thrust, swaying menacingly; but the fisherman on the wharf held up his hands for silence. "Shishi-shish!" he said with odd intonation, peering down into the water. "A fish swims this way. It is a big musht. My! What a mouth! It can hold half a dozen staters. Now if it only sees my baited hook—" There came a sudden tug of the line he held in his hand and a *swish-swish* as a fish broke water about forty feet from the dock. "It's

hooked!” Simon Peter yelled, dancing about. “Come out and watch me land it,” he invited.

There was a rush for the strong pier and none led ourselves and Malchus and Matthew Levi. But the Captain of the Temple Guard crowded too close and Simon Peter, noting it, gave his line a mighty jerk and bumped the Idumean into the water.

“Keep out of my line!” the fisherman shouted.

“You—you dog!” Malchus sputtered amid whoops from the crowd, as he came up and made for the dock. “I’ll cut your throat.”

But Simon Peter jerked a wicked-looking knife from his belt, sunk it with a quick flip into the boards of the pier and snarled, “Stay in the water, you son of Satan!” Then he drew in his catch, hand over hand, and deposited it at our feet—a shining fish with a large mouth.

“A musht!” someone cried. And the people began to murmur in astonishment.

“Yes, a musht, even as I said,” Simon Peter spoke up as he pulled his knife from the board. “And I will rip its belly—as I would the belly of Malchus—and get the tribute money, just as I promised.”

But he took his precious time, cut open the belly of the fish and fumbled in its entrails. Then he began to sing a ditty, which I doubted to be improvised. It went like this:

Gold is the outside of a fish,  
So gold must be within;  
May Jehovah let me find it  
Beneath this mushti’s fin.

He got up suddenly with something, apparently, clenched in his fist. Extending his arm full length he slowly opened his fingers, and in the palm of his hand lay a gold coin, glowing strangely in a circle of blood from the fish’s body. Awed exclamations burst from many, and there was much jostling to see. “Here, you slave of Caesar!” Simon Peter called to the astounded tax collector as he held out the coin to him. “Take this gold stater and give my Master credit. And know that Jesus of Nazareth has power on earth to forgive sin, even the sin of a publican. So go and ask to be forgiven.”

But Matthew Levi, staring in solemn wonder at the gold stater—for such it was—shook his head. “No, no!” he cried, keeping his hands behind him. “I will not touch it. Go and give it to your Master, good fisherman, and tell him that I said he has paid his debt to Caesar in full. And so have I,” he concluded significantly, and walked away.



“And now, Luke Galen,” the Emperor’s physician began as we left the dock, “am I supposed to believe this miracle also? Are you to insist that we have just witnessed another demonstration of supernatural power? Or are you willing to concede that Simon Peter—either with or without the consent of the Healer—perpetrated a hoax?”

“Of course he did,” I agreed. “I could see the whole story written on the fellow’s face. Besides, he winked at me more than once. Didn’t you notice it?”

“Yes,” my colleague admitted dryly. “But I thought he was winking at me.”

Then we both laughed in uproarious relief and climbed to the Inn of the Sea to dine.

## XVII

Herod Antipas returned from Rome with a new wife and a suspicious skin infection, the latter developing rapidly during the Mediterranean voyage. His new wife was giving him trouble enough, for he had taken her from his brother Philip, and all Jewry was aflame with moral indignation. Moreover, the father of the woman Herod Antipas deserted to marry Herodias—Aretas, an Arabian king—had declared war and was about to march against his former son-in-law. So the Tetrarch’s honeymoon was over and past and his return to his capital city, Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, found him low in health, suspicious of everybody and confronting a war.

Chuza, the ruler’s overseer, came to our inn and brought us word of all these things. He had been down to Tiberias in consultation with Herod Antipas and we were informed that the Tetrarch had locked himself up in his palace, surrounded by a powerful guard, and was in an ugly mood.

“He is a sick man,” Chuza declared, “and rejects the counsel of his court physician.” The steward paused and gave us a troubled look. “Herod Antipas wants you both to attend him and at once,” he revealed gravely. “He seemed to know all about your presence in his realm and of your association with me.”

“Through Malchus, do you suppose?” I questioned with growing uneasiness.

“I am not sure,” Chuza replied, “but if not through him then from others equally unfriendly. You must either obey what amounts to a royal summons or get out of his realm at once.”

“Why should we flee?” the Emperor’s physician said. “Besides, we have a letter to Herod Antipas, yet undelivered.”

“Then you wish to go down to Tiberias and offer him your medical services?” I put in doubtfully.

“Why not?” he retorted. “If our therapy fails,” he went on, in tones not wholly devoid of sarcasm, “we will recommend the Galilean Healer.”

Chuza looked startled. “I hope the Galilean never goes to Tiberias,” he said. “I pray he may never be summoned to enter the Tetrarch’s presence.”

“Why?” my colleague inquired idly.

“Because Herod is the only ruler in all the land that the Healer has criticized. He always speaks of Herod as ‘that fox,’ and this may have come to the ears of the Tetrarch more than once. And if he learns that I have befriended the Galilean—well, my household will be in danger.”

“You are right, Chuza,” I said, “and if we go to Tiberias to attend Herod Antipas we must not mention the Healer’s name.” I turned to my colleague. “Do you really wish to go and see the Tetrarch?” I asked.

“Certainly,” he answered. “For we not only have letters to him but his sickness—whatever it is—includes him in our mission. Now don’t you think so?”

“No, I don’t,” was my flat rejoinder. “My intuition tells me to get out of his realm; but I will defer to your wishes.”

“Then we go to Tiberias,” he declared.

And we did and Chuza accompanied us, for his position as overseer of the Tetrarch’s estate on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee gave him easy access to the palace.

But when we got down to Tiberias we noted a different atmosphere: the swagger had gone out of the city and there was a tenseness and uncertainty despite the fact that soldiers were everywhere, outside and inside the walls, for King Aretas, Herod’s former father-in-law, was assembling troops east of the Dead Sea. The palace itself was surrounded by a powerful force and we had some difficulty in entering. We were passed from guard to guard, eyed suspiciously or curiously, and by the time we reached the royal bedchamber where the Tetrarch, behind bolted doors, reclined on a silken couch, we were weary and out of patience.

We saw a bloated-looking man in middle life, very dark, even to his restless eyes which came to rest on the face of the Emperor’s physician with a questioning stare.

“So you are Caesar’s physician,” Herod Antipas began as soon as the salutations were over. “Well, Caesar’s physician should be the greatest in the Empire. Are you?”

“No,” my colleague replied with a slow and stubborn shake of his head. “My father, if he were in active practice, would be the greatest physician in the realm, and

since he is not, then my colleague here, Luke Galen, takes precedence over all Rome's medical men."

I could see that Herod Antipas did not relish the manner of the Emperor's physician, but the ruler fixed his gaze on me and said, "I have a skin disease—one I noticed the second day I was out at sea on my return voyage. It grew worse rapidly and by the time I landed at Tyre it had, from a few spots on my right leg—" he suddenly threw back the silken covers—"spread from my hip to my knee and there was swelling."

Both myself and my colleague bent down and began our examination. The flesh was hard and scaly and the limb was nearly twice its normal size.

"Is—is it leprosy?" Herod Antipas all but whispered.

I shook my head. "It may be elephantiasis," I stated. I addressed my colleague: "What do you think, Sergius Cumanus?"

"It is elephantiasis," he replied, and he seemed to enjoy saying it.

Tetrarch Herod's upper lip broke out in sweat and, in trembling tones, he asked, "What is that? Can it be cured? How long will I be ill?"

We both were silent and the alarmed and angry ruler screamed at us: "Speak, fools! I command you to speak! What is this disease? Where does it get its terrible name? Will I recover from it?"

Chuzas was alarmed and I shared his feelings, for it was evident that Herod Antipas was ready to throw us into prison, or worse, if we displeased him in the slightest. But the Emperor's physician, with a calmness that was only matched by his bold words, spoke sharply. "We are not fools; at least we know what we are talking about when we tell you that your disease is elephantiasis. The disease—as you should know—derives its name from what it does to the limbs—swells them to elephant size and stretches the skin and creases it until it looks like an elephant's skin. It is not necessarily fatal, much depending on the treatment and the care of the patient."

"But what causes it?" Herod Antipas repeated. "Why should I have it?"

"Medical science has not yet discovered its origins," my colleague replied.

I thought, as I looked upon Herod Antipas, of a saying in one of the sacred books of the Jews: "All that a man has will he give for a healthy skin." We might have escaped a critical situation except for the continued mocking attitude of the Emperor's physician; then it was I realized in what great contempt Romans held the Herods, for my colleague said, "How is it, noble ruler, that you have not gone to the cult of the Aesculapians for relief? Have you forgotten that their temple up in the hills was made possible through your munificence and genius for building?"

I expected the heavens to fall as Sergius Cumanus ended his ironic speech and stood looking with cold contempt upon the diseased ruler. But Antipas was strangely humble for a Herod. “They cannot help me,” he muttered, “and I am afraid of snakes.”

My colleague burst into loud laughter, laughter that startled both Chuza and myself again and we exchanged uneasy glances. But, not giving either us or the Tetrarch time to speak, the Emperor’s physician continued his blunt remarks, all slightly veiled criticisms. “Surely the priest-doctors, noble ruler, would know all about your disease and just what to do. And you should not fear the great snake they would have crawl over your couch, for does it not have healing powers imparted by the god, Aesculapius?”

“I won’t go to the Aesculapian temple,” Herod Antipas all but shouted. “I won’t leave the safety of my palace. And I command you physicians to remain here and heal me.”

My colleague and I exchanged understanding glances. It was not only the sacred serpent of the Aesculapian temple that the Tetrarch feared: it was the great army of his one-time father-in-law. For the Arabian king and his wild tribesmen were within a hundred miles of Tiberias and there was no available Roman legion to reinforce Herod’s uncertain troops—soldiers who hated Rome and might desert to the enemy. Thus, it was quite evident that Herod Antipas would keep himself shut up in his fortresslike palace; at least he would not be found on a bed of sickness in the unprotected Aesculapian temple, which was a full mile beyond his walled capital.

But my colleague and I now found ourselves also shut up in the palace. What a predicament with the probability of the city undergoing a long siege, not to speak of the danger that might grow out of our failure to cure the Tetrarch of the beginning of a bad case of elephantiasis. We gazed at the purple-clad ruler, who had sat up in his silken bed, and we both knew that the moment was at hand when the wrong word might terminate our medical mission then and there. I confess that I was at a loss for words, but the Emperor’s physician was not. With daring and initiative he said, “Of course we will remain with you, noble ruler, and we will, I believe, treat your disease successfully. But we must go and secure our instruments and medicines.”

“Why did you fail to bring them with you?” he demanded.

“Because we knew nothing of the nature of your malady,” my colleague replied easily. “Now that we know it is elephantiasis we will go to Capernaum and make ready to transfer our headquarters to Tiberias. And we will bring with us a rare oil—one that my father used with marvelous results in the treatment of elephantiasis—and administer it to you, externally and internally.”

“When will you return?” the Tetrarch questioned.

“Day after tomorrow,” Sergius Cumanus said. “We can not clear Capernaum any sooner.”

Herod Antipas lay back on the bed and stared at us, and his roving, suspicious eyes included his steward. “Chuza,” he began in tones of severity, “I will hold you responsible for the return of these physicians to Tiberias.”

“I shall not fail you, noble ruler,” the steward promised.

“Chuza,” the Tetrarch went on suspiciously, “it is rumored that you and your household have befriended a fellow who stirs the multitudes in Galilee—a worker of miracles who is in rebellion against the religious rulers at Jerusalem as well as my authority in Galilee. Is this so?”

And Chuza, caught in a serious situation, surprised us by the calm dignity of his rejoinder. He gave a simple, forceful recital of all his dealings with the Galilean Healer, omitting nothing, and the Tetrarch paid close attention, especially of his overseer’s dramatic recital of the Healer’s curing of the sick child at a distance of twenty miles. “It is true, noble ruler,” Chuza concluded, both in defense of the Healer and himself, “this Jesus of Nazareth stirs the multitudes, but not to rebellion. They follow him because he heals their diseases, nor do I know of his failure in any instance in which he attempted to heal the sick.”

So Chuza narrated his story and the only factor he omitted was our own failure—if failure it had been—to heal his son. But we were not to get off so easy, for Herod Antipas asked us what we knew of the things his steward told. “Much,” I replied at once, knowing full well that whatever source of information the Tetrarch had—and doubtless it was Malchus—our own names were included. “We have seen the Healer work.”

“And you, being physicians, admit that he heals where you fail?” the petty king remarked critically.

I was silent but my colleague was not, and in his emphatic rejoinder there may have been greater safety for us than I was aware of at the moment. “I have never admitted that this man heals,” he asserted. “His chief success, if any, seems to be with hysterical women.”

“Perhaps the Emperor’s physician is jealous of this miracle-worker,” Herod remarked to no one in particular. Then he startled us by adding, “Perhaps it would be well to have this Healer test his skill against Caesar’s young physician. Yes, that is what I wish.” He turned his dark, brooding eyes on his steward. “Chuza,” he said in stentorian tones, “I command you to bring the miracle-worker to me. You will return with him in company with these two physicians day after tomorrow.”

I looked at the steward. His face had gone white and his eyes held fear, but his tones were steady when he said, "I have heard your command, noble ruler." In his words I thought I detected something bitterly negative to his ruler's desire.

But it was not until we were out on the road between Tiberias and Magdala that we conversed freely, and when we did we discovered that we were of one mind: none of us had any intention of returning to the walled city of Herod Antipas.

"But we've got to get out of Galilee," I declared. "Out of the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas."

"Yes," Chuza said sorrowfully. "I now know that I must flee with my family, for my ruler's mind has been poisoned toward me and my house. Malchus has told more than we realize."

"Including many lies," my colleague blurted with an oath. "How I wish I had killed him!"

"Where will you go with your family, Chuza?" I inquired, hoping to get my colleague's mind off the head servant of the High Priest.

"Perhaps Pontius Pilate would give me and my family shelter and protection," the steward answered. "If so, then I would take my family to the old Maccabean house in the Wilderness of Bethhaven between Jericho and Jerusalem, just within the borders of Judea over which Pilate rules. Perhaps the noble physicians would go with us and continue the medical mission in Judea, making the old stone mansion new headquarters."

"An excellent idea," the Emperor's physician spoke up. "But shouldn't the Healer and his household get out of Galilee also?"

I knew his anxiety was over only one member of the Galilean's household—Mary Omri. But before I could express an opinion, Chuza said, "I have not forgotten the Galilean Healer and his friends. They must accompany us, for the Tetrarch's wrath will fall upon them before many days. Still, it may not be easy to persuade Jesus of Nazareth that he is in danger. He fears no man, much less Herod Antipas, whom he holds in great contempt."

We were silent on this phase of the problem, for we had no influence on the going and coming of the Galilean Healer. Or did we?

But when we reached Capernaum we went straight to the house of the Healer between the smelly suburb and the city proper. Only the women were at home, Mary Omri and the Healer's mother. The Healer and his male companions were on a mission of mercy, as his mother put it, somewhere west of the town. "They will return about sunset," she stated.

"What do you want with him?" Mary Omri suddenly asked, giving the

Emperor's physician a penetrating look.

"To warn him of danger," he told her.

We explained all that had taken place and Chuza revealed his plans to have everyone journey down into Judea, under the protection of its Procurator, and take refuge in the old Maccabean house. "We need not inform Pontius Pilate that Jesus of Nazareth is with us," Chuza said wisely. "For we have not forgotten that this ruler desired to secure the Healer for causing the riot in the Temple."

But Mary Omri shook her head, saying, "The Master has plans of his own—plans that will take him and us to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, to Tyre and Sidon and down to Caesarea. He will not turn his face toward Jerusalem until he is ready. And he is not ready," she concluded knowingly. The Healer's mother confirmed her in all she said.

The instant Mary Omri mentioned Caesarea as a possible city the Galilean Healer might visit I felt we had the solution to more than one problem: Caesarea would put all of us under the protection of Lucius Vitellius, would enable the Emperor's physician and me to renew our ministrations to the Governor's child who, according to a letter from her father, was not improving, and would enable us to complete our mission in western Jewry and Syria, from Joppa northward to my home city of Antioch. But before I could express my approval of the Healer's proposed journey to the coast cities my colleague said, "Caesarea will be a place of perfect safety for everyone under the wrath of Herod Antipas. I am in favor of shaking the dust of Capernaum off our feet before another thirty-six hours."

"Do you think you can persuade the Master to start tomorrow, Mary?" Chuza inquired nervously. And in the question, put so exclusively to the former dancing girl, I sensed her growing influence over the Healer.

But with gracious tact Mary Omri turned to the older woman and waited, and the mother of Jesus of Nazareth said, "My son will not hurry because evil men may attempt to harm him. He may tell you that his time has not yet come. But what is your opinion, daughter?" she finally asked, speaking to Mary Omri.

She shook her head slowly, saying, "When the Master returns he will decide for himself. And the will of God will direct him in all things."

It was clear to me that the Emperor's physician was vexed over the words of both women. For when they should have been practical they were occult. There was nothing left for us to do but to go on to the Inn of the Sea and mark time, and there was not much time left. But before we parted from Chuza we agreed that we, in company with his family, would take our leave of Capernaum the following night, silently and under the cover of the darkness. So the steward hurried on to his

residence to acquaint his wife with the dangerous situation and we went to the inn. But before we went to sleep that night my colleague remarked, “This is a land of mysterious personages and cryptic sayings. Ask anyone anything and you get a cabalistic reply or none at all. Now what is it that Jesus of Nazareth is attempting to do that calls for so much concealment and veiled allusions?”

“I am too sleepy for you to propound riddles,” I replied peevishly. “Go to sleep as I am trying to do. Perhaps sleep will clear our heads and a new day bring us more hopeful things.”

## XVIII

What the morning brought us was an odd and unexpected visitor—Matthew Levi, chief collector of revenue for the Capernaum district and the most despised publican in Jewry in Rome’s employ. And what he had to say was startling.

First of all, he told us that he was about to resign his position and would never collect another penny for the Roman government, and when we inquired as to his reasons he simply said, “Jesus of Nazareth has called me to follow him and I can resist him no longer.” Next, he revealed a plot against the lives of the Galilean Healer, Chuza and the Emperor’s physician. And the final revelation he made was of Malchus’ plans to enslave Mary Omri, securing the consent of Herod Antipas, whose subject she was, to force her to marry the head servant of the High Priest and renew her dancing career.

“Is the Tetrarch already a party to all these evil things?” I questioned Matthew Levi.

“If not,” was the quick answer, “he soon will be. For Malchus and the Herodians were in touch with him the day he returned to Tiberias, and as soon as the Tetrarch has time to investigate the persons Malchus has named, I do not doubt that they will be included in the ruler’s wrath.”

“Preposterous!” I cried indignantly. “What have these men done that a ruler marks them for death? And on the testimony of an assassin like Malchus?” Matthew Levi simply gave a characteristic shrug and I went on in anger. “Jesus of Nazareth is a beautiful spirit and is guilty of nothing save the highest good; Chuza is above evil of any kind and has served the Tetrarch faithfully; while the Emperor’s physician—if he will permit me to say it—is one of the best medical minds of all time and devoted to his science.”

“None of these things will deter Herod Antipas,” Matthew Levi declared. “His



heart is full of hate and jealousy and lust.”

“Well,” I said, feeling that the Tetrarch would stop at nothing and stoop to all things, “Herod Antipas may murder the Healer and his steward and his act be not called in question; but if he takes the life of the Emperor’s physician Rome will crucify the Tetrarch of Galilee and scatter his household.”

“Granted,” Matthew Levi replied. “But all this will not bring the Emperor’s physician back to life.” He turned to my colleague. “You must get out of Herod’s realm,” he urged.

“I shall do so,” Sergius Cumanus said, “but only for the sake of the others. But someday I shall return and search out Malchus, whether he be found in Herod’s realm or Pilate’s, and I will kill him as I would a wolf.”

“In that day you will have my consent,” I told my colleague, “but for the present we must remember that we are on a mission for the Roman government and it must not end in a brawl. So go ahead and apprise Matthew Levi, a new and unexpected ally, of our plans to escape Herod’s realm.”

The Emperor’s physician revealed our plans to the man who, just yesterday, was considered our foe and a friend of Malchus, and Matthew Levi nodded his approval and said that he would go with us. “For wherever the Galilean goes I will follow,” he repeated several times, though neither I nor my colleague understood just what he meant.

After the publican took his departure, promising to keep close touch with us in all things, we started for the home of Chuza, for there was much to tell. They were amazed at our story and Joanna said, “I have always told you, my husband, that one like Herod Antipas, with the cunning and cruelty of the leopard, would someday include us in his wrath. We must flee this place forever. Why, the Tetrarch would even slay our little son.”

“Without a moment’s hesitation,” I said, hoping thereby to speed our departure.

Neither Herod’s steward nor Joanna needed urging; indeed, they had already perfected plans to escape the clutches of the Tetrarch and their plans were bold and unique: they intended to take Herod’s own horses and vehicles.

“We will only borrow them,” Chuza explained. “It has been our privilege ever since I have been the Tetrarch’s steward to make journeys in his vehicles, so we will excite no suspicion. And we needs must take as much luggage as possible, for we shall never return to this place.”

“Why not borrow a sufficient number of horses and vehicles for the use of the Galilean Healer’s household and his fishermen friends?” I suggested. “For if our destination proves to be Caesarea—and I think it will—Herod’s horses can be

returned to him under a military escort. Lucius Vitellius, the Governor, will cooperate with us in all things—of this I am sure.”

Chuza agreed at once and we formulated our plans, deciding to leave Capernaum at night. All that was lacking was the consent of the Galilean to join our party, and winning him over to our plot might prove our gravest problem. As we discussed it, Chuza turned to his wife and said, “Joanna, you must go to the Healer’s house with the physicians and add your plea. He has heeded you in many things.”

She nodded and grew pensive. “Perhaps Mary Omri and I together can persuade him,” she said. “He defers to her in more things than to anyone else. But there are times when he will heed no one and speaks strangely of destiny.”

Here again was the idea of destiny in the career of the Galilean and once more—as in the case of his mother and Mary Omri—a woman spoke of it. Had this singular personality revealed itself more fully to women than to men? But there was little time for further speculation, so I said, “We should go at once to the house of the Healer and learn if he has returned.”

My colleague and I, accompanied by Joanna, started for the Galilean’s house, leaving Chuza to his great task of making ready to abandon Herod’s estate. Great was our joy on finding that Jesus of Nazareth and his friends had returned, though they were down at the fish house of Zebedee on the quay.

“The Master will be ready to go with you,” Mary Omri told us, after we presented our plans. Her quiet but positive manner was full proof that the Galilean Healer, whether believing the proposed journey was consonant with destiny or not, paid a great deal of attention to the advice of this former dancing girl.

So, leaving Joanna to make final arrangements with Mary Omri and the Healer’s mother, the Emperor’s physician and I went on down to the quay and entered the fish-drying establishment. There we found John and Simon Peter in grave consultation with Matthew Levi, the publican, whose customhouse office was on the same docks.

They listened in eager silence to all our proposals and then Matthew Levi said, “I will be ready to go with you, for I am renouncing tax-gathering forever and will follow the Galilean wherever he leads.”

“And so will I,” Simon Peter agreed, “even to a cross.”

John was less emphatic, though none the less sincere, and said, “My brother James and I will close the fish establishment forever unless our father, Zebedee of Jerusalem, opens it again; and we shall continue to walk with the Master.”

My medical colleague and I were puzzled to grasp the full import of all these fishermen said unless they meant that they hoped to learn the Galilean’s healing art. I

recalled that John had confessed their failure to heal, though they had attempted to do so—a failure, so their Master accused, because of their “little faith.” Faith in what? In whom? I was not ready to answer my own confused questioning.

But there was no time for speculation, only for full understanding of all preparations for the night flight to Caesarea; and to that end we made it plain that the Galilean and his household and his friends, now numbering twelve with the addition of Matthew Levi, were to await our coming a mile down the beach road toward Magdala. We knew the dangers attending our plan to “borrow,” as Chuza put it, the horses of Herod, and before we parted we tried to impress them with the hazards involved.

“We will be there tomorrow night, two hours after the going down of the sun,” my colleague said. “I need not tell you that great secrecy must attend all our movements or we may find ourselves in the hands of Herod’s men.”

“We shall be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves, as the Master says,” Simon Peter spoke up.

“At least as wise as serpents,” the Emperor’s physician remarked wryly.

We spent the remainder of the day and the night at the inn, for we did not wish to be seen too often in company with either Chuza or the Healer and his friends. We had no way of knowing how many spies were on our trail, though we felt reasonably sure that Herod Antipas expected us to return to Tiberias on the morrow and would not learn until it was too late that we had vanished from Capernaum.

But it was all I could do to prevent the Emperor’s physician from leaving the inn after dusk and seeking the company of Mary Omri and strolling on the beach.

“How foolish,” I chided as we lounged in the arcade of the inn and watched the sun sink across the Plain of Esdraelon. “And you were the one who has warned all the rest of us to be so careful for the next twenty-four hours. Besides, if you are determined to see her tonight then do so in the presence of others. Do not think of strolling the beach with a woman—especially this woman—the night before we escape this city.”

He growled something about my bad habit of moralizing and stalked away to his couch, leaving me to watch the darkness deepen and the stars come out, though a thin layer of clouds covered them like a gray veil upon the eyes of a lovely woman.

We packed our luggage the next day and wandered restlessly about the town. How far out of the orbit of our mission we had spun! Or had we? For the Healer was constantly in my thoughts throughout the day and, as I reviewed the past weeks—almost months, for it was late in June—I could not, medical scientist that I was, reconcile myself to the belief of my colleague that the Galilean was a fakir and

charlatan. But did he really heal? The testimony of my senses was compelling me day by day to admit something my medical philosophy cried out against.

The day dragged itself out, and when the last glow of crimson faded I turned to my easy-mannered colleague and said, "Well, Herod Antipas' men of war will have to be in Capernaum in two hours or we will be gone."

"I could wish that one particular jackal would sneak up this way—Malchus," Sergius Cumanus remarked bitterly. "For I may never get a chance to return to this part of Jewry and I had hoped to leave it with his blood on my soul."

I made no rejoinder and we sat and spoke only intermittently until the going down of the sun; but it was not until deeper darkness blotted the landscape that we descended to the innkeeper, paid what we owed, shouldered our luggage and went into the night. Making our way out the dim road that led to Chuza's house we went to the stables and there, by prearrangement, found Chuza and three of the Galilean's friends who were acquainted with horses—Thomas, Bartholomew and Andrew. The five vehicles were ready; the horses were in the traces; Chuza's luggage was packed in the lead carriage and to it came Joanna and her little son, stealing suddenly out of the shadows. My colleague and I got in the rear vehicle and he took up the reins, for driving was not an accomplishment of mine; and so we moved out of the Tetrarch's stables and took the shore road.

The fish houses were dark and silent as we drove past them; the quay, the customhouse where Matthew Levi had held forth, and the row of buildings of Zebedee and his sons were but shadows on the shore. On we moved down the beach road and hoofs and wheels, now and then striking rocks, made sparks that came and vanished like fireflies. Our eyes became accustomed to the darkness and the outlines of the shore grew more distinct as we moved down toward Magdala. A mile beyond the last suburb of Capernaum we beheld the shadowy forms of the Galilean and his group and we rejoiced that, thus far, our plans had not miscarried.

There were no loud salutations as the two groups joined; only whispered instructions. Four persons were to ride in each carriage. Chuza, who knew every foot of the roads we were to travel, held the lead and with him, besides his family, was the heavily armed Zelotes; the second vehicle held the Healer, his mother, Mary Omri and Bartholomew the driver; in the third carriage and the fourth, all armed as well as Zelotes, were Philip, Thaddaeus, James, called the "son of Alphaeus," John and James, sons of Zebedee, Judas Iscariot, and the two drivers—Thomas and Andrew; and the rear conveyance contained Simon Peter, Matthew Levi, the Emperor's physician and myself. We were also with swords, for our party had to traverse a robber country in the hills between Magdala and Cana—where outlaws

lived in self-made caves by day and operated by night.

So we moved down toward Magdala, within four miles of Tiberias—where my colleague and I were under orders to go—and turned west into a gorge highway called the “Way of the Sea.” Up it we moved at slow pace, traversing one of the oldest roads in Jewry—one over which the caravans of centuries had moved between the Mediterranean and the far Mesopotamian lands. Winding the foothills of black mountains we passed Cana and turned south to Nazareth, the home of the Galilean. It lay quiet and dark—not even the light of a candle gleamed in any window; not even a dog barked; the town seemed without life; and yet stealing through it was one of its own—a man who was beginning to attract the attention of mighty rulers as well as a multitude of humble and sick folk.

It was at dawn that we crossed the last range of hills and rolled down onto the great Plain of Esdraelon. After fording the River Kishon we ate breakfast from the food the women were thoughtful enough to bring and, an hour after sunrise, we toiled up the foothills of the Mountains of Carmel and, by noon, reached Sharon Plain. Across this rose-filled plain was Caesarea, the capital of Rome’s Palestinian possessions, and when within a mile of its walls we halted for a final conference. The Emperor’s physician became the chief spokesman. He gave it as his opinion that the Galilean and his household, together with Chuza and his family, should go to Strato’s Inn until further arrangements could be made.

“And what of the others?” I asked, for his patrician predilections were never more apparent.

“Do you recall the Jewish quarter between the quay and the market place?” he said. I nodded. “Well, there is a large inn there, exclusively for Jews, and if these twelve men will go there I will pay for their lodging. For I think they should keep together and be subject at any time to the call of their—Master.” My colleague brought out the last word with hesitancy.

Now the Twelve, as they were beginning to be called, were pleased and began to converse with animation among themselves and were even eager to push on into the pagan city of which they had heard much and which they had never seen.

So we journeyed the last mile and entered the city. The populace stared at our rather unusual caravan and there was much speculation. For our horses and vehicles were of the finer sort—too fine, in the estimation of the shrewdly observing, for some of the occupants. When we all moved first down into the Jewish quarter where the Emperor’s physician was to arrange for the lodging of the Twelve, many of the citizens of Caesarea followed us to the very threshold of the inn. Then the Twelve left their vehicles, with the exception of the drivers, and followed my colleague within.

But he had no difficulty in making arrangements for them to sojourn there, for his wallet held plenty of gold.

“Now we must stable the horses of Herod,” he said on emerging, “and we must see that they have the best of care, otherwise we may find ourselves charged with theft and in a controversy that might prove embarrassing to Lucius Vitellius.”

“Then why not go directly to him, explain the whole situation and request the loan of his stables for Herod’s valuable horses?” I suggested. “We could then be sure that they would be safe and sound when the Tetrarch sends for them or we send them to him.”

“The idea is excellent!” Sergius Cumanus exclaimed. And then to me he whispered, “If Lucius Vitellius is not pleased with our escapade we may find ourselves in prison.”

“He will be pleased on more scores than one,” I said. “He will welcome our return in the interest of his leprous child and if we fail—Well, what are you thinking, Sergius Cumanus?” I broke off abruptly.

“I am thinking of how a certain Healer would fail also,” he replied. “For of course the Governor must hear all about the Galilean and his reputed cures. Now we must drive on to Strato’s Inn and be stared out of countenance by another class of citizens, and I prefer those down here in the Jewish quarter,” he concluded in one of his contradictory remarks which had begun to differentiate him from any upper-class Roman I had ever known.

So we drove on to the inn above the sea, and the innkeeper was astonished to see us, especially escorting the famous dancing woman of Magdala, though her plain garments, if it had not been for her wealth of red hair, might have concealed her identity for a time from prying eyes. But we offered no explanations. Having secured accommodations for all our party, we were soon in our rooms in the same wing of the inn that housed our friends. Then my colleague and I, accompanied by Chuza, went down to the street where Thomas and Bartholomew, two of the Twelve, attended the horses of Herod, and drove toward the palace of the Syrian Governor.

## XIX

“My honored friends, the physicians!” Lucius Vitellius cried as he greeted us with outstretched hands in the audience chamber of the palace. “And Chuza of Capernaum, Herod’s excellent steward,” he hurried on even in greater surprise. “Of course you know that the Tetrarch and his bride, Herodias, were here not long ago,

en route to Tiberias from Rome.” He stopped short, frowned and added, “And what a storm was brewed by his marriage! Small wonder that his former wife has been able to persuade her father, King Aretas of Arabia, to declare war. It will be Semitic against Semitic, but of course Rome will have to step in finally, for Herod’s troops are poor. But tell me,” he broke off, “how is his recent marriage being received in his provinces?”

“Not well, Excellency,” Chuza stated frankly. “The priesthood of Jewry is aflame with moral indignation and even the hinterland exhorters and the miracle-men are denouncing this incestuous marriage. One of them, known as John the Baptizer, harangued the multitudes in the wilderness near Tiberias and sent word to Herod that he had no right to take Herodias from his brother Philip, and Herod threw the exhorter into prison and probably will execute him.” Chuza paused and seemed to be measuring the Syrian Governor. “John the Baptizer is a kinsman of the man who caused a riot in the Temple at the Passover last spring,” he concluded.

“Oh, that fellow!” the Governor exclaimed. “Pontius Pilate told me of his act and escape into the hill country of Galilee. I would like to get my hands on him, for I hear he is stirring the multitudes against the rulers as well as the Temple.”

I looked from Chuza to the Emperor’s physician, but the latter did not hesitate. “Well, Excellency,” he said, “you should have no difficulty in laying hands on this fellow. For we brought him with us to Caesarea.”

The amazed Governor stared incredulously, then suspiciously at all of us. “What are you keeping from me?” he demanded. “And what brought you to Caesarea so suddenly? And why are you consorting with rebels and rioters? Speak, one of you!” he thundered. “Do not stand there and stare at one another. Speak!”

The Emperor’s physician spoke—spoke for all of us, and he was calm in the face of the rising wrath of the ruler. In tones that were steady and with thoughts that were clear my colleague began at the beginning and unfolded all our experiences to the astounded Vitellius who, at the conclusion, truthfully said, “You physicians have managed to crowd a lifetime into a few weeks. But I hardly can credit portions of your story, especially the cures attributed to the Galilean Healer. Only a god could perform such miracles.”

“I did not say that the Galilean healed,” Sergius Cumanus reminded the Governor. “For I do not believe he did. I only included him in the story of our experiences because, somehow, he always became a part of them. He is a great opportunist, Excellency.”

The Governor’s reply to my colleague’s declaration surprised and heartened me, for he said, “Your appraisal of the Galilean Healer, Sergius Cumanus, does not

seem to explain everything. I would like to hear more of this matter, but not now. Just now I am thinking, not of your affair with Herod Antipas, nor of any of your troubles with the villainous Malchus and possible complications with the High Priest's family. I am thinking of my own leprous child. She grows worse. Come and see her."

We followed him to the miniature Aesculapian house down in the walled garden and we needed only one glance at the girl to know that she was failing. Our presence at her bedside scarcely caused the flicker of an eyelid on her part, for she was listless and indifferent to all that went on around her.

It was not without some embarrassment that we began to speak of the child's condition as we left the garden; yet there was little we could say. Our treatment had been carried out to the letter during our absence, both in medicines and diet, and she was dying by inches. We simply had to tell the distracted father that his daughter's leprosy was progressively worse. "But we will hold a consultation at once," I said, "and decide upon further treatment; that is, if you wish us to do so. But, thus far, we have failed."

"Failed is not the proper word," the Emperor's physician snapped, correcting me.

"But what more can you do?" Vitellius challenged. "What more could your illustrious father do if he were here?" His tones were despairing and my heart bled for him.

My colleague gave a stubborn rejoinder, saying, "Such cases under the treatment we have given may become much worse before they become better. Then nature may reassert itself quite suddenly and your daughter would begin to improve."

I knew that my colleague was rationalizing, but I did not censure him in my thoughts. Chuza, listening to every word, could restrain himself no longer. "I pray the noble physicians will forgive me if I appear to undervalue their skill, and I hope the Emperor's physician will try to understand me when I say I believe with all my heart that Jesus of Nazareth healed my child when all else apparently failed. So, noble ruler, why not send for the Galilean?"

"Would it offend you physicians if I did so?" Vitellius asked, looking from my colleague to myself and back again.

"It would not offend me," the Emperor's physician replied, for the Governor's question had been put to him more directly than to me. "But it would be a concession to superstition if you did so," he concluded flatly.

I felt constrained to differ with my colleague and lost no time in so doing. "Julia is your child, Excellency," I said. "And if I stood in your place I would turn in any direction—even to an itinerant thaumaturgist—for help. My reason may cause me to



agree with my distinguished medical friend, but my heart prompts me to urge you to do as you wish.”

“Very true,” Sergius Cumanus said agreeably, slipping into one of his contradictory moods. “We do not hold our professional pride above the life of your child.”

“You are noble in spirit—both of you,” the Governor said brokenly. “I shall never forget your services to me and my house. I shall remember always that except for you my child might now be dead. Why,” he burst out in greater praise, “except for you the Galilean Healer would not be in this city.”

Chuzza took up the same words of praise, saying, “And except for them, noble ruler, the Galilean Healer would not have known of my child.” Then he added something that gave me pause, nor do I think his words were lost entirely on my colleague. “I am not a learned man, but the belief grows in my mind that the Lord God works through all skill and in all circumstances to heal his children.”

Neither my colleague nor I could controvert this simple wisdom. In the midst of our silence Lucius Vitellius said, “Go and bring the Galilean under my roof.”

Before we left the ruler we all agreed that Pontius Pilate should be apprised of the whole situation at the earliest possible moment. “For he dwells in an atmosphere of mistrust,” Vitellius stated, “and his wife knows more of what is going on in Caesarea than I do. See him at once and inform him of the presence of Chuzza and Joanna, formerly in his employ, and also tell him the story you have told me—the story of your experiences with the Galilean Healer and your reasons for bringing him and his household to this city.”

But on our way to the inn we fell to discussing the request of Lucius Vitellius that the Healer visit his child. “The Governor is bound to be bitterly disappointed in the outcome,” my companion said, “for the Nazareth fakir will be helpless in the presence of incurable leprosy. Still, I think you made a tactical blunder when you told Vitellius that our therapy had failed.”

“Well, hasn’t it?” I interrogated critically.

“I am uncertain,” was the stubborn rejoinder. “I now recall a similar case in my father’s practice, the only dissimilarity being the early start in the treatment of his patient. And the patient recovered. The form of leprosy was the same as the child’s. So, if she happens to improve after the Healer performs above her wasted body, the outcome will be the result of a miracle in nature occasioned by our therapy and not because nature was transcended by a miracle at the hands of Jesus of Nazareth.”

In spite of my efforts I could not refrain from laughing in my colleague’s face and then I said, “Of all the bald rationalizations, Sergius Cumanus, this is the worst I’ve

heard from you. You know the leprous child has no chance to live—none so far as our therapy is concerned.”

“Then you believe that this fellow will heal her—is that what you actually believe, Luke Galen?”

“I scarcely know what I do believe now,” I answered. “But let’s await the outcome.”

He bowed and we began our toilets, for we were to dine with two families—that of Jesus of Nazareth and of Chuza.

We dined privately in a room overlooking the sea and no one was concerned to wear fine garments, though Mary Omri was never more beautiful in a simple white stola, designed after the fashion of Greek women rather than Jewish. On her half-bare arms were ebony bracelets; her feet were shod with black sandals. Across her forehead was a black band that held her mass of red hair, and it was let down over her shoulders like a flaming shawl. She outshone the many candles, but she would have outshone the moon above the sea, especially in the eyes of the Emperor’s physician. His eyes were upon her constantly.

As we had agreed for Chuza to reveal the plight of the Governor’s child we, near the close of the meal, signaled to him with our eyes, and he began the story.

The Galilean listened closely and when Chuza came to the part wherein the Syrian Governor had expressed the wish that Jesus of Nazareth attend the leprous child he quietly said, “The Roman ruler is not likely to believe unless he sees signs and wonders. An evil generation seeks such and it shall be denied. It all reminds me of those who say that a shower is coming because a cloud is rising in the west, or who, when the south wind blows, say that there will be heat through the day. Such wisdom! But how is it that they know how to read the signs in the sky but cannot decipher the signs of the times?”

There was gentle irony in the tones of the Galilean—irony that revealed how well he understood our pretentious generation. But I was afraid he was going to refuse the Governor’s request, so I said, “The leprous child of the ruler has been a patient of the Emperor’s physician and myself and, apparently, our medical science has failed. Thus, Lucius Vitellius implores you to help him.”

The Galilean, although I had spoken, fixed his eyes on the impassive face of the Emperor’s physician, saying, “You must have faith in God and a physician must heal himself before he can heal others.”

Angered, my colleague blurted, “You might try your faith on the Governor’s child and let us know the result.”

The Galilean nodded. “I shall ask my Father in Heaven to heal her through me,”

he said, unperturbed by my colleague's manner. "And if it be his will the child will live."

The Emperor's physician smiled cynically. "So!" he exclaimed knowingly. "You place all the responsibility on the Deity, and if the child is not healed then it is no fault of your own. Is that it?" he concluded bluntly.

The Galilean's answer may have been an evasion but it was food for thought. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." He looked across the table at Chuza. "Go and tell the ruler that I will come to his house, and tell him not to be faithless but believing."

"And when shall I tell the noble ruler you will enter his house, Master?" Chuza asked.

"Just before the going down of the sun tomorrow," was the significant reply, the same as the one he made to the man whose boy he had healed at the going down of the sun that day in Cana.

It was after the meal that we decided to go to the villa of Pontius Pilate, for we knew it was not wisdom to have him discover we were in Caesarea and had made no effort to inform him of our presence. So we left the inn well after sundown and strolled a winding street that led to a terraced hill on which stood the Judean procurator's house, and we climbed to it.

It was easy to see that Pontius Pilate lived in no Spartan simplicity, for the place was large and rich in furnishings and costly to keep up. Did he have a secret source of revenue? I asked myself the question as we waited in the atrium, for my colleague had told me that the Roman government did not furnish a residence for its procurators, though their remuneration was ample. At the very moment I was asking myself such a question, my colleague whispered, "Perhaps all this luxury makes it clear why the Judean Procurator wanted to crucify the man who whipped the money-changers and caused a great falling off in the Temple receipts. Eh?"

"You mean Pilate shares personally in the Temple tribute?" I replied in low tones.

"You know that he does, Luke Galen," my colleague said with conviction.

And just then the Judean Procurator and his wife appeared, both uttering exclamations of pleased surprise.

"What brings you to Caesarea?" Pilate questioned curiously. "Surely your mission is not at an end."

"No," my colleague replied. "There is yet much to do. We came to see the child of Vitellius."

"Is she worse?" Claudia questioned half fearfully, though we both knew she was not thinking of the child.

“She is no better,” Sergius Cumanus answered with professional caution. “But have you made no inquiry about the child since your return from Jerusalem?” he asked pointedly.

“I—I have not gone near the Governor’s palace,” the woman stammered.

“My wife still fears she was contaminated by dining at the palace that night,” her husband said with a short laugh. “She examines her flesh every day and if she ever finds a rash of any kind she will die of fright.”

“My husband, as you see, is beautifully sympathetic toward my fears,” Claudia said resentfully.

By way of changing the subject, Pilate led the way to the library, saying, “You might inform me of all that has happened to you since you left Jerusalem for the realm of Herod Antipas.”

“Oh!” Claudia exclaimed before either Sergius or I could say a word. “Have you seen Herodias, the Tetrarch’s new wife? They say she is not beautiful. I do not know. I only know that they avoided us when they came to Caesarea from Rome—which is my husband’s fault, as he cannot endure her husband.”

“Shall I embrace a man who journeyed all the way to Rome and begged Caesar to take the rule of Judea and Samaria out of my hands and add these provinces to his own?” The Procurator’s wrath exploded in a question that was meant for the whole creation rather than as an answer to his wife.

“But Herod Antipas failed, even as we knew he had failed before he arrived here from Rome,” she insisted. “So you should have invited him here and taunted him with his failure. And I could have gloated over his bride.”

The Judean Procurator controlled himself with a great effort and, ignoring his wife and the political differences with the Herodians of Jewry, he requested us to narrate our experiences since leaving Jerusalem. There was something in his query that made us uneasy, though there was nothing else to do except give him certain facts, for he would soon know of the presence of Chuza and Joanna, formerly in his employ, and of the Galilean and his friends, not to speak of the dancing woman of Magdala.

Amazement was stamped on the faces of Pilate and his wife as we, taking turns, narrated our experiences in Galilee, and the only difference in our recitals lay in my colleague’s outspoken skepticism of the healing powers of Jesus of Nazareth and of my reticence to come to any conclusion concerning them.

“The Healer must be in league with the gods,” Claudia exclaimed at one point in our narration.

“Or the devils,” her husband corrected bluntly.

“He has been accused of both,” I answered. And then we went on with our joint recital.

But if Claudia’s interest was in that portion of our story that dealt with the relations of the Galilean and Mary Omri, the Judean Procurator considered only the fact that we had somehow managed to get our mission tangled up with an itinerant exorcist who was also a disturber of the peace. Not that Pilate cared a rotten pomegranate about the trouble the Healer was giving Herod’s realm, but here was the fellow who disturbed the rule of the Judean Procurator and even challenged the time-honored business of the Temple’s money-changers.

“It is beyond me,” Pilate suddenly interrupted, “how the Healer and his band got away from Captain Titus the night the Passover ended last April. I was never satisfied with his explanation. Anyhow, he is too much the sentimentalist to be at the head of the Jerusalem Cohort, his closest friends being Jews of the common people rather than anyone else, either Jews of the ruling classes or Romans in the government service.”

“And it is just as mysterious how that redheaded dancing girl escaped Malchus,” Claudia put in, determined that the sex element should not be left out. “I think I shall go to Strato’s Inn and have her tell me all about it.”

“Cease troubling your frail brain over this woman,” her husband growled. “What I wish to do is to consult with Chuza, my former factor, and see if he will return to my employ. I could use him better than ever, now that he is so well acquainted with the affairs of my enemy, Herod Antipas.” He hesitated and then fixed his cold, mistrustful gaze on me. “You say that Joanna ministers constantly to the Galilean of her substance,” he resumed. “Does she realize that she is lavishing gold upon one that the authorities, both civil and religious, may have to destroy?”

“I think she is well aware of the serious offense Jesus of Nazareth committed in the eyes of Temple and State officials when he drove the money-changers from the Temple,” I replied.

“And you, Luke Galen,” Pilate snapped; “and you also, Sergius Cumanus: don’t you think the act of this fellow was criminal and revolutionary. Or do you?” he quickly propounded in his most suspicious manner.

“Revolutionary,” I admitted, “but certainly not criminal. For the man struck at abuses, not at the venerable law of the half-shekel payment.”

“So that is the way you view it. Eh?” the Judean ruler said.

“Precisely, Excellency,” I returned. “And it is the way all good Jews view it. In fact, the act of the Galilean Healer has the sanction of thousands.”

My assertion angered the Procurator. “I will nail that fellow to a cross if he tries

it again,” he all but shouted, “and you may go and tell him what I said. I will not tolerate rebels coming out of Herod’s poorly managed provinces and rioting in my own. Go and warn this sorcerer to remain away from Jerusalem if he values his skin.”

“But he doesn’t value his skin—at least not above the integrity of his conscience,” I revealed.

“Are you defending him?” Pilate demanded. “Do you support him and his kind in acts of violence against Caesar?”

The interrogation might have found me, half Jew that I was, at a loss for words; but the Emperor’s physician came to my aid. “Why invoke the name of Caesar?” he inquired. “This whole business is questionable and I shall so inform Caesar. What a commentary on Roman rule to find the government in league with a degenerate High Priest to fleece the Jewish masses in the name of religion.”

“Enough!” Pilate roared. “My government does not obligate me to quarrel with anyone over its policies in Jewry. It is my work to collect just one-half of all the Temple tribute and I shall do it if I have to slaughter half the Jewish population. I wonder what Lucius Vitellius would say if he knew your frame of mind toward this exorcist, for the Governor is aware that the riot in the Temple at the last Passover cost the government a great sum in reduced tax collections.”

I shall never forget my colleague’s bold and contemptuous rejoinder, for he said, “Gold above God! Small wonder that increasing numbers of Romans can no longer believe in priestly professions. How glad I am my noble father reared me in atheism. But he never dreamed that the Roman government would bolster a decaying hierarchy in order to divide the spoils.” He stopped short and his eyes were as hard as his tones when he added, “Now go and tell Lucius Vitellius all that I have said, or even write it to Caesar.”

“I shall!” Pontius Pilate exploded. “And I shall insist that Jesus of Nazareth, now in this city, be seized and imprisoned for his act at the last Passover.” The Procurator turned abruptly and left the room.

We knew we were dismissed, though Claudia did all she could to mollify the Emperor’s physician, even attempting mirthless banter in foolish remarks about Mary Omri. But our visit was over and we soon made our excuses and departed.

“I admired your defense,” I told my colleague as we descended to the street and began our long walk toward Strato’s Inn. “But your temper may cause trouble for the Galilean.”

“Not if he heals the leprous child of Lucius Vitellius,” he replied. My amazement was so great that I could not speak further, though I did not quite fathom his meaning

nor reconcile the contradictions involved in his remark. But I knew a crisis was at hand.

## XX

The dawn of the day the Galilean Healer was to go to the bedside of the Governor's leprosy daughter found my colleague and me out of bed with a beginning anxiety and restlessness that increased hour by hour. Our growing apprehension was over more than one situation. In the first instance, we were in Pilate's domains, for Caesarea, the Roman capital of all Syria, was on the coast line of the province of Samaria. Consequently, if the Procurator wanted to exercise his authority he could legally do so despite the fact that Caesarea, the governing city, was a law unto itself with the Roman Legate as a court of final appeal. But we wondered what Vitellius would do if Pilate demanded that Jesus of Nazareth be seized and taken to Jerusalem, the scene of his offense.

Now my colleague's anxiety was equal to my own, though there may have been variations in our motives. I believe he was afraid that, in the event of the arrest of the Healer, Mary Omri would be taken to Jerusalem also, which meant she would be in the power of Malchus once more.

"Don't you think we should inform Mary Omri, first of all, of the Galilean's danger?" my companion asked as we partook of breakfast.

"Yes, I do," I replied, "and probably of her own."

The appetite of the Emperor's physician vanished at once because of my final remark. He got up from the table and I followed him. We went to the terrace, for the women always assembled there after breakfast to sun themselves and we knew Mary Omri was usually the first down. But this morning she was late and when she came Joanna and the Healer's mother were with her; perhaps it was just as well, for all were involved. We drew them to the far end of the terrace where we had a clear view of the sea, already dotted with sails, and I inquired at once of the whereabouts of Jesus of Nazareth.

"He rose even before the dawn," his mother said, "and went down into the Jewish quarter to consult with the Twelve. They are planning a walking journey northward as far as Tyre and Sidon."

"When do they start?" I asked.

"Tomorrow," she replied simply, "after the healing of the noble ruler's child."

I glanced at my colleague to note the effect of her words of confident faith on

him, but his face betrayed nothing. "It is necessary that we consult with your son before he goes," I stated.

"About what?" Mary Omri inquired before the Healer's mother could speak.

It was clear that the former dancing girl had sensed our anxiety. So we narrated the outcome of our interview with Pontius Pilate, withholding nothing. Both Mary Omri and Joanna were agitated, but the Galilean's mother was not. "My son fears nothing men may attempt to do to him," she said. "Nor will they do anything to him that his heavenly Father does not will." It was her old contention.

Here again was the occult manner and speech, and I might have been nonplussed except for the swift, helpful words of the Emperor's physician. "My government is merciless toward those who interfere with its financial policies," he stated frankly. "Whatever Caesar may condone, either in a vassal people or Romans, he forgives no offense against the Empire's fiscal customs. Both your son, madam, and those you call the Twelve are in danger," Sergius Cumanus insisted, speaking directly to the Healer's mother.

"We must believe the Emperor's physician," the lovely Joanna said as she slipped an arm around the elderly woman. "He knows the mind of Caesar; he knows the spirit of the Roman government."

"But after my son cures the noble ruler's daughter of leprosy, surely the Roman would let no harm befall him," the Jewish matron insisted shrewdly.

The wisdom of her observation was not lost even on the Emperor's physician, no matter what he thought about miracles and the power of Jesus of Nazareth to perform them. So he said, "The Governor may protect your son regardless of miracles, but we wish to be sure of our ground."

I felt that beneath my colleague's polite manner was a burning desire to leave nothing to the chance of the miraculous, so I said:

"We must see the Governor at once and then go down to the Jewish quarter and warn Jesus of Nazareth and his friends of possible danger." I turned to Mary Omri. "Perhaps you should go in advance of us and see the Healer." She nodded soberly and I hurried on. "Suggest to them that they remain at their inn until Sergius Cumanus and I get down from the Governor's palace."

Mary Omri agreed on the wisdom of our course and we started at once for the palace.

Lucius Vitellius was at breakfast when we arrived and, impatiently, we waited in the audience chamber. It was near the fourth hour of the day before he came. He greeted us warmly but questioningly and we made quick explanation. He listened in his grave, careful manner and then said, "I have not been in the house of the Judean



Procurator since that night when his wife acted so contemptuously on hearing the news that my child is a leper. But I will go at once and learn what he has in mind. Be at ease, good friends," he urged, noting how sorely we were troubled, "for the Galilean is to be my guest at sunset and not even Caesar could prevent him from coming, much less Pontius Pilate."

We thanked him and departed, for his day's task was beginning, and we knew it to be heavy. The Governor of all Syria, under the slowly disintegrating reign of old Emperor Tiberius, confronted greater problems than any other Roman ruler.

"Well, Luke Galen," my companion said as we left the palace, "we have Pontius Pilate chained for the day and the night." He halted on the great outer stairway and laid a detaining hand on my shoulder. "And if by chance the Healer's magic succeeds, or if he, once more, proves himself a great opportunist and our own therapy begins to manifest itself coincident with his visit to the leper girl, Lucius Vitellius will become his slave as the others have. And as you may become," he added smilingly.

"And what about yourself—O stubborn man of science—would you, even though the Galilean should raise the dead, still deny the testimony of your senses?"

"I would have to be very sure the man was dead," he retorted with a tantalizing laugh, in which I felt constrained to join.

The Jewish quarter in Caesarea was walled by custom and prejudice if in no other manner and all about it was a sea of paganism. For the city was the only one in Jewry in which the Jews themselves were a decided minority. It was as cosmopolitan as Alexandria in Egypt, though its Semitic population was poorer and more wretched. Down into the seething section we went, in the narrowest streets of the city, and on to the inn where we had halted the first day we entered Caesarea with the Healer and his household, and there we found the Twelve. They were making preparations for the noon meal—a veritable feast of fish and leeks and lentils, with a coarse red wine, and we were invited to dine.

Neither the Galilean nor Mary Omri was to be seen, so we made immediate and anxious inquiry concerning them. Simon Peter gave reply. "She came down here a while ago to tell us of Pilate's evil intentions and the Master returned to Strato's Inn with her," he revealed. "We attempted to persuade him to remain with us but he gave no heed to anyone, not even Mary Magdalene. But he will return for the meal, so if you will remain—"

"We shall," the Emperor's physician said at once.

The meal proved the occasion for a dispute among the Twelve and it was difficult for us to understand all that was said. For the first time in our presence they

discussed freely the future of Jesus of Nazareth and themselves. Being part Jewish and conversant with the eschatology of this Semitic people I had no great difficulty in following their conversation. But Sergius Cumanus was puzzled. For they talked of the end of the world; of the judgment to come; of Divine vengeance that would fall upon their foes. Still, after the manner of Semites, they sometimes disagreed violently. Finally they left off discussing such vague subjects and their conversation took a fascinating turn; they began to wonder among themselves how long it would be before they were able to heal the sick and cast out demons.

As we listened I recalled what John, the son of Zebedee, once said of their failure to perform miracles, though now he was silent as they disputed. For some of them were imbibing too freely of new wine and there was a gluttony about their feasting that began to make their conversation dull as it grew in violence. Zelotes and Judas were the chief offenders and several regarded the Emperor's physician closely when the fierce-looking Zealot growled, "If the hour ever comes when I am able to perform miracles I will waste no time on the filthy beggars and their sores. I will use my power to slay—to slay those who hold us in bondage. What do you say to this, Judas Iscariot?" he asked, turning to the sullen fellow who was forever jingling coins in a bag.

"I may heal the sick when the time comes that I can work miracles," Judas replied, "but I will demand gold for it; and if the sick are rich—and I won't bother with the beggars—I will demand much gold." He paused and stared at my colleague and myself. "The Master could have enough gold for us all if he healed for money as all physicians do."

The Emperor's physician nudged me and chuckled, but I was too intent on catching all that was said to share his levity. For John gave Judas a severe rebuke, saying, "Your words are evil and it is well the Master is not present to hear them. Nor will you ever be able to heal the sick as long as gain fills your thoughts, Judas Iscariot."

But there was one pronounced skeptic among them—Thomas. "I shall never be able to heal the sick," he declared, "nor do I believe that any one of you will."

"I shall," spoke up Simon Peter with an amazing show of dogmatism. "And I shall be the first among you to heal the sick."

There were scoffing murmurs that followed Peter's declaration, followed by harsher disputation, and the place became noisy. More wine was called for and a man and a boy—father and son—who had been waiting on us hurried in with well-filled amphorae and began to serve the ones who had demanded it. The boy—a sickly-looking lad of ten or twelve—grew very nervous and spilled wine over the

garments of Zelotes. He jumped to his feet, seized the boy and shook him violently, then hurled him across the room. The lad fell to the floor and did not rise. Both my colleague and I turned on the big Zealot and began to curse him when the boy on the floor gave an unearthly scream and started to foam at the mouth.

“My boy—the demons tear him!” the father cried in fear and grief.

I got to my feet and started to go to the lad’s assistance, but Sergius Cumanus checked me. “Wait,” he begged. “It is our opportunity to see the Healer’s friends fail to revive the boy. Then we will do it, for it is nothing more than a spasm.” Then, lifting his voice, he cried a challenge: “Why don’t some of you cast the demons out of the lad?”

The Twelve looked at one another in some consternation and then, with one accord, crowded round the boy on the floor, now writhing and foaming, and began their exorcisms. Some cried one thing and some another and above the tumult we caught certain phrases—“Depart, evil ones. . . . Come out of him. . . . Let him alone you that torment him. . . . Away into the sea. . . .” And many other commands they spoke to the demons they believed to be in the epileptic; but his convulsions increased.

“Oh, oh!” wailed the frantic father. “He has never been so bad. The demons never tore him so. Oh, help me!”

The Emperor’s physician acted quickly. “Fetch me a pitcher of cold water,” he commanded the father. Then he knelt beside the writhing form and seized the boy’s hands. “Hasten with the water,” he called. “Seize the boy’s limbs, Luke Galen,” he ordered. I obeyed just as the father rushed up with a pitcher of water. “Pour it over his head and neck,” my colleague directed. The father of the boy obeyed; the child gasped, but began to struggle more violently, all but twisting out of our hands. “A bad case,” Sergius Cumanus said to me as we tightened our hold upon the lad. “More water,” he demanded. “And hurry—”

“The Master!” someone cried, interrupting the Emperor’s physician. And Jesus of Nazareth stood in our midst.

“More water!” the Emperor’s physician shouted, ignoring the presence of the Galilean. But no one obeyed; all recoiled before the accusing eyes of the Healer.

“We—we tried to cast the demons out,” one of the Twelve stammered.

Jesus of Nazareth looked at them and then at the table, now littered with the remains of the feast, and back again to his friends. “Have I not told you,” he began in tones of rebuke, “that this kind comes out only through prayer and fasting? And now you are filled with wine and flesh! O faithless and perverse generation, how long must I still be with you and bear with you?” He ceased as suddenly as he had begun

his rebuke and, stooping, touched the shoulder of the Emperor's physician, who yet held the boy's hands. "Release him," he said in gentler tones, "and I will heal him."

I let go of my hold on the boy, and my colleague, after a moment's hesitation, did the same. We got to our feet and waited. The Galilean, kneeling, touched the child's foaming lips but spoke no words. But I thought I saw his own lips move as if in prayer. And then the boy quieted; the foam no longer pulsed from his mouth; the set look to his eyes changed to a natural expression, and as full consciousness returned he looked up into the Galilean's face and smiled.

## XXI

Mary Omri greeted us on our arrival at Strato's Inn and said that we, including the Healer and herself, had been invited to the Governor's palace for the evening meal. "It will be after sunset; after the Master heals the leprous daughter of the noble ruler," she explained in a manner so artless and believing that there was little left for us to do but murmur our thanks.

But we could not help wondering about the Governor's invitation, especially the inclusion of the former dancing woman, though I felt reasonably sure that Jesus of Nazareth had something to do with it. I became sure of my ground when she told us that he would go to the palace after we arrived. So the three of us started for the house of Lucius Vitellius half an hour before sunset and the mood of each was one that led to silence.

The Roman ruler greeted us calmly and suggested that we wait in the atrium until the Galilean came, and then we discovered that Mary Omri had been in consultation with Vitellius and what passed between them left him far more humble about the visit of the Healer than I had believed the stern Legate could ever become. For during the conversation, while awaiting the arrival of the Healer, the Governor said, "I am not worthy to have Jesus of Nazareth come under my roof."

The sun was about to drop into the sea when the Galilean came. He paused in the doorway of the atrium to which a servant had conducted him and simply said, "Peace!" But it sounded like a blessing.

"Welcome to my house," Lucius Vitellius cried, bowing low in the manner of Semitics rather than giving the Roman hailing sign. "Thrice welcome to my house and to all I possess," he added fervently.

Ignoring the ruler's cordial greeting the Galilean said, "Do you believe that I am able to make your child whole?"

“I believe,” Vitellius answered humbly, “and may the Lord God help my unbelief.” And in his cry—for cry it was—I knew he had traveled an immeasurable distance beyond an outworn pagan creed. And so it was that he led us down into the walled garden and on to the Aesculapian house.

Julia Vitellius, swathed in oil-soaked bandages, lay on her beautiful bed, languid, indifferent and almost insensible to all that was going on around her. Her eyes, naturally large and now accentuated by her emaciated condition, stared into the semidarkness of the gold-painted ceiling and her thin fingers, like candles that had been shaven down, picked at the gauze covering that seemed a funeral shroud.

“Julia,” her father began as the white-robed attendant retired, “another great physician is here to see you.” He paused as if at a loss for further words and his tactful speech revealed to us the true nobility of his character. “But this one gives no potions. His healing is in his words and touch. See, daughter, he stands beside your couch and is ready to make your flesh clean. Look at him and believe that he is able to heal you, even as I believe.”

The wan girl turned her head slightly and looked up into the face of Jesus of Nazareth, and as her burning eyes met his own beautiful and luminous ones they held like a magnet. Then, with a gesture that was both gentle and kingly, the Galilean spread his hands above her wasted body and said, “Daughter, be of good cheer, for I have come to make you whole. And according to the faith of your household—” there was a slight pause—“so shall it be done unto you.”

We watched closely. For this reason we were present; for this purpose we had followed this man throughout Jewry; and there was not a moment that we were not men of science observing all phenomena. We saw the Galilean suddenly lift his head; his lips moved, but we heard no words; yet I knew he was at prayer; I knew that he was invoking that great central source of all life. And in that moment I learned the method—if method it could be called—of his healing power.

But my colleague was curious and, as the Galilean turned away from the bedside of the diseased child, the Emperor’s physician took his place and, bending down, began a close scrutiny of the leprous flesh. I watched him carefully as, from head to foot, he made his examination: the scaly flesh, the open sores, the swellings—nothing escaped him. He was the cold man of science, alert, thorough, unhurried. By the time he concluded his work the Galilean and the Governor were gone from the Aesculapian house and with them had gone Mary Omri, nor had she spoken a word while there.

I waited patiently, wondering whether my colleague expected to find some change in the girl, not through miracle but as the direct result of our own therapy. But

there was no change. Julia Vitellius lay as she had lain for months while attendants bathed and oiled her flesh. Servants prepared tempting dishes of the food we ordered; singers chanted beautiful hymns and musicians plucked at the strings of harps; flowers embowered her; and powerful opiates induced merciful slumber. Not so much as by the flicker of an eyelid did she manifest the slightest interest in our presence nor in my colleague's minute examination. But I had noticed that her eyes had followed the Healer from the room and I had heard a deep sigh well up from her as he vanished from her sight.

The meal in the great dining hall of the palace is among my lasting memories, certainly not because of the food, for it was surprisingly simple—too simple for the gold and silver dishes on the table and for the marble room with its tessellated floors and beamed ceiling of Lebanon cedar. There was no sheep cooked in sweet wine; no roasted boar's rib glazed with figs; no antelope seethed in milk and sprinkled with anise and cumin. But there were pyramids of fruit and wheaten bread and goat's milk; there was a large fish for each one of us, broiled in leeks, and every vegetable that the soil could grow.

But the conversation—here was rich food, and it was served up, strangely enough, by a Jewish provincial whose education, if rumor were true, was in carpentry and not in the arts and sciences. For the man was a matchless storyteller, fascinating us with tales from the folklore of his race; but more than this, he was the philosopher who transcended the schools and penetrated, so I thought, to the core of reality. And then, near the close of the meal, he surprised us by his sparkling wit and humor—a side of which we had known nothing—and the room rang with laughter. But the wit sometimes carried a sting and the humor pointed a moral. For this man understood life and human motives and read the heart as if it were an unrolled parchment.

It was at the close of the meal, and after we had discussed with the Galilean the growing danger of his position in Jewry, that he spoke freely and frankly of his proposed journey northward to Tyre and Sidon. As both cities were pagan to the core, far out of the bounds of Jewry and worshippers of the female deity, Ashtoreth, I was amazed when he broke into sudden denunciation of the towns in the region of the Sea of Galilee, illy contrasting them with the baldly pagan civilization of the coast of Phoenicia. For he said, "Woe to Chorazin and to Bethsaida, for if the miracles performed in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have been sitting penitent in sackcloth and ashes. And Capernaum, exalted to heaven, will be brought low as hell. For in the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you."

I glanced at the Galilean and there was something of baffled rage in his looks and tones; instinctively I knew that, officially at least, the gates of the Galilean cities had been shut in his face and that he was about to journey to the very heart of the pagan social order of Syria. Did he expect to find these gates of its cities flung wide to him?

It was after the Galilean and Mary Omri left the palace that Lucius Vitellius said, "I shall see that no harm befalls Jesus of Nazareth, no matter where he may go in Syria, for I have great faith that my child is healed of her leprosy."

We were silent in the presence of this ruler's humility and trust, though when we took our departure Sergius Cumanus blurted, "Did you ever hear anything so illogical? And from an educated Roman, too! What does it all mean—are we drifting back into the superstition of the dead centuries? Did Hippocrates live in vain? Are all the achievements of science to be annulled and ignorance set upon the throne?" I was in no mood to argue and made no reply. "But wait—wait until the leprous child of the Syrian Governor dies. Then what?"

"Do you think she will die?" I finally said.

"Within a month unless—unless our treatment saves her life," he replied. "And that would, of itself, be something of a miracle."

"I pray for a miracle of any kind," I said. Then we went on to the inn and to our couches, for we were weary and both had come to an hour when sleep would mean our own healing.

But while the Emperor's physician was disrobing he said, "I wonder if the Healer is taking the women of his household on the journey to the Phoenician country."

"I don't know," I replied. "Shall we go with him in either event?"

He shook his head. "I prefer to remain in Caesarea and relax," he told me. "And if you will remain with me we will swim in the sea and fish and sail."

"Very well," I agreed. "But we should not idle too much. Why not write our first report of our mission and send it to Rome to your father?"

"An excellent suggestion, Luke Galen," he remarked as he dropped down on his couch.

But I lay for some time, weary as I was, thinking of the records that must be compiled of our recent findings and of the notes I would jot down in my diary—one I kept secretly and that I might never permit the Emperor's physician to see.

## XXII

I think I was as happy as the Emperor's physician when we learned, the next

morning, that the women would not accompany the Galilean and the Twelve into the Phoenician country. It was Mary Omri who gave us the information.

“He desires only the Twelve to go with him,” she stated. “He wishes to train them how to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits and to tell the good news.”

The Emperor’s physician started to make some comment, or perhaps to question her, but he checked himself and I inquired when the Healer and his friends would leave the city.

“They left before dawn,” she said.

“How long will they be gone?” I asked.

She shook her head. “His mother and I think we should go to Jerusalem and await their return,” she said at length.

It was then that the Emperor’s physician thrust himself into the conversation, and quickly. “Jerusalem,” he echoed. “Why go there? It is not safe for you to go there. Where would you sojourn while there?” His questions fairly tumbled over one another, and I could see that he was both worried and irritated.

Her answers to all his questions were frank and immediate. “We will go to the house of Zebedee, whose wife is the sister of the Healer’s mother,” she said. “And we will go to Jerusalem because the Master intends to face toward that city on his return from Tyre and Sidon.”

Here was disconcerting news, nor did we understand its full import, nor did Mary Omri offer any explanation. But it was at this juncture that the Emperor’s physician interposed strong objection to the women going to Jerusalem, and I think he sensed in Mary Omri’s words something of her disinclination to remain longer at Strato’s Inn. Not only was it expensive but its atmosphere was no longer to the liking of the former dancing woman of Magdala; indeed, the place was beginning to pall on my colleague and myself. Idle Roman and Greek women, whose husbands were in the consular service; expatriate adventurers with sophisticated airs; and a number of wealthy families of Semitic background, who preferred the gay society of Caesarea to the drabness of Jerusalem, dwelt at the inn the year round and poisoned it with gossip.

Knowing that Chuza and Joanna did not like the inn’s atmosphere any more than did the others, including ourselves, Sergius Cumanus asked Mary Omri if she and the Healer’s mother would remain in Caesarea provided a house was secured for them and Chuza’s family. She appeared uncertain and he pressed the point. “Wait a little longer,” he begged. “Wait until Jesus of Nazareth and the Twelve return; then all of you, together, can go to Jerusalem if you must. But before any of you go Luke Galen and I—and I think I can speak for the Syrian Governor—will want to know if



you will be safe in Jerusalem.”

She was silent and he hurried on to enumerate the perils they would confront, though it was clear that he was eager to have her remain in Caesarea for reasons more personal. “Herod Antipas may now be at war with the Arabian king,” he went on to say, “and the province of Judea may be involved. Jerusalem will be besieged for many months and all Jewry involved. Besides, do not forget either your personal enemies—like Malchus—or those of Jesus of Nazareth. Wait,” he implored again, “wait until Lucius Vitellius has time to settle all these things, for it now seems certain that he will have to send troops to the Jordan River country to prevent both internal and external upheavals.”

“I will talk with the Master’s mother and let you know,” Mary Omri promised. “But of one thing I am certain—the Master is going to Jerusalem when he returns.”

“But why?” the Emperor’s physician questioned impatiently. “Why should he go there, of all places?”

“Because the Master has said that a prophet should not die out of Jerusalem,” she replied, startling us.

Neither of us felt like prolonging the conversation, so we left her where we found her, on the terrace off the inn, and decided that we should seek Chuza and Joanna and present our new problem. We found them in their rooms and, fortunately, they were having a family conference on the very subject of leaving Strato’s Inn.

We informed them of all Mary Omri told us, which greatly disturbed them, and when they heard of our wish to secure a house for them until the Galilean returned they were pleased. “But you, Joanna,” I said, “will have to convince Mary Omri and the Healer’s mother of the wisdom of the plan.”

And she did, nor did it take her long, for she went at once, leaving us to discuss serious matters with her husband. Uncertain days were ahead of us and we could not forecast their outcome. When Joanna returned with word that the Healer’s mother and Mary Omri were willing to take a private house in Caesarea with them and await the Galilean’s return from Phoenicia’s pagan towns, we decided to go straight to Lucius Vitellius with a problem as trivial as locating a residence. His interest was immediate; it was even enthusiastic, for his concern was twofold: he wanted an excuse for retaining full knowledge of the Healer’s going and coming, and his concern for my colleague and myself was deep and sincere. So he called his steward and requested him to secure a house. “It must be a good one,” the Governor said. “One with furnishings and comforts.”

“Would my own residence suffice?” the steward inquired at once. “For my family is now journeying toward Tyre and will abide in that city for many weeks.”

Lucius Vitellius nodded approvingly. "It is a place of the better sort," he assured us, "in a quiet street well beyond the markets and shops. Your friends will be comfortable there."

"We are sure it will meet all their needs and more," I hastened to say.

"Then you may take it over today," the owner said graciously.

"And you may occupy a room in the chamberlain's quarters in the palace," the Governor told his steward.

So the Governor's steward made arrangements to see Chuza, former steward of Herod Antipas, and move both his family and that of the Healer's to the designated residence, and we were at ease.

"How is Julia today?" I inquired of Vitellius after the steward departed.

It was a crucial question, a crucial moment, and I knew if I did not speak at once my courage would fail. Twenty hours had passed since the visit of the Healer to the leprous child's bedside and, while I had no precedent to go by—none concerning leprosy's cure through supernatural agencies—I remembered Captain Titus' soldier and Chuza's little boy and Legion, the Gerasene demoniac, and the blind man at the Jerusalem pool and Mary Omri on the beach at Magdala, and I wondered if there were any change in the flesh of the little leper out in the beautiful Aesculapian house.

"Come and see," he said quietly.

But instead of leading us down into the garden he ascended the marble stairway that led to a great wing of the palace overlooking the sea and, wonderingly, we followed. For Julia had been removed from the Aesculapian house to a room adjacent to her father's sleeping quarters. She was sitting in a big chair beside an open window and her eyes were upon a great ship moving slowly out of the harbor. She heard us enter the room and turned her head, and then she smiled at us—the first time she had ever done so—and held out her sorest hand, as she always had done, for our examination. "I am better now," she said gravely.

She may have been, and I think she was, but her sore hand belied, or seemed to belie, what she said. Neither my colleague nor I could see any change in her flesh; but there was one in her spirit. The old listlessness and melancholy had gone and she was alive to our presence and—which she had never been before—pleased and cordial.

Our stay was brief, but it was long enough for the unprejudiced mind to see that the girl was improved—definitely so—no matter the disagreements as to what had brought it about. Nor were there disagreements—none in the presence of Lucius Vitellius, and not until my colleague and I were out of the palace was anything said

about the change in the little leper.

“Something has happened,” the Emperor’s physician admitted at length as we went toward Strato’s Inn, from which our friends were about to go to take over the residence of the Governor’s steward. I said nothing but kept walking. My silence irritated my companion. “Something has happened,” he repeated. “Julia is better, though there are no indications of it in her flesh. Of course you are ready, Luke Galen, to tell me that the visit of an itinerant thaumaturgist to her bedside produced the change.”

“No,” I said, secretly rejoicing that I had him at last where I could harass him. “I am not ready to pass judgment upon the Galilean’s therapy. But I suppose you are ready to tell me that he timed this visit also—timed it to coincide with the potency of our own therapy. If so, you should at least give the Healer credit for amazing foreknowledge if nothing more.”

It was now his time to be silent, nor did he speak another word until we arrived at the inn, where we found the others just about ready to cross the city to the new place of sojourn. All were happy over the prospect. The Governor’s faithful steward was there with an excellent vehicle drawn by two of the finest horses from the stables of his master, and he was assisting them with their luggage. Mary Omri and Joanna were directing the work and they greeted us banteringly.

“When you tire of the Strato’s food,” Joanna said, “come and we will give you fig cake and milk fresh from the steward’s goat farm just beyond the walls of the city. He has promised us half a firkin a day, brought to our door.”

“Shall we come tomorrow?” the Emperor’s physician asked, looking at the lovely Mary.

“Day after tomorrow,” she corrected. “We will be too busy for guests before then, is it not so, Joanna?”

But the matron shook her head after noting my colleague’s dismal countenance. “Let them come tomorrow for the evening meal, Mary,” she suggested. “They have earned it, haven’t they?”

“A hundredfold,” the girl agreed warmly.

And so it was planned.

But it might have been better for us if we had gone with them then and there, for after they left we very nearly quarreled. I knew it was coming and tried to avoid it, but the Emperor’s physician was in no mood to be turned aside. It was down at the seaward end of the terrace—our old idling place—that he returned to the subject of the Governor’s child. “Luke Galen,” he began as if he were about to rebuke me, “I fear you are first the Semite and last the scientist, for your education in the sciences

does not seem to have eradicated certain racial characteristics bequeathed to you by one side of your house.”

“For example?” I questioned as calmly as possible. He hesitated as if afraid of wounding me, so I assisted him. “You mean because I am half Jew that I am heir to superstition and ignorance in the healing art?”

“You put it the worst way,” he objected. “But I cannot help wondering what my father, your old teacher, would say.”

“Well,” I replied, “in the first instance he would be more considerate of my racial characteristics. Of course this may be the basic difference between you and your father.”

“You scored that time, Luke Galen,” he admitted. “Still, I believe that were my father here and confronted by experiences like my own, he would hardly concede the failure of his medical science and the success of thaumaturgy.”

“From all I remember of your good father,” I said, “were he here he would not close his mind to the phenomena inherent in your experiences with the diseases in Jewry. Take the case of Julia Vitellius for example: you can not deny that, just yesterday, she was hopeless; today, well, there is hope.”

“She is not cured,” he returned stubbornly. “Her flesh has not altered. Tomorrow may find her in the old moods of melancholia and indifference to all that goes on about her.”

“But what is your explanation for her greatly altered mood today?” I interrogated.

He grew thoughtful and was slow to respond, but when he did so I felt he had moved a little closer to empiricism in the healing art. “I am not blind to the rare personality and exceeding charm of Jesus of Nazareth,” he asserted. “He has probed human nature to its depths, which, within itself, is miraculous. Perhaps his very presence is healing. My father, during his long practice, possessed a measure of this power. I do not. What a physician the Galilean would have made if he had studied in the Hippocratic school and gained the sciences!”

“So that is all you see in the man—just an engaging personality. His is more than power through personality,” I contended. “He has tapped the source of all power—God! Of this I am convinced.”

“Then the healing art is nothing more than belief in the gods and an appeal to them—is that what you think?” His tones were filled with irritation. How singular it was that one so gifted, so stamped with the image of the Divine, should be so skeptical of the very source of his gifts.

I shook my head in answer to his cynical question, saying, “The healing art—

mine and yours—has its greatest ally in faith, faith in the reality of the unseen. Someday medical science will make this discovery—the discovery that man’s psyche governs his flesh—and when this comes to pass the race will gain mastery over many diseases that now threaten to destroy it.”

“Medical science has no need of a religious ally, if that is what you mean,” he asserted dogmatically. “If I thought so I would practice in an Aesculapian temple—which no reputable physician, trained in the Hippocratic school, ever does. But there is no God—much less minor deities—so why invoke aid from that which does not exist?”

“Your rejection of the idea of God does not banish him from the universe, my dear Sergius,” I retorted. “It only closes your own mind to him.”

“And prevents me, in my medical practice, from descending to a mere sorcerer,” he replied cuttingly.

“Or cuts you off from a source of power which, added to your science and skill, would enable you to approximate the miraculous in your practice,” I corrected.

“I wish I could believe that,” the Emperor’s physician said, almost humbly.

And here once more was a flash of something that lighted up the darkness of his unbelief, revealing to me a noble nature walled round by prejudices deeper than those of religious superstition and ignorance. For here was a dogmatism of learning no less untenable than that of ignorance itself.

But if we were quarreling—and we were dangerously near it—other dangers, not far off, brought us back to our old unity and brought experiences beyond anything we ever imagined would confront us in our medical mission to Syria.

### XXIII

It was the third week of the Galilean’s absence in the regions of Tyre and Sidon that Lucius Vitellius summoned us to the palace late one afternoon. Our sailboat—one in which Mary Omri sometimes cruised with us or fished beyond the Caesarea mole—had just docked when a messenger, who had waited half the afternoon for our return from a day’s fishing, accosted us and said that the Governor desired to see us at once. We hurried to our inn, made a quick change of garments, and made speed in going to the palace. We were ushered up to the great library where we had spent many hours and found the Syrian ruler pacing the floor. He stopped short as we entered and cried, “My daughter! My beloved Julia!”

“Is she worse?” the Emperor’s physician questioned. And his tones were strange

—nearly exultant. For Julia Vitellius' condition had improved steadily, though slowly, in the twenty days that had elapsed since the Galilean visited her—so slowly in fact, that I was puzzled. For if she had been healed through supernatural agencies why was the change so gradual as to be barely perceptible, which had given my critical colleague his opportunity to contend that our own therapy—not that of the Healer—had begun to tell? “Is she worse?” Sergius Cumanus repeated, for the Governor was staring at him without replying.

“Worse!” he echoed half belligerently. “She is healed. Come and see.” And he strode from the library toward the girl's apartment. We followed closely.

Julia Vitellius was standing before a mirror combing her hair, something she had not done since that day when the terrible sores appeared on her scalp. She turned when she heard us enter the room and we saw that a definite metamorphosis had taken place in her since we examined her the week before. Her hands were not only healed, the skin was fair. The scalp was healthy. There was not a scale to be seen on her flesh, and there was a satin smoothness about it that told us that health was flowing throughout a body which, a month before, was full of decay, premonitory of death. We concluded our examination while the girl, no longer diffident, challenged us—though good-humoredly—to find a blotch upon her skin.

“Well, Julia,” I began uncertainly, for my colleague was not inclined to utter a word, “your flesh is clean; you are free of the disease that afflicted you.”

“Was I a leper?” she asked so suddenly that none of us was quite prepared to answer.

But it was her father's duty and prerogative to reply and he did so after we nodded to him. “Yes, my dear child, you were a leper,” he said. “But how did you know?”

“I heard one of the servants tell another that no one in our house should be afraid of catching leprosy, now that the great miracle-man of Galilee had laid his hands on me,” she revealed. “But I think the Emperor's physician and Luke Galen of Antioch must have helped Jesus of Nazareth a great deal, didn't they, Father?” she said generously. “They were with me so often and did so many things for me.”

There was a moment of agonizing embarrassment and then the Emperor's physician endeared himself to me and to Lucius Vitellius forever when he said, “We did what we could, Julia; but the Healer did what we could not do.” He wheeled on me. “Shall we go, Luke Galen?” he suggested. And we left the healed child of the Syrian ruler.

But before we left the palace we learned that the troops of Herod Antipas had just been defeated in battle near the Dead Sea and he had sent swift messengers to

Lucius Vitellius imploring him to march the Ninth Legion from Caesarea to his rescue. For King Aretas of Arabia, whose daughter Herod had deserted to wed Herodias, his brother's wife, was making ready to march up the Jordan River Valley, lay waste the Tetrarch province of Perea and invest the cities of Galilee, including Tiberias.

"And I would not check the Arabians in their destruction of Herod Antipas," Lucius Vitellius declared, "if it did not menace Roman rule throughout Jewry."

But all I thought of was how the war in the Jordan River country would affect the Galilean Healer's avowed purpose to go to that area on his return from the Phoenician cities. For I now believed that the medical mission of the Emperor's physician was, somehow, bound up with the destinies of Jesus of Nazareth. So I said, "Excellency, what if the Galilean Healer should return to this city and insist on going to the troublesome portions of Jewry—would he be in danger?"

"Not from war itself," the Governor declared. He stopped short and scowled uncertainly. I read his thoughts and said:

"But what if Herod Antipas, or even one as low as Malchus, should attempt the Healer's life? The former doubtless includes him among the revolutionaries of Galilee and the latter probably is under orders from the party of the High Priest to apprehend him if he should enter Jerusalem."

"But is the power of arrest with the High Priest?" the Emperor's physician asked in some surprise.

"It is wherein the Temple is involved," the Governor answered, "and Malchus, as Captain of the Temple Guard, could throw the Healer into prison for a time. But only Pontius Pilate could pronounce the death penalty—if it should come to that. And I would see that it did not," he concluded grimly.

"But Malchus is not above assassination," the Emperor's physician reminded the Governor.

"True," he admitted thoughtfully. "So if the Galilean Healer is determined to journey toward Jerusalem I will see to it that he has a military escort, and I will also send word to the civil and the religious authorities of Jewry that they will be held accountable for any harm that befalls him."

"Then you should begin on Pontius Pilate," my colleague asserted, "for should the Galilean again interfere with the money-changers at Jerusalem the Judean Procurator will have him crucified. He has so declared."

"And I have—as I promised you I would do—warned Pontius Pilate of any hurried acts of violence against Jesus of Nazareth without a trial in the Roman way. Moreover, I informed the Judean Procurator that I will inquire into the practices of

the money-changers at Jerusalem before another Passover.”

“Then you have established a precedent,” I said, “and if the Galilean dies on a cross he will have not lived in vain. For he is the voice of the common people of Jewry, both against a degenerate High Priest and civil misrule and indifference to their plight. I hope you will defend Jesus of Nazareth against those who may seek his life, for his is the spirit of a great people—my own people, sir.”

“I will defend with my own life, for I owe my child’s life to him,” Lucius Vitellius cried. “I will defend him against the Herodians, or the procurators, or the party of the High Priest, or even Caesar himself.”

The Syrian Governor, probably unaware of his actions, lifted his clenched hands above his head as he turned his face upward as if imploring the aid of the gods in his vow; and we believed him. Still, there were the menace of assassination, the jealousy of a Roman-dominated priesthood, and the vindictiveness of the Judean Procurator—each and all yet remained. So upon the acts of the Galilean, after his return to Caesarea, much depended. Would he remain nobly indifferent to all that men might try to do to him? Such had been his attitude. Or would he give heed to reason and to his newfound friends and, for the present, remain under the immediate protection of Lucius Vitellius, who was ready to become the Galilean’s servant?

We received our answer in less than a week, for Jesus of Nazareth and the Twelve, travel-stained but thrilling with new healing triumphs—triumphs in which some of them participated—returned to Caesarea and announced another walking journey through Samaria, Jerusalem bound.

“Do you wish to accompany them?” my companion inquired as we sat at meat following a visit from Peter and John in which we were told of the Healer’s intentions.

“Do you?” I questioned in return. “You head the medical mission, you know.”

He grinned and I knew he was fully aware of my intentions to smoke him out and force him to admit that he would follow wherever Mary Omri might lead. Then he grew serious. “I have an old score to settle in Jerusalem or near by,” he said. “And the fact that Mary Omri is going straight back into danger is sufficient reason for my return to the Jordan River district. I need not tell you, Luke Galen, that I am deeply in love for the first time in my life, and I do not intend to lose her to kings and nobles. Much less will I stand by and see her molested by that Idumean. Am I clear?”

“Perfectly,” I said. “But have you no other motives which impel you to journey again with the Galilean?” I did not wait for his reply, hurrying out with something that I had kept deep within my heart. “Love also prompts me to journey again with Jesus



of Nazareth—love for the man himself.”

“Then we shall let nothing deter us, my good friend,” the Emperor’s physician cried with enthusiasm.

Nor did we, though we soon found ourselves involved in a controversy, stirred up among the Twelve, over the avowal of the Galilean to journey through the Jewish-despised province of Samaria.

The Emperor’s physician did not catch the full import of the objections of some of the Twelve to crossing the province of Samaria until I narrated a portion of Jewish history wherein Hebrew women had intermarried with a colony of Assyrian soldiers who settled in “Palestina” during the long exile of the major part of the nation. Their offspring came to be known as “Samaritans” and were despised by later generations of Jews because of their racial impurity.

“So modern Jews and Samaritans have no dealings with one another,” I stated, “and thus it is not difficult to understand the objections of the Galilean’s friends to entering the province.”

But Mary Omri, who was listening to our conversation, further clarified the controversy by telling us of an incident that took place on the borders of Samaria in the beginning of the Galilean’s ministry of healing. He and his band were refused lodging in a Samaritan town and some of them wanted him to call down fire from Heaven and destroy the place and its people. “But he rebuked his companions for their evilness of heart,” she explained, “and now, remembering their experiences in Samaria, those who were with him object to returning. They are urging him to take the Joppa road through Judea to Jerusalem.”

“And you, Mary Omri,” I said, “which road do you wish him to take?”

“Through Samaria,” she revealed without hesitation.

“Why?” my colleague inquired curiously.

“Because it is his wish and mine,” was her frank admission. Then, musingly and with a little laugh, she added, “An olden Israelitish king named Omri built the city of Samaria and there is a legend in my family that we sprang from him.”

The Emperor’s physician and I exchanged startled glances and I, drawing hard on my knowledge of Hebrew history, recalled a story in the Annals of the Kings of a certain ruler named Omri who permitted the tambourine women of Phoenicia to dance in the streets of the city he built and who set up the idols of Baal and Astarte, and who took one of his wives from the Coasts of Phoenicia, as Ahab did Jezebel, and she was the most famous dancer in the land. Could it be possible that the former dancing woman of Magdala had a lineage of dancing from a faraway tambourine woman of Phoenicia as well as her Greek mother? Moreover, was this beautiful

creature who stood before us in all the habiliments of modesty, now meek and mild, the offspring of King Omri, whose house was full of evil? So I sat and mused while Mary Omri and the Emperor's physician spoke in lighter vein and planned the practical side of the proposed journey through the land of the Samaritans.

But I was afraid that my colleague would overdo preparations for our journey through a province that was not more than thirty miles across. For he insisted on purchasing high laced shoes for walking, goat-hair tents for slumber, ostrich-feather sunshades for the women and donkeys for them to ride. And he bought rugs and shawls and items of food and new wine and water skins and filled them, being lavish with government money, for he was on a mission for Rome: let the politicians in the Senate rage in later days over his expensive journey. Just now he was not considering the cost, only the comfort—it amounted to that—of Mary Omri. Then, right in the midst of his buying, he met with singular orders from Jesus of Nazareth, orders given specifically to the Twelve, but which might include all who journeyed with him.

Henceforth, they would need little more than the clothes on their backs: no extra sandals, nor robes, nor hoods, nor gold in their wallets. For as the Twelve journeyed they were to help him heal the sick, cast out demons and tell the good news to the poor. There must be no regrets over leaving homes and lands, cattle and sheep, boats and nets, wives and children; and there must be no turning back—whoso turned back, after having put his hand to the plow, was not fit for the new age at hand. The Galilean dismissed the matter with a terse sociological observation: "They who wear fine clothing live in kings' houses."

There was something of finality in the Galilean's words to the Twelve. Outwardly they accepted this pattern for their future; inwardly, some raged, and among these were Zelotes and Judas; but all obeyed their Master's mandates. They ceased their objections to entering Samaria and eyed less hungrily material comforts they hoped to share out of the purchases made by Sergius Cumanus. But his own attitude toward the Healer's negation and indifference of the things that minister to the flesh brought sharp criticism from the Emperor's physician. "The Galilean's sudden preference for the austerities of life is well enough for himself and his band," he said to me as we discussed the plans for the journey. "But if he attempts to include the rest of us in his asceticism, especially the women, I will contend with him to his face."

I knew he had one woman in mind and I was interested in the outcome. Whatever he may have said to Mary Omri he never revealed to me, but the day we started on our journey found my beloved colleague garbed in plain habiliments and—which astounded me—of Jewish design. He wore a grayish caftan, belted closely,

a turban of the same color, heavy walking sandals, brown in color and thong-laced, and at his belt hung a beaded wallet, smaller than the one he had discarded and without distinction either in color or cast.

“Ah! A Roman turned Semite!” I ejaculated mockingly, for I knew that a woman’s hand had worked the change.

“Why be conspicuous in a land of Semites?” he growled.

“You are conspicuous,” I remarked unfeelingly and emphatically.

“But I had my way about the donkeys,” he was quick to say. “The women will ride them.”

“And I suppose you will lead one. Eh?”

He nodded, smiling good-naturedly. “Yes,” he said. “The one ridden by the most beautiful woman in the Empire.”

Up to the hour of starting no one knew anything of our final destination. Vaguely—at least to my colleague and me—the Galilean had spoken of going to Jerusalem before the next Passover. But that great festival was a spring affair and it was now September. Where and how Jesus of Nazareth and the Twelve and his family would spend the interim was beginning to puzzle and trouble us. Would they simply wander up and down the land unmindful of the rigors of winter and possible dangers from well-known foes? Pondering such problems brought together Chuza, the Governor and ourselves. Herod’s former steward and the Roman Legate offered certain solutions. Chuza said that the old stone house in the Wilderness of Bethaven, twelve miles from Jerusalem, would provide shelter and safety for all.

“As I may have told you,” he said, “the place is secluded, even a secret, and is practically inaccessible except to my wife and me. It is in a mountain valley, reached by a hidden pathway that enters a cave and emerges in the little valley. Here stands the stone mansion that gave refuge to our Maccabean fathers and it will—if God be for us—to ourselves.”

“Is its location within the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate or Herod Antipas?” Vitellius inquired. “For from all you have said it appears to be on the border between Judea and Perea.”

“It is,” Chuza stated. “But it is just within Judea, Pilate’s realm, in that volcanic range of small mountains between Jerusalem and Jericho.”

Lucius Vitellius nodded understandingly, saying, “Then you will not be bothered by Herod Antipas, though it is conceivable that Pontius Pilate may desire some acknowledgment from you. But I shall consult with him and pave the way for your freedom of movement and security,” he added grimly. Then he told us that the Ninth Legion would soon be in motion toward the Jordan River country to confront the

threatening Arabians who had already defeated Herod's troops. "The Ninth Legion will headquarter at Jericho and down at Machaerus on the Dead Sea," he said. "They will march the short way through Samaria with orders to quiet the province and swing into Galilee for the same purpose. This should pave the way for your own safe journey. But in addition to this I will order a centurion to follow you with a few picked soldiers, forming a guard of honor and thereby guaranteeing the safety of your party."

We knew Lucius Vitellius had Jesus of Nazareth, primarily, in mind, but we were satisfied, for all were included. So we thanked the Governor and took our leave to complete all preparations for leaving Caesarea. But before we cleared the palace grounds we went down into the garden where Julia, the picture of health, romped with a big dog. She ran to us and we could see that her former sickness was a fast-fading memory. We visited with her for several minutes and then bade her farewell. As we left her the Emperor's physician gave expression to something that, for him, was quite a concession. "Julia's recovery is miraculous," he said thoughtfully. "I do not comprehend all the forces and factors in play, but I am free to admit that some of them are outside any known therapy. Perhaps ahead of us, Luke Galen, are other experiences which will uncover great laws of healing now beyond our sight. Pray that I may be ready, without prejudice, to receive them. For my nature is skeptical and slow to accept laws not governed by matter. Be patient with me and, when my nature is ugly, forgive me."

But I could not tell whether his humility was born of faith or love; probably the latter, for the love of a man for a woman works more miracles in the human heart than can be worked in disease-infested flesh.

## XXIV

Our caravan—it amounted to that—left Caesarea at the beginning of harvest and the fields were white and ready for the reapers. The day was cloudless and invigorating as we took the road that led toward the old city of Samaria in the province of the same name.

Never had I seen the Emperor's physician so carefree and animated. But no wonder; with him was the Juno-like woman of the flaming hair and—to the scandal of whoever was rigidly orthodox—it was uncovered. But she was mounted on the drollest-looking donkey I had ever seen and about the laziest; I afterwards wondered if my colleague hadn't purposely selected the beast for her in the hope

that she would become so vexed with it that she would dismount and walk with him.

“How do you like my warrior steed?” she said to him as we left the city in a cloud of dust and headed for the Plain of Sharon.

“You even beautify a donkey and make it as stately as a war horse,” he declared as he placed a hand on the beast’s neck and kept pace. And there was more than mere gallantry in his speech.

Afterwards—when we were walking alone—I asked him if he didn’t think he exaggerated slightly when he told Mary Omri that she could beautify even a donkey.

“Why, you poor fool!” he all but shouted. “You need a miracle on your eyes.”

“Either that or you see too much,” I returned. Our laughter caused the others to turn and look at us, for at that moment we were dropping back to the rear to hold our first consultation with the centurion and his band of soldiers just leaving the walls of Caesarea.

Through the pellucid atmosphere of an autumn day we journeyed—almost sauntered—until the noon hour and after the meal and a rest we took to the highway once more, with the weather growing a little warmer, and traveled until the sun, at our backs, rolled down and across the Plain of Sharon and on into the sea; then we ate a simple evening meal and the stars were scarcely out when we prepared for slumber, the women occupying the tents. We were up at dawn and, after a breakfast of fruit and milk, we began the long ascent to the ancient city of Samaria.

But when we came in sight of it the Galilean, who always walked in advance of the cavalcade, often alone, sent back word to skirt the frowning walls and make no contacts with the inhabitants. We were surprised but obeyed and we followed him as he turned due north, making our way along a narrow path until we entered another great highway that led into Galilee. I think Mary Omri was disappointed that we did not enter the city King Omri built nearly a thousand years before, but she made no comment.

Simon Peter now came to where my colleague and I walked a little apart from the others and said, “The Master is leading us to the border country between Samaria and Galilee, beyond Dothan, where there are many who are diseased, both Jews and Samaritans. And there they mingle, for their miseries are common.”

This was news indeed, for we were about to enter a hinterland district where there was a fellowship of suffering with no racial distinctions. For sorrow is the great leveler and points us to the stars.

It was two hours before sunset when we came to the historic village of Dothan within a few steps of the southern borders of Galilee. But we did not linger and the Galilean, after we refreshed ourselves at a wayside well, led us due east along a five-

mile stretch of forest road that began to climb between craglike hills. The walking was difficult and it was fortunate that the women were mounted on sure-footed donkeys. So it was near the end of the day when we came in sight of a wretched hamlet, whose name I have forgotten. Suddenly, emerging from the hazel thickets, screaming as they appeared, were ten ragged men. "Unclean, unclean!" came the familiar but blood-chilling wails of the leprous.

Jesus of Nazareth paused and looked up at the haggard creatures grouped on the knoll above the road. We paused with him. But up came the soldiers on the trot and the centurion, as he passed us, shouted for the lepers to go back into the thicket. The poor fellows, ever timid when confronted by soldiers, began to shrink back into the undergrowth when the Galilean cried, "Be not afraid; only believe that I can heal you."

"Who is it that speaks?" one of the lepers shouted, as all paused uncertainly.

The impetuous Simon Peter made rejoinder, shouting, "It is Jesus of Nazareth, the Master, the great Healer."

There was a moment's tense silence and then a great clamor rose from the hilltop: "Jesus, Master! Have mercy on us! Make us clean! Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And their wails turned to wild sobbing.

Then we saw the Galilean lift his hands and his voice at the same time, crying, "According to your faith so shall you receive. Now go without fear into yonder village and show yourselves to the priests. They will pronounce you clean." And with one accord the ten turned and started for the town; but one of them suddenly ran down the hill toward us and the soldiers scattered, for they feared contagion. On the fellow came and dropped to his knees before Jesus of Nazareth and cried, "Thanks to the Most High God! Thanks, Jesus, Master!"

The Galilean stooped, took the man by the hand and lifted him up and, fixing his eyes upon the Twelve, now grouped together, he sternly said, "See this Samaritan—he alone turns back to glorify God. Your own countrymen ran away. And you did not want to enter Samaria." And, turning away from them as if weary of their disputes, he went on up the road toward the town.

The Samaritan leper—if leper he yet was—started to follow the Galilean when I caught him by the arm and said, "Wait! If you will talk with me I will give you—this." I took, with a quick movement, a gold coin out of my purse and held it out to him.

His eyes glistened but he shook his head, saying, "I must show myself to the priests and be pronounced clean." And he looked toward the village.

"I am going there," I said, "so I will walk with you."

He seemed satisfied and we started up the road, the others following. But I was

glad when my colleague dropped back to where Mary Omri sat on the donkey, for I wanted to speak alone with the Samaritan. I had a theory and I wished to verify it. “Let me see your hands,” I requested as we walked along. For they were bandaged. He removed the wrapping and I looked at his hands, in between the fingers. There were no sores, only a few blotches; nor were the palms scaly. I could not halt him to look at his scalp because the others were not far behind. But my theory grew into a conviction.

“Who told you that you were a leper?” I demanded.

“The priests,” he replied.

But I knew that real lepers were never permitted to stay as close to communities of healthy people as these ten had been to the village we approached. Moreover, the nine who ran off so fast could not be stiff-jointed, as all lepers are; so I concluded that these men had what was commonly known as “social leprosy” and were on probation pending the outcome of their cases. Such leprosy—or aggravated skin trouble—called for certain isolation, but was considered neither dangerous nor contagious. Those thus afflicted were examined by a town’s priest, according to religious and civil law, between two Sabbaths of each month. I well knew this and I believed that Jesus of Nazareth knew it. My colleague, I felt, did not know it and probably believed that the ten who had wailed “unclean, unclean” from the hilltop were incurable lepers and ostracized from the community for all time. So, deciding upon a certain course of deception, I told the fellow to hurry on and I halted in the roadway and waited for the Emperor’s physician to come up; when he did so, I, with difficulty, separated him from Mary Omri, who rode smilingly on, and told him I wanted to converse about the healing of the ten. It was nothing more than a trap I had set and it caught him at the first try.

“What do you think of the sight you witnessed?” I began. “Something new under the sun, wasn’t it? Healing lepers wholesale and instantly.”

“How do you know they are healed?” he demanded.

“Well,” I said, giving a little shrug that always annoyed him when we argued. “You saw them go back to the community that ejected them. And if they are not chased out, why, their leprosy has vanished.”

He stopped short, dug into his wallet, produced a handful of gold and said, “Luke Galen, I’ll wager you twenty staters that the ten lepers—as soon as they are examined—will be driven out of town. For it is impossible that they be healed in that manner. Come, are you afraid to gamble?” he demanded.

For answer, I opened my purse, took out the required sum and said, “Here comes the centurion. He shall hold stakes; are you agreed?”

“Perfectly,” he replied as the wondering soldier was stopped by us. “I will win your gold and give it to the Galilean. Perhaps it may compensate him for what is going to prove his failure to heal a group of lepers in the twinkling of any eye.”

So we made the wager and moved on toward the wretched hamlet, which none of us desired to enter. Being weary, we camped in a grove outside the place, pitched the tents for the women, ate our suppers and, worn with the journey, lay down to slumber under the stars of Samaria.

It was quite evident the next day that the Galilean was in no hurry to continue his journey; but of all the undesirable districts of Jewry this was the worst we had noted and the particular village, outside of which we had spent the night, was, in the full light of the day, destitute of a single redeeming feature. Here poverty and disease contended for the mastery and each had won a major position; here was a laboratory for our widest and deepest experiments; and here—perhaps by deliberate design—Jesus of Nazareth had led us that our own eyes might behold what he had seen before.

But most peculiar of all the town’s characteristics was the paradox of Jew and Samaritan dwelling in it, side by side; out of their common miseries they had won a hammered cohesion that had lifted to a brotherhood beyond the power of a single race to produce. It was, literally, a fellowship of suffering in which their sorrows became greater than their age-long religious differences. We need not have been surprised when we learned that a priest of each faith dwelt there in friendship and co-operative effort. As we were searching for such priests to learn their decision concerning the ten lepers who had returned, at the bidding of the Healer, to the community, our wager was about to be settled.

To us, there was little difference in the characteristics, mental or physical, of these two middle-aged priests, though perhaps the Jew was the intellectual superior of the Samaritan. Yet both were Semitics and the Turanian strain in the Samaritan, crossed with the Jewish, gave the former, so I imagined, a fatalistic indifference to life that the latter did not possess. They were greatly interested in us and when we told them that with us—though he had not yet entered the hamlet—was a certain Jesus of Nazareth, renowned for his healing art, both nodded and revealed that they knew him.

“He has been here before,” the Jewish rabbi stated, “and we gave him shelter and food after these things had been denied to him in the city of Samaria.”

“And he healed some of the sick here,” the Samaritan priest said, “without distinction of race and religion.”

“Were there lepers among them?” I inquired, pleased that the conversation had



led to the very subject uppermost in our thinking.

Both priests shook their heads and the Jewish made careful explanation. “Of course there were none in the village,” he said, “and the Healer met none, as he did today, on his journey to this place. Yesterday, as doubtless you know, he met ten.”

The rabbi’s sudden pause brought a sharp question from the Emperor’s physician. “Well, did he cure their leprosy?” Both priests remained silent. “Didn’t you examine them, according to law and custom?” my colleague went on pointedly. “For we saw them make for this place upon the command of the Healer who told them to show themselves to you.”

“The ten came,” the Jewish priest admitted at length, “and we examined them in the leper-house that stands just outside the village. We had examined them before, sending them back to their forest retreat in each instance. For their flesh still appeared diseased, though their leprosy—if any—was always mild. But yesterday —” he paused and we could see thoughtful wonder in his expression—“yesterday their flesh was so improved, if not clean entirely, that we will not drive them away. For they are our people and we suffered their ostracism as well as they did their own. But they will remain in the leper-house for a season—for we wish to make sure—and we will see them daily except on the Sabbath.”

“I think you’ve won the wager,” my colleague asserted at the conclusion of the priest’s explanation.

But I wasn’t thinking of the gold I had won; my thoughts were on the miracle—if any—that had been performed on behalf of the ten lepers. So I asked the priests if they believed such a miraculous thing had really happened.

“We have seen him heal the sick, causing the lame to walk, the dumb to speak and even the blind to see,” the Samaritan priest declared with conviction. “So why should it be thought a thing incredible that he cure the leprosy?”

“But, on your own admission,” Sergius Cumanus argued, “the ten men he met on the hilltop had only a mild form of leprosy—which may have been nothing more, all along, than certain forms of skin disease so common to this land and other lands.” Both priests were silent again and my colleague, rather to my surprise, revealed that we were physicians. Ignoring himself he said, “With me is Luke Galen of Antioch in Syria, the greatest physician in the Roman Empire, and we are on a medical mission, attempting to discover the underlying causes of the diseased multitudes.”

“And my companion,” I put in as soon as he concluded his speech, “is physician at the Court of Emperor Tiberius Caesar, and is the son of the most eminent medical mind in the world. Our medical mission of which he speaks—authorized by the Roman government—centers not in me but in him.”

“How came you to be with Jesus of Nazareth?” the Jewish rabbi questioned after a surprised pause.

I quickly narrated all the salient features of our experiences, which broke a certain reserve of the two priests, for there were exclamations of deep interest and hopefulness. It was at this juncture that we saw the Galilean and the Twelve entering the town.

He came on slowly, majestically, but his eyes saw everything of the place’s degradation; and the Twelve saw and marveled. I saw something else—and I think my colleague did also: the schooling the Twelve were receiving from their Master. It was schooling in all the forces and factors that make for world misery—prejudice, poverty, disease, injustice and sin. For in this poor place, on the very border between Samaria and Galilee, within a score of miles of the luxurious city of Tiberias and not more than sixty from the great Temple-Town of Jewish religious authority and haughty Roman rule, were in epitome the sorrows of human society. And walking in its hovel-lined streets was a Galilean carpenter who saw the bruised heart of the world in the body of this wretched town.

Suddenly it dawned on me that the Healer, too, was on a great mission. No visible government, no king nor emperor had commissioned him—had higher powers?—to look at life and strive to heal its hurts. Was he not a physician himself? And was he not, therefore, of our great brotherhood of healers? What mattered it that he was not of the Hippocratic school or that his therapy, for all its miraculous connotations, was far from that of the cult of Aesculapius? Were we not workers together? Yes, were we not his colleagues? The Emperor’s physician’s voice broke in on my meditations. “Here comes the centurion,” he said. “Have him pay you the wager.”

## XXV

If the Galilean had thought of entering his native province, which we dreaded to have him do, our fears were dissipated when he led us from Samaria by a southeasterly route into Perea, where we came to the great Jerusalem-Damascus highway that paralleled the Jordan River. October was at hand and there was color in the tops of the eucalyptus and the sycamore trees and the valley was like burnished gold except for the river that cut down through gray-black gorges in its swift flow to the Dead Sea.

We soon found ourselves caught between long caravans ascending and

descending this commercial artery and the dust and the heat increased as we drew near Jericho. For the Galilean, without offering any explanation, said that he was going to this ancient city. Once we were there, Jerusalem would be only a score of miles away and between was the Wilderness of Bethaven in which stood the old Maccabean mansion owned by Chuza and Joanna.

“You may be sure of one thing,” Chuza said as he trudged along with me down the highway. “Nothing that has been said in the Healer’s presence concerning the old Maccabean hiding place has been lost on him. In fact, according to his mother, he sojourned in this wilderness for more than a month before he began his work of healing.”

“Perhaps he has seen the old Maccabean house,” I suggested.

Chuza shook his head. “That is not probable,” he said. “It is hidden, as I have told you, in a little valley with walls rising almost sheer for two thousand feet. The only access to the valley—you may recall what I once said—is through a cave. I have reason to believe that less than a dozen living men know of its whereabouts and they are friends of my family.”

“I hope the Galilean will consent to go to this place, giving us time and opportunity to learn something of the mind of Jerusalem toward him,” I said. “I would hate to see him go directly to that city and play into the hands of his foes. Even if we were with him we might find ourselves helpless to avert grave trouble despite the warnings that Lucius Vitellius has sent to the authorities.”

Chuza nodded agreement and then told me that three great festivals would fall within six months: the Feast of the Harvest in the autumn; the Feast of the Dedication in the winter; and the Passover in the spring. “And I think the Galilean has it in mind to attend each one of them. I fear his mood will be one of challenge,” he concluded solemnly.

“Well,” I said, thinking of the incident in which the money-changers were assaulted by the Galilean and his band at the last Passover, “if he should interfere once more with the traffic in the Temple nothing could save him.”

“Which makes it all the more necessary that we do all within our power to persuade him to take up his abode on my little estate in the Wilderness of Bethaven where his future plans can be discussed and where he can conceal himself should the Jerusalem authorities decide to secure him,” Chuza insisted.

I looked back over my shoulder to where the Emperor’s physician trudged dutifully beside the donkey Mary Omri rode, and suggested that we wait for them to come up and help us simplify the problem. So we waited and they came up to where we stood with laughter on their lips and love in their eyes. My colleague wanted to

know why we had halted. I think he was peeved because we had done so, but when I started to explain there was an interruption. A richly laden caravan of merchants began to pass and more than one pair of dark eyes shot down looks of admiration and envy at the beautiful red-haired woman on the droll beast and the handsome man standing so near. The cavalcade went past in a long, lurching line of many colors and the confusion was too great for conversation.

“We will wait until we get down to Jericho to converse with them,” I said to Chuza. “I think we would greatly disturb them now.”

“Either that or they would not hear us,” Chuza responded with an indulgent smile cast at the lovers.

As we neared Jericho the heat, for autumn, grew intense, for we were in a tropical area a thousand feet below sea level. Yet, on our right, and within two miles of the great highway, were cliffs that rose to the height of fifteen hundred feet with rounded mountain peaks another five hundred feet above. Deep gorges, rimmed with stunted pines, furrowed the sides of the past volcanic range like enormous gashes on the sides of some great slate-gray beast.

“Somewhere up there, deeply recessed in the hidden valley, is the old stone house my wife inherited from her Maccabean line,” Chuza reminded me. “It may shelter her and her child as nearly two centuries ago it did the women of the Maccabean chieftains when Greeks and Syrians united to destroy Israel. For we have come to strange times, Luke Galen, when forces within Jewry, not without, may lead on to the destruction of our national and racial identity.”

I was glad for once that the Emperor’s physician was out of hearing as Chuza and I conversed on these things, for I believed that the birthright of the common people had been sold to Caesar by men like Annas and Caiaphas, High Priests, and the half-Jewish Herod Antipas. Small wonder that the land was filled with sick and half-crazed and impoverished people, longing, searching, wailing and dying without the realization of all they hoped and dreamed.

Then I thought of the hopelessness of our medical mission and of the Galilean Healer—a lonely figure in the midst of so great a sea of heaving humanity.

As we approached the walls of Jericho they didn’t fall down “flat” as they were said to have done when besieged by the mighty Hebrew captain, Joshua; but the city appeared to be in a state of siege once more. Soldiers by the thousands were camped round about it and there was marching, the roll of drums and the flying of banners. The Ninth Legion had arrived from Caesarea to bolster the defeated troops of Herod Antipas now at war with the Arabians under the father of his deserted wife; and I confess, for once, that sight of the Roman soldiers was pleasing to me.

For I knew that their commander was under orders from Lucius Vitellius to receive our guard of honor who, led by the centurion, had trailed us all the way from Caesarea and would report concerning our welfare. So it was at the Jordan Gate in the north wall of Jericho that the centurion bade us farewell and marched his men into the city and on to the massive Citadel, and we were, once more, so much flotsam and jetsam in the whirl of an Empire's events. But we knew we were safe for the time from our avowed foes, whether the low villain Malchus or the authorities above him, and we prepared to camp because the city was full to overflowing.

The women dismounted and joined the Galilean a little apart from us and we were about to move eastward along the city's walls to a palm grove to set up our tents when a blind beggar, who was squatting near by, heard our conversation and set up a cry for alms.

Judas Iscariot—who watched greedily every coin we gave out—turned on the beggar and cursed him in tones so loud and vile that Jesus of Nazareth left the women and strode toward us, his face flushed with anger. Giving a quick and comprehensive glance at the scene, the Healer shot a stinging rebuke into the ears of Judas and then, lowering his tones, spoke to Simon Peter; and Peter went to the blind beggar and said, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He has no gold to give you but he can restore your sight. For he has power to heal the sick and cast out demons. Which gift would you prefer—as much as a talent of gold or your sight restored?”

And the beggar cried, “Sir, the gift of my sight.” Then, before there was time for anything else, he began to wail, “Jesus, Master! Have mercy on me and give me back my sight.”

But the Galilean was slow to comply—so slow that the Emperor's physician whispered to me and said, “Either the beggar is a hopeless case or the Healer is afraid he will fail.”

“What a foolish remark,” I whispered in low tones to my colleague. “For if the Galilean were afraid he would fail he would never have confronted the problem. You are a physician,” I hurried on cuttingly, for Sergius Cumanus had angered me above anything I had experienced of his cynicism and materialism. “You are gifted in the realm of medical science, so why don't you do something for the blind man besides giving him a coin?”

“Because if he is actually blind I wouldn't risk my reputation on his case,” he said with a chuckle. “And if he is simulating blindness—which many beggars do—I wouldn't be a party to medical deception. So if you—”

A pitiful cry burst from the beggar's mottled mouth as he, holding out his hands,

begged for the restoration of his sight. “Master! Oh, Master! I want to regain my sight.”

And instantly the Galilean, speaking quietly this time, said, “Your faith has made you whole. Receive your sight.”

The blind man stood uncertainly, stood blinking in the general direction of the sound of the Healer’s voice, and then he gave a sob-like cry. “God of my fathers! I see! I see men as trees, walking.”

Several onlookers, not of our group, broke into an animated discussion, for some of them often had seen the beggar at the city’s gate; but while some affirmed others denied that the fellow could now see. I was ready to admit that I had no way of knowing whether he could see or not, even as I was in no position to say whether he had ever been totally blind, for I was well aware of the truthfulness of my colleague’s contention that beggars often simulated blindness. But why would one who had made his living through pretensions of blindness now destroy all hope of further gain by pretending to see? So, as Jesus of Nazareth walked away while others crowded round the beggar, I put such a question to my skeptical companion who was looking on the scene with a puzzled expression creeping into his eyes.

“Am I obligated to answer your question?” he snapped.

“No,” I retorted. “But I can read your thoughts. Again you believe that the Galilean has been either grossly deceived or has lent himself to deception. Now don’t you?” I fairly roared at him. For my patience was at an end. Here stood a coldly brilliant man of science who, despite all the amazing experiences through which we had passed—experiences in which Jesus of Nazareth had demonstrated the power of healing laws not known to us—scoffed at what he did not understand. My anger increased, which may have been, in part, superinduced by my own inability to grasp the Galilean’s therapy, and I fairly railed at the Emperor’s physician while the Twelve looked on in wonder. But my colleague remained calm and collected and when I had all but exhausted myself and my vocabulary of invectives and had begun to think that this marked the end of our relationship, Sergius Cumanus went to the beggar and said:

“I am a physician. May I look at your eyes?”

For answer the fellow simply stood and blinked into the face of the Roman who, in the bright light of the autumn sun, gave full attention to his task.

“How long were you blind?” the Emperor’s physician asked.

“From the time robbers killed my wife and three children on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem,” the man replied. “And they left me for dead. When I came to and saw the bleeding bodies of my family my eyes went blind. Nor have I seen a ray

of light until now.” And once more he burst into praise of God and the Galilean.

“Shock, both mental and physical,” my colleague said as he turned from the beggar and addressed me. “Jesus of Nazareth restored his sight—there is no question about it,” he went on as I thrilled to his words. “But how—how?”

“Have you no theory?” I inquired as we walked away, arm in arm.

He nodded, saying, “I have a theory, but I may be mistaken. It is this: the Galilean was able to link the man’s mind with his sight—sight long dim through grief caused by the shock of what he saw that day. For you will recall, my dear Luke, that the fellow admitted when he regained consciousness he could see. He saw the bodies of his wife and children. The blows he received had weakened his vision; the shock he got when he saw his dead loved ones cut off his brain from his organs of sight. Am I clear?”

“Yes,” I answered. “And convincing. But what is the power of the Galilean to lift the man’s darkness of vision?”

He pondered my question as we walked toward the palm grove where we were to camp for the night and his reply was slow, careful and even humble. “I am not sure that I can give you a convincing answer, for I think you see factors in the Galilean’s therapy that I do not yet visualize. But I will try to answer your question—at least from my own standpoint. The Galilean, somehow, reaches down into the very souls of the sick and stirs memories. His words, both tender and commanding, penetrate sluggish minds and enfeebled wills and recreate, stimulating them to their one-time strength. Then the miracle happens.”

“Then the miracle happens,” I repeated after him, and added, “Yet you see nothing of the supernatural in it.”

“I see the transcendence of the natural, as we understand the natural,” he admitted. “But I do not see the gods leaning down to do for men what they, through rationality, cannot do for themselves and for others. The Galilean was not the medium through which the gods—or God, if you will—restored the beggar’s sight. The Galilean was himself the restorer—a distinction with a difference, my dear Luke Galen.”

Somehow the idea was not displeasing to me, so we went on to the old palm grove—perhaps the beautiful Cleopatra had idled with an Emperor in its shade—and there we ate the finest supper of fruits in all the realm of Caesar and drank the clearest and coldest water from an immemorial spring called “Elisha’s Fountain.” The city of Jericho grew every manner of fruits and its seasons were long and its trees, so we were told, never fail. The night came on softly and the stars burned like distant beacons above the ancient walls, and we slept more at ease than since we had left

Caesarea.

But the morning brought us uncertainty and anxiety, for to our camp came groups of curious people, having heard of the man who opened the eyes of one called Bartimaeus, Jericho's most picturesque blind beggar. Some importuned Jesus of Nazareth to enter the city and receive its homage and, to our utter amazement, he consented to do so.

We all made ready to accompany him, perhaps each out of different motives, and Matthew Levi, former chief publican of Capernaum, was elated. He told the Galilean in our hearing that the chief publican at Jericho was a certain Zacchaeus, an old friend, and Matthew requested the privilege of going in advance of the others that he might go to the house of Zacchaeus and inform him of the Healer's presence. Jesus of Nazareth gave his consent and Matthew hurried through the gates of the city, promising to meet us at the House of Custom that he said stood in a sycamore grove near the Citadel.

But Mary Omri was careful to cover her head before she started, for she had danced in Jericho more than once and did not wish to be recognized. So, about the fourth hour of the morning, we left the palm grove and moved leisurely into the city's famed artery, the Street of the Palms, blazing with multicolored awnings above the finest bazaars I had ever seen. We had not gone down this street very far when people began following us and in their midst was Bartimaeus, no longer blind nor begging but weighted down with gifts from those who were now pressing from every direction to see the miracle-man from Nazareth.

"I believe our centurion from Caesarea, or some of our other guards, had something to do with stirring up these crowds to see Jesus of Nazareth," my colleague remarked as we were fairly swept along in the multitudes.

"Perhaps," I replied. "For the Galilean greatly impressed the centurion and his men. But look yonder. There is an open space in which stand two large buildings surrounded by trees—the customhouse and the Citadel, I suppose."

"Undoubtedly," the Emperor's physician agreed as he stared at the structures built in the style of Roman architecture for public buildings.

But I could see that the Citadel was older than Roman occupancy of this portion of Jewry—possibly as old as the Grecian conquest of Syria—and, clearly, it was a remodeled structure of great height and strength and surrounded by soldiers. In front of the customhouse was an unusually large sycamore tree and in its branches, well above a crowd that had gathered there, were two men. As we closely followed the Galilean—and we were all but lost in the excited mob—I recognized Matthew Levi as one of the men up the tree. The other was little of stature, a weazened old fellow,



sharp-eyed and a trifle imperious in looks.

The Galilean paused abruptly, looked up at the pair in the sycamore tree and Matthew Levi cried, "Master! Here is my friend, Zacchaeus, the Jericho publican, and he wishes to speak with you."

"Then make haste and come down, Zacchaeus," the Galilean said, "for today I will sojourn at your house."

It was laughable to see the manner in which the tax dignitary scrambled down from the tree. He greeted the Healer with great warmth and sincerity and cried that it would be a joy if the Galilean would come under his roof. And they, accompanied by Matthew Levi, pushed out of the crowd and vanished, leaving many to wonder and a few to murmur against the Healer going to be the guest of a publican who had grown rich through fraud. But when Jesus of Nazareth and Matthew Levi returned to the camp the latter told us a remarkable story of how Zacchaeus, while they dined in his beautiful home, pledged half his great fortune to the poor and all who had suffered through his peculations would be repaid fourfold.

Here was a new phase of the Galilean's work that led me to say, "Sergius Cumanus, what is your interpretation of it all?"

"Just this," he replied with the chuckle that was beginning to express a slow change in his attitude toward the Galilean, "Jesus of Nazareth is destroying Rome's system of taxation by bringing the chief publicans in Jewry to repentance."

But the day was growing old and we were yet at Jericho and we wondered about the Galilean's next move. Not even Mary Omri knew his mind on this subject and we might have camped outside the walls indefinitely except for a piece of fortune, which was also a great danger, that suddenly projected us across the Jordan Valley toward the Wilderness of Bethaven and the old Maccabean mansion. Herod Antipas came to Jericho.

## XXVI

"God of my fathers!" Chuza's sudden exclamation, fear-filled and sorrowful, interrupted our discussion as we stood at the edge of the palm grove in which we were camped. "Look! Unless I am as blind as was the beggar at the gate, yonder comes the royal military equipage of Herod Antipas."

The Emperor's physician and I wheeled to look up the great highway. Rolling down it toward the Jordan Gate of Jericho, not far from where we stood, was a glistening chariot drawn by coal-black stallions preceded by armed outriders with

red banners flying. One look was sufficient; at the side of the driver of the chariot stood the purple-robed Potentate of Perea and following were a score of other chariots with their captains and chief men. On they came toward the walls of Jericho as if the pending campaign of the Roman Ninth Legion against the Arabians awaited the leadership of Herod Antipas.

“Ah!” exclaimed the Emperor’s physician, quick to grasp this display of pomp before the walls of the city. “The King of the Jews, as he calls himself, has come to hearten the Romans to drive the Arabians back from his borders. And just yesterday they chased him all the way from the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee. How I wish Lucius Vitellius were here to behold this sight!”

But Lucius Vitellius was not present and there was no time to stand and hurl sarcastic invectives at the royal cavalcade from Tiberias. We were in danger. Chuza, fully aware of it, turned back to the shelter of the palm grove. Quickly following, we went on to where the others lounged in the shade and revealed the situation. The Healer’s mother was greatly disturbed. “Alas!” she cried. “The Herods still shadow my life. How well do I remember this ruler’s father—Herod the Great.” But whatever it was she recalled with so much grief and fear she did not make known but only stood and stared at her son.

“Come,” he said, looking round at us all. “We will walk to the wilderness yonder.” And he pointed to the dark line of the mountains on the western border of the Jordan Valley.

So Herod Antipas and his retinue vanished through the gates of the city and we quickly broke camp and, unnoticed save by a few idlers outside the Jordan Gate, began our journey to the Wilderness of Bethaven and the old stone house which had sheltered the Maccabean chiefs and their families so long ago. We traveled slowly along the Jerusalem-Jericho road and turned off it when we came to the foothills at the village of Geba; then we went northwest and began the long climb. Guided by Chuza, after toiling for a thousand feet we entered a rocky trail that tested the nimble feet of the donkeys the women rode. All about us were great boulders that had been hurled indiscriminately, in some mighty upheaval of nature, from the top of the mountain another thousand feet above us.

It was a desolate mountainside, almost barren of vegetation and depressing. But a dark forest of stunted trees stood up the trail another five hundred feet and we entered it and crept along a ledge path that suddenly ended in a solid wall of limestone. We looked inquiringly at Chuza, who immediately said. “Covered by yonder cluster of bushes is the mouth of a cave. Through it we will reach the hidden valley. Follow me.”

There was no path along the edge of the wall to this clump of undergrowth and the footing was difficult, but in single file we advanced and entered the thicket. And before us yawned the cavern's entrance—one of the largest I had seen in all the hill-country we had traversed in Jewry. Nature had formed a tunnel, six feet high and seven feet wide, through the limestone wall and through it the Maccabees of old had crept to the isolation of the little valley.

We lighted pine torches, for the way was Stygian black and, after assisting the women to dismount, we began the subterranean journey. Midway a gash in the floor of the cave cut across our pathway and we peered into unknown depths. But Chuza, holding his torch close to the wall on our right, felt in a crevice, caught hold of a lever and pulled with all his might. Out of the semidarkness, like some black monster, swung a narrow drawbridge and spanned the yawning hole in the cave's floor.

"Judas Maccabaeus, the great Jewish leader in revolt against the Syrian murderer, Antiochus Epiphanes, built the first drawbridge in this cave," Chuza explained as we prepared to cross, "and later generations of Jews of my wife's family line, who opposed the coming of the Romans sixty years ago, built another. And I, after Joanna inherited the old stone house to which we are coming, knowing the secret of the cavern, built this one. Come," he broke off abruptly. "The bridge is strong." And we passed to the other side.

Chuza swung the drawbridge back to the darkness of its original position and led us forward. A slow walk of only five minutes brought us to the light of day and, emerging, we found ourselves on a broad table rock. Sheer above us was still a higher range of cliffs; below, almost at our feet, was a little valley of amazing fertility and beauty. Great limestone walls rose above it like the walls of a mighty temple arched over by a blue dome—the sky! Down in the heart of the valley was a cypress grove and through its eternal green we caught a partial view of the historic stone house, built massively like a fortress.

"Well, Joanna," Chuza said to his wife, who was gazing down on the scene in deep emotion, "here is your little estate—thanks to your heroic forebears."

And the lovely matron, suddenly placing an arm about her little son, nodded through fast falling tears, saying, "I pray that our child may not, when he is a man, be compelled to hide here from merciless foes. Surely the land and the people will, someday, inherit peace and not war and hatred, my husband."

I think the Emperor's physician and I felt the depths of her pathos. We looked at each other in a manner so solemn that Joanna, quickly brushing away her tears, smilingly said, "Welcome, noble physicians, welcome to yonder House of Hope, as we have always called the Maccabean mansion. Come! I am eager for you to see

it,” she broke off. And she led the way.

As we descended to the floor of the valley a few antelopes and mountain goats leaped from the thickets and raced across the field of tufts of wild grass.

“There’s an abundance of game in the valley,” Chuza explained as we went along. “The goats—some of them—belong to us and are only shy because no one has been here for two years. My work as Herod’s steward was exacting; besides, we never wanted him to know about this place. Walnuts and almonds abound here,” he hurried on to say, as if he would forget the Tetrarch, “and there is a spring of excellent water that gushes out of the other side of the valley walls and flows to the house. So you see, even though we were cut off from the world, we would neither starve nor die of thirst.”

We entered the cypress grove and got our first clear view of the stone house. There was a great central structure, flanked by sprawling wings; the house was towerlike at the center, being devoid of porticoes. Its architecture was more reminiscent of residences I had seen in Alexandria of Egypt than in the cities of Syria, being massive, of straight lines and without ornamentation. But it was the interior that thrilled and fascinated us; there was an atrium of noble dimensions with a wide hearth at one end and a massive door at the other that led to the largest dining room I had ever seen except in the houses of nobles. Beyond the dining room—which also had a huge fireplace—was a spacious kitchen with wall-built stoves and hanging on a score of pegs were utensils of every sort, and in rows on the floor were vessels of copper and brass—some of them, so Joanna said, older than the house itself. Upstairs and down, especially in the structure’s wide wings, were two score beds in half as many rooms. The only Roman touch about the house was a stone-built bath with an opening from the kitchen hearths for heat.

As night was fast approaching—it had taken us only three hours to walk from Jericho, just ten miles down on the flood-plain of the Jordan—we set to work, under the directions of Joanna, to place the house in order for the preparation of the evening meal and for slumber.

My colleague and I were assigned to a room filled with curiously wrought pieces of furniture, very old, with two low beds made of gopher wood looped with leather thongs.

“Well,” the Emperor’s physician remarked, as we observed all things, “we will be as comfortable as we were in our tower rooms at the Praetorium without the breathtaking climb.”

“Or the chatter of the Procurator’s wife,” I reminded him. “I did not know that there was so much difference between the women of Rome and those of Jewry,” I

added pointedly.

Instantly I regretted the comparison I had made between Roman and Jewish women, for he said, "I wish you had known my mother. She died the year before you came to Rome to study medicine." He grew pensive, speaking softly. "I can see her now, sitting wrapped in a bright-colored shawl, on the terrace of our villa down the Tiber near the sea." He stopped short and then exclaimed, "Why! I had never thought of it before. She wore a shawl made in a far-off Syrian town called—Magdala. How strange; how very strange!" he murmured. But I could see nothing strange about it: Magdala had been a center of shawl-making for generations, and I so informed him.

Crudely, I made light of his sentimentalism, for I knew that Mary Omri, rather than his mother, was uppermost in his thoughts. For I was beginning to wonder if the old stone house in the mountain fastness might not bring certain problems that women, where men have time on their hands, usually beget.

An incident took place at the table that night—our first meal, hastily prepared, in the Maccabean mansion—that confirmed me in my fear that Mary Omri was loved by more than one man in the group. We were partaking of dried fish, nuts and dates, cheese and barley loaves, all brought up from Jericho with us, and there was laughter and lighter conversation than that in which we usually engaged; for each had a feeling of security and comfort, and even a great peace seemed to settle upon us which comes to men who struggle to win it. The table where we ate was a long festival-like board of balsam wood, polished and sweet-smelling; and, in the candle light, faces were not too distinct. But I, from where I lounged with the Emperor's physician, could see the burning eyes of Judas Iscariot, almost constant, upon the face of Mary Omri. Weasel-like, he peered across the table at her, occasionally casting furtive glances right and left to make sure that others were not observing him. And in a lull in the conversation, Jesus of Nazareth, from his position at one end of the table, suddenly said:

"Whoever looks upon a woman with lustful desire has already committed adultery in his heart with her." It was an irrelevant saying, though not more so than many of his other utterances, and its effects were disturbing. Judas Iscariot, twisting on his lounge, was, to me, visibly embarrassed and scarcely lifted his black eyes from his plate after that. And so our first meal in the historic house came to an end in the midst of a silence that every man felt, and we left the table, one by one.

Within a week we had settled into a kind of communal life, sharing ideas and experiences as well as food, begetting a fellowship of the spirit, discovering that we had many more things in common than we had remotely imagined, and, day by day,

we gained a cohesion and mutual sympathy and respect which knit us together for whatever lay in the future beyond the strange little world now our own. There were mild tasks for each of us, tasks set by Joanna, that ranged all the way from gathering firewood to journeying down the mountain to Geba and Ramah, villages in the foothills, well off the Jerusalem-Jericho highway, where needful purchases could be made. Several hours a day I spent over the endless records that were to be compiled and the reports of conditions as we found them.

Mary Omri, sometimes lovingly called the Magdalene by the others, strolled the length and the breadth of the valley a great deal with two men—Jesus of Nazareth and the Emperor’s physician. But first it was with one and then the other and I am sure there was wonderment, if not a little small talk among the Twelve. Yet her moods were quite different when she returned from these brief walks, always in sight of the stone house. For example, an hour with the Galilean left her mystical in mind and exalted in spirit, and an hour with the Emperor’s physician found her in a mood of shy happiness in which she would hum old love ballads that marked the trend of her thoughts. And through it all, more and more, the hate of Judas Iscariot mounted—hate for the two men she favored; and his passion for her grew and became an unpleasant thing to behold, though I believe, unless Joanna sensed it, that I was the only one who observed his manner to any great extent.

There were times when the Galilean took the Twelve to the great rock shelving above the valley and, seated thereon for hours, talked of many things we never knew. But there were times, after they came down, that Judas and Zelotes sat sullen and unresponsive to all that went on about them, or they would go off by themselves and not return until the supper hour.

One day, with November at hand, I happened in one of my own lonely walks to meet the Galilean’s mother, closely wrapped in a shawl, for there was a chill in the air, wandering across the field. She greeted me with a tender smile, for our friendship was rapidly approaching a bond, and, risking her displeasure, I put certain questions to her that I longed to ask. Most of them centered in her son and, to my joy, she responded with little reserve. One of my queries was, “Isn’t he quite unlike the others of your household? I have so heard.”

“Yes,” she said. “In all things. But he is unlike anyone whom you know, is he not?” she inquired in turn.

“Decidedly,” I said. “But what is the chief difference between him and the others?” I interrogated hopefully.

Her rejoinder came painfully slow—so slow that I was fearful she would not give it at all. Finally she said, “Noble physician, they tell me you are Jewish on your

mother's side. Is this truth?"

"Yes," I replied wonderingly.

"And you were instructed in the sacred writings, were you not?"

"Yes, quite thoroughly. My mother was devout," I said.

"I can well believe it," she stated fervently. "Therefore," she resumed, fixing her soft eyes on my face, "when I tell you that my son Jesus is more like the prophets of old—Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah—and the others of the household are like the harsh Zelotes, fierce in zeal for the restoration of Jewish power, I am sure you will understand."

I did understand and her explanation, as far as it went, was clear enough. For I had fair acquaintance with the difference between the passionate nationalism of men like Zelotes and the nobler ethical concepts of the more gifted in Israel. But I was puzzled over the biological abyss—it amounted to that in my opinion—between the Galilean Healer and the others of the family, of whom John and Simon Peter had told me much. So I made bold to put a final question, one that many women, from time immemorial, hesitate to answer or do not answer at all. It was this: "Is your son Jesus like your dead husband?"

She shook her head and seemed lost in things of long ago. "No," she replied after what seemed an interminable time. "My son was not like my husband. Joseph was a good man and I loved him much and never cease to mourn his departure. But he was absorbed in his tools and trade in his carpenter shop at Nazareth. My son, though taught this trade, used it more to build a new world than houses of wood and stone. Even from childhood he dreamed—and sometimes spoke—of new foundations for the nation, of a great house of brotherhood for all men."

She seemed reluctant to say more on the subject, though it flashed into my mind that now was the time to ask her plainly how her son healed the sick. For, basically, such was my interest. So, craving her patience and good will, I asked her. Her rejoinder was immediate. "He heals the sick because he and his Father in Heaven are one in will, one in purpose, one in labor. Without his Father he could do nothing," was her simple, yet profound, analysis. But it left me with a reeling mind.

As we walked toward the stone house I told her that I was also an artist and wanted to paint her son's portrait. "I hope you may," she said, smiling at me with her doelike eyes.

"And I would like to paint a portrait of his lovely mother," I added.

"Only the women of the great have their portraits painted," was her not inapt remark.

"But you are a great-souled woman," I said fervently.

That night, in the seclusion of our room, I told Sergius Cumanus something of my conversation with the Healer's mother, dwelling on her assertion that her gifted son was wholly unlike anything her husband had been. It was then that my brilliant colleague made a cryptic remark. "The garden does not make the plant," he said. "The womb of a woman produces according to what seed is planted there."

## XXVII

"I am about to request Jesus of Nazareth to sit for a portrait. I've already asked his mother if she will permit me to paint her, and as time may hang heavy on our hands this winter, I may do a portrait of Mary Omri."

It was several days after my conversation with the Healer's mother that I spoke to my colleague concerning my ambition to return to my long-neglected hobby and paint portraits of these three. He made a tart observation, saying, "So you are not to practice medicine for some time, eh? So you are to forget our mission for two or three months. Is that it? I suppose you will linger over the portrait of Mary Omri, won't you?"

"Well," I drawled unnaturally, "to capture the wonderful color of her hair calls for long study and painstaking work with the brush."

"And a great deal of privacy?"

"Of course," I replied. "An artist cannot be bothered with a pining, sighing lover standing round waiting for him to complete the portrait of his beloved."

Then we both laughed heartily and got down to more serious matters to which some of the Twelve had called our attention. Jesus of Nazareth was making ready to leave the mountain retreat for an unknown destination.

Neither John nor Simon Peter had been taken into the Healer's confidence, as usually they were, and both his mother and Mary Omri professed ignorance of his intentions. The news was not without its disturbing features; there was danger in his proposed, solitary journey, no matter the direction he might take. So my colleague and I decided that to press the subject of the portrait might prove revealing; and it did, for the Galilean gave a negative reply. Flatly, I inquired his reasons for not sitting for his portrait. His rejoinder carried him back into his old mystical manner, for he said, "I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day, for the night comes when no man works."

But when we carried the problem to Chuza he said, "The Healer undoubtedly is going to Jerusalem. The Feast of Tabernacles is at hand and, for some reason best



known to himself, he is going and desires to go alone.”

“Perhaps it would be well to get word to Captain Titus,” I suggested. “He would guard the Galilean with his very life.”

“Excellent!” my colleague exclaimed. “And the way to get word to him is for us to go in person and at once. If the Healer goes to Jerusalem it should not prove difficult for Captain Titus to locate him; if not—well, we cannot be found trailing the Galilean all over Jewry.” He paused and eyed me questioningly. “I need to go to Jerusalem, Luke Galen. Will you accompany me?”

“Gladly,” I answered.

With only Chuza knowing our destination, we left the mountain retreat early the next morning and he accompanied us through the cave. He revealed to us the mechanism of the drawbridge, which was simple enough after one knew its location, for we did not know when we would return and, bidding him farewell, we descended to the hamlet of Ramah. Gaining the Jerusalem-Jericho road, we pushed on to the capital city of the Jews, a distance of only nine miles. But a portion of the way was through an inhospitable country and we were glad for the many pilgrims along the highway, going to the great feast. They were in holiday attire—provincials for the most part, shouting to one another and singing ballads. But when we came to a wayside inn that was midway between Jericho and Jerusalem, where there was a deep well and plenty of food, we hired two camels and a guide for the remainder of the journey—a steady rise to the walls of the city.

It was high noon before we entered the Damascus Gate and we lost no time in going to the garrison. In so doing we had to cross a court that separated it from the Praetorium.

“I hope no one recognizes us,” I said as I pulled my headpiece closer about my face, “much less Pontius Pilate, if he is to attend the Feast of Tabernacles.”

“We are not malefactors,” my companion growled, “not yet, at least.” But I noticed that he covered most of his own face as we passed the postern gate of the Praetorium.

We gained admission to the barracks, though we had to reveal our identity to a guard, who readily recalled us, and were conducted to the presence of Captain Titus without great delay. His joy over seeing us was sincere and soon we were at the noonday meal with him.

“Is Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem?” was my first question.

“Yes,” the commander replied. “But his wife is not with him this time. Her fear of leprosy has become a mania with her.”

“It is not her only mania,” the Emperor’s physician remarked.

“That I know,” Captain Titus admitted wearily. “But tell me what brings you to this city? And let me know all your experiences since you left, especially any news that concerns Jesus of Nazareth. For strange and alarming rumors have come to me.”

So we narrated the salient features of our lives since going into Galilee and he listened in astonishment. When we came to the part wherein we sought the shelter of the old Maccabean house hidden in the mountain valley, he nodded and said that he knew of the existence of such a place but had never seen it. We informed him that few had seen it, though we did not reveal to him the secret of finding it. Then we told him of our mission to Jerusalem and he became grave. “The Galilean may never be safe in this city,” he said. “But it will not be difficult to find him if he comes. From the little I know of his visits to this city he sojourns either in the house of Zebedee or stays at a home in near-by Bethany with a man called Lazarus, who has two sisters.”

This was vital, interesting information and after formulating all our plans to have Captain Titus’ spies track the Galilean, should he come to Jerusalem, we left the barracks. Following the suggestion of the commander, we went to a small inn at the foot of Hill Akra, not far from the home of Zebedee, and took lodging. Two days later, at the beginning of the harvest celebration, Captain Titus hurried to us with the information that Jesus of Nazareth was a guest in the house of Lazarus at Bethany, two miles from the walls of the city, on the eastern slope of the Hill of Olives. “Malchus cannot fail to see the Healer,” Captain Titus declared, “and I shall not lose sight of Malchus.”

Strangely enough, nothing alarming came to pass in the week that followed, though there were controversies of some nature between the Galilean and a few altar priests. Perhaps the latter were discomfited because the common people jeered at them on two or three occasions, and when the priests said that the Healer should be driven from the Temple area or arrested, Malchus made no move. Captain Titus warned him that any open hostility toward the Galilean on the part of the Temple Guard would result in a riot beyond the control of this body. “The multitudes think well of Jesus of Nazareth,” the Roman commander of the Jerusalem Cohort told the chief servant of the High Priest, “and they will riot if you move against him. If this come to pass I will not furnish you a single soldier to put it down.”

So, while the disputes continued, loud and long after the manner of Semitics, no hand was laid on the Galilean, though he was said to have castigated the Temple rulers more than once. When we inquired of Captain Titus if these things had come to the ears of Pilate, he said that they had, but that the Procurator was ailing with a stomach disorder, moody and indifferent to all that went on. He simply authorized

the garrison commander to keep order and kept to the seclusion of the Praetorium. "So my task is simple," Captain Titus remarked grimly and significantly.

But a singular occurrence took place the morning of the final day of the festival and we were witnesses to it, though the crowd was so dense in the court where it transpired that the Galilean did not see us. He was the center of friendly questioners when, without warning, a group of the Temple's penmen, known as Scribes, highly technical in all things, brought a woman of the street to him—probably an irregular thing for Scribes or anyone else to do in the Temple courts. She was a faded-looking woman who, perhaps, had dared to ply her age-old profession in the shadow of the walls of the sacred place; but they had seized her not so much because of her sinning as for her usefulness to them in presenting a hard problem to Jesus of Nazareth. For one of them said:

"This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. The law of Moses commands us that such a woman be stoned. But what have you to say?"

The question was difficult and, at once, we knew it to be; for stoning women taken in adultery was an unpopular business in the half-Hellenized capital of the Jews, unpopular even in the hinterlands; consequently, any strict interpretation of the religious law and rule by which the people were supposed to live might involve the Galilean with the friendly multitudes.

"He is taking his time to answer them," my colleague said. For the Galilean had stooped and was idly making marks of some kind in the dust that was thick on the stone pavement.

"Maybe he is writing their epitaph," I suggested bitterly.

And he was, because he suddenly lifted himself up and said to the woman's accusers: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

There was a tense silence and then, stealing away one by one, followed by the jeers of the crowd, her accusers got out of sight as quickly as possible.

"Nobody threw a rock at her," the Emperor's physician remarked bitingly.

"None had the moral right to do so," I reminded him as we left the scene. "Not even I."

"Nor I," was his short utterance.

But when we returned to our inn we sat down and conversed on the strange scene we had witnessed, and for once we were in full accord: that the way of Jesus of Nazareth with women was one of healing, no matter their malady. And we also agreed that the whoredom of society must become a medical, as well as a moral, problem. That sex promiscuity was already a great social problem, one that was giving the statesmen grave concern, was obvious to all who wished to see it. So we

brooded, for such was our mood, and all that we had won out of our journey to Jerusalem was added consciousness of the magnitude of our medical mission. Each of us wished to return to the peace of the Wilderness of Bethaven—I to my portrait painting, the Emperor's physician to the woman he loved. The next day we set forth, having parted with Captain Titus with the understanding that a detail of his troops would trail Jesus of Nazareth until he reached the foothills at Geba and began the ascent toward the mountain retreat.

Our return to the old stone house, followed by the return of the Galilean two days later, found me determined to urge him to sit for his portrait; but again he refused and revealed that he, accompanied by the Twelve, was going on another walking journey. And away they went the next day and were gone two weeks, and on their return we were astounded to learn that they had been to the headwaters of the Jordan River—to the pagan city of Caesarea-Philippi in the realm of Herod Antipas' brother, Philip.

"Why trouble ourselves in the future over the going and the coming of the Galilean?" my colleague said testily on learning that the Healer and the Twelve had journeyed north of the Sea of Galilee, passing within a few miles of Tiberias.

I admitted I was as vexed, for if Herod's hirelings had known of the proximity of Jesus of Nazareth to Tiberias they doubtless would have imprisoned him or worse. For John the Baptizer had now been beheaded at the instigation of Herodias, whom he called an adulteress, and the Galilean, being a kinsman of the stern exhorter, could easily have shared the same fate.

"Speaking of miracles," I said with some irritation, "it is one that Jesus of Nazareth traveled the length of Perea and returned without having been seen by his foes."

"Perhaps he dematerialized himself," Sergius Cumanus suggested, "especially whenever he saw any who might be unfriendly."

"Why attribute anything so fantastic to him?" I burst out in anger. "It is no time to jest."

"Well," my companion persisted, "if he can heal at a distance, cause the blind to see by anointing the eyes with clay and spittle, cause the lame to walk by touching their bodies, and cure leprosy in its worst forms, all without the aid of a rational therapy, why couldn't he dematerialize himself and pass unseen under the nose of a foe?"

"Because he is no mere magician, and you know it," I snapped. "His foes do not seize him for reasons of his moral majesty. Such is the final pledge of his safety until—well, until destiny decrees otherwise," I concluded lamely.

“Welcome to the ranks of the fatalists, Luke Galen,” the Emperor’s physician said.

I shook my head emphatically. “My concept of destiny has nothing in common with fatalism,” I insisted. “Rather do I believe that the pattern of our lives is divinely shaped, though we are free agents and have the power to mar the pattern if we so will.”

The Emperor’s physician stared at me with doubtful eyes—they were, at times, the most unbelieving eyes into which I ever gazed—but he made no reply.

It was not long after the return of the Galilean and the Twelve that we sensed a change in him and them. It was impossible of analysis; it could not be explained by certain differences among the Twelve, for they had always contended with one another. Rather did it appear to be a force that was disintegrating the spiritual unity that, hitherto, had held them together and bound them to him. They, no less than himself, were depressed, giving one the impression of waiting for the inevitable and the tragic.

Seeking to grasp the meaning of the change, especially in the Galilean, I importuned him once more to sit for a portrait, and his quick consent baffled me.

Then he told me to work swiftly because he planned to walk again in Jewry and intimated that he might not return to the old stone house. I had been working on a portrait of Mary Omri, making excellent progress, for she was inspirational both in her beauty and modesty, and I felt compelled to make known to her the Galilean’s request for dispatch in my portrait of him. She was greatly pleased, saying, “The Master comes first in all things.”

I had found a flawless slab of marble, highly polished, stored in a closet of the old house, and from the moment I saw it I knew I possessed the finest material on which to paint the Healer’s picture. Indeed, both sides of it were so perfect in finish that I thought how fitting it would be if I painted his picture on one side and his mother’s on the other. She had given her consent and I had waited for his own; and at last I received it. So I began my greatest work of love, though from the first sitting I realized, poignantly, that I was about to portray the features of a man who was deeply troubled; yes, even ill. And the shock of my discovery led me straight to my colleague.

The Emperor’s physician listened in grave silence; no longer was the old cynicism to the fore—the jesting, the irritating manner of closing one eye when speaking critically, the detestable habit of covering his mouth with his hand to conceal a mocking smile—all were missing in his attitude as I told him what I thought I saw in the Galilean’s face.

“It is not fear of the future,” I said, striving both for a definition and the expression thereof. “Rather is it the look of a man who has dreamed something and has received a rude awakening. There is resignation on his face, such as I have seen on the face of one long ill who has just discovered that he cannot recover.”

It was only after a depressing silence that Sergius Cumanus said, “Sometimes in the highest and happiest natures a tragic sense of life is the deepest, hidden beneath a noble sense of mission, and rising at last to the surface in the face of inevitable defeat.” He ceased speaking for what seemed an interminable time and then I heard him say, “Why not go right on, Luke Galen, and portray him as you see him, not as you once saw him, not as he was before this subtle change?”

“Then it will be as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” I said, thinking suddenly of a line of poetry in one of the sacred books of the Jews.

And so I depicted Jesus of Nazareth. On and on I worked, even feverishly, and the autumn gave way to winter, and the first snows fell into the little valley. Life in the old stone mansion, regardless of the unchanging mood of the Healer, became gayer. Only Judas Iscariot and Zelotes remained as they had been for weeks, the former sullen and jealous, the latter rebellious against all things extant.

But there were long, cold evenings when the great central room, aglow with pines and sycamore blazing on the wide hearth, became a place of song and mirth. Joanna, who played the psaltery with skill and beauty, performed for us upon an instrument whose frame was as old as the stone house and whose strings as new as our Jericho purchases; there were songs of war and peace, moving folk ballads that fascinated the Emperor’s physician. Or was his fascination due to the smiling eyes of Mary Omri, sometimes searching his face while she sang with the others? And once—just once—she danced for us to the music of Joanna’s psaltery—a dance of praise to the Lord God for his love and watch and care, while the others, swaying with her, chanted rhythmically. It was a new role for the former dancing woman of Magdala—new to the Emperor’s physician—and he sat spellbound as Mary Omri swayed up and down the vast room like a young willow tree in a soft south wind blowing in springtime. There was chastity and spiritual emotion and religious interpretation in her dancing—an elevation to her art that ennobled it and all who beheld.

But this was the night of the terrible quarrel. It came with startling unexpectedness just after Mary Omri ceased her dancing and the matron Joanna, her thrumming of the strings of her harp. For the rebel Zelotes suddenly blurted, “Dance the battle song of Miriam while Joanna plays and we will sing how Jehovah drowns the horses and riders of our enemies in the sea. For now our foes are not

Egyptians, they are Romans.” And he shot a look of wrath in the direction of the Emperor’s physician.

Both Mary Omri and Joanna looked appealingly at the Galilean and he shook his head. Angered, Zelotes cried, “It is the hour. Long have we waited. Old are our miseries.” Then he got up, crossed the room to where Jesus of Nazareth sat gazing into the fire and continued his tirade. “I declare that it is the hour to rise against Israel’s foes. The Feast of Dedication is near. Once more the Temple is defiled as in the days of the Maccabees, but now the Romans are the guilty ones. Let us go down to Jerusalem with you, Master, and await your signal to strike. What is your answer?” Zelotes concluded imperatively.

“It is not my hour.” The tones of the Galilean were even and low. “My time has not yet come.”

“We can wait no longer; we will wait no longer,” Zelotes shouted. “Let us strike at the Feast of Dedication. The people are ready. They but await your command. They await the use of your power, no longer wasted on a few sick, to confuse and destroy the foe. Speak, and all will know that one greater than Judas Maccabaeus is here! Speak, and ten thousand Zealots will spring to obey your command.”

And Jesus of Nazareth spoke. He sprang up from his seat before the fire and confronted the angry Zelotes, and I have never ceased to regret that I did not have my parchment and pen at hand that I might have written down every word that fell from the Galilean’s lips.

Little had I dreamed that Jesus of Nazareth was a master in the realm of invective speaking. His words withered the bold fellow and when the final sarcastic phrase burned its way through the room like a flame on the hearth, the Galilean resumed his seat, called the Twelve to gather round him and spoke to them as if they were children. He called them his sheep and told them that he was their shepherd and that he would, like all good shepherds, lay down his life for his sheep. “Greater love has no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his friends,” he continued, rising and lifting his voice a little. “And you are my friends if you do all I tell you.” Then, without another word, he turned and went slowly toward the atrium’s portal and vanished in the darkness of an outer room.

## XXVIII

Snow covered the hills round about Jerusalem the week of the Feast of Dedication, late in December; but Chuza and Joanna were determined to make the

journey to the Temple city, and Jesus of Nazareth would accompany them. For this winter festival commemorated the purification of the Temple in the days of the Maccabean forebears of the gracious woman whose guests we were. This festival brought no great number of pilgrims to Jerusalem, though it was the most joyous feast of the Jews. Mourning and fasting were prohibited; internal quarrels were forgotten, and factions were integrated. For it was thus in the days when Judas Maccabaeus united the nation, defeated its foes and held the first great feast of purification of the Temple after its defilement by the Syrians.

Neither I nor the Emperor's physician desired to go with them, though all were to make the journey with the exception of the Healer's mother and Mary Omri. So a path was made through the snow in the valley to the ledge at the cave's mouth and the Galilean and the Twelve, accompanied by Chuza, with Joanna riding the strongest of the donkeys, set forth. The Emperor's physician and I accompanied them through the cavern and down the side of the mountain as far as Ramah and watched them until they were but dark moving specks over the snow-painted hills, and then we returned to the old stone house.

It was this week that I, working with renewed speed and interest, finished the portrait of the Galilean's mother. And I prided myself that I had caught the spiritual beauty of her face, though it was a little shadowed by a haunting fear, which I was not able to overcome in the finished portrait. Her eyes told the story: it was one of anxiety over her son.

But while I labored the Emperor's physician made love and, for the first time, Mary Omri yielded to his more ardent wooing. Often I came upon them, after I had laid away my brushes and colors, before the hearths, either in the atrium or the dining room, and I saw that their happiness was complete. I disturbed them but little, for something told me that the world beyond the walls of the old Maccabean house would disturb them soon enough. But whatever problems of the future might call for suffering and separation, this pair of lovers was now united and each day was fulfillment. Then the Galilean and his friends returned and I was shocked to note that his mood of melancholy was deeper.

We made immediate inquiry of Chuza concerning all that had transpired, fearing, after noting the Galilean's manner, that Captain Titus might have failed in some particulars to protect him. But Chuza told us that the Feast of Dedication had found all Jewish parties, even the Zealots, suspending their old differences and making the festival glorious.

"There was only one disturbance," Chuza admitted finally, for he was reluctant to admit that anything occurred to mar the harmony of Israel's great feast of peace.



“The Galilean was walking up and down in Solomon’s porch, whose steps, snow-covered, led down to the Temple’s courts. Up these steps came a little band of Pharisees—the more exacting element of this powerful sect—and one of them challenged the Healer to prove that he is the Messiah. For some of the Zealots—though Zelotes himself was not among them that day—had been pointing out the Galilean, declaring that he was the long-expected deliverer of the Jews.”

The Emperor’s physician was more or less puzzled by Chuza’s words, but of course they had significance for me. So, eagerly, I asked, “What did the Galilean say to this?”

“His reply was esoteric,” Chuza revealed. “But they thought he made himself equal to God—I think he said that he was the Son of God—and they shouted that he was a blasphemer and might have stoned him except for a detail of Captain Titus’ soldiers, who always strolled the Temple area whenever he entered it.”

So the Captain of the Jerusalem Cohort had not been remiss in his promises, being in full command of the city, for Pontius Pilate, knowing how peaceful the Feast of Dedication always was, had not undertaken the winter journey from the comforts of Caesarea.

The Galilean’s journey to Jerusalem and the incidents of the great feast, no matter how joyous for others, begot no change in him and when I again took up work on his portrait I still was burdened with the problem of depicting a face shadowed by a mind heavy with sorrow. But I worked at increasing tempo because of renewed restlessness on the part of the Galilean, and the painting was halted several times throughout January by other journeys he and the Twelve made to the little towns that dotted either side of the range: Ephraim, Gederah, Gibeon, Ramah, Geba and Michmash; and once he went down to Jericho alone and was the guest of Zacchaeus, not even taking Matthew Levi with him. When he returned he had a wallet of gold the chief publican of Jericho had given him, which he handed over to Judas Iscariot with some cryptic remark about not accepting bribes. Judas gave him a startled look but was soon absorbed in counting the gold coins; then he thrust them into a leathern bag and swung it to the heavy belt he wore, unconsciously feeling of it as a warrior does a sword.

It was shortly after his return from Jericho that the Galilean and the Emperor’s physician had their first controversy and it took place in the presence of all. The night was stormy; a cold rain blew down into the valley, and the fire roared up the chimney to meet the wind. I hardly knew how the argument began, but I heard my colleague say, “No one knows the origin of life, though the Greek scientists were closer to it than any other race in their contentions that it evolved out of the earth

instead of being superimposed by the gods.”

There was mystification on the faces of most of the group as my colleague ceased speaking as they, as well as he, waited for the Galilean to make rejoinder; for they were unlettered provincials who knew their nets, or trades, or farms, but could hardly be expected to follow the Emperor’s physician in his theories of Greek science. But when I looked at Jesus of Nazareth his eyes were smiling in their old way, smiling as I had not seen them for weeks, and I sensed in his manner something that promised a bad hour for my brilliant colleague. If his intellectual armor was off or weak in any place, I knew that this man of the people would penetrate it. And penetrate it he did, for he said, “God may have hidden the deeper things of creation from the wise and the great and revealed them unto—” he ceased speaking and his eyes went round the circle of the eager faces—“unto babes,” he finished softly. He spoke again, saying, “If a grain of corn is planted in the ground and dies it produces many others; if it does not die it remains alone.”

Once more he paused and then he showered my colleague with interrogations, all bearing on the origin of life, not its unfolding. He wanted to know if the wisdom of the Greeks knew the secret at the heart of a grain of corn; and he asked the Emperor’s physician if he believed the seed sprang into being without creative propulsion behind it; and finally he inquired if it were not greater wisdom to believe, after the fashion of humble people, that before the seed God was. “In the beginning God created,” he quoted from the opening lines of the old Hebrew Hymn of Creation.

Of course my colleague remained unconvinced. Why should he surrender his scientific theory of the creation of the universe and life just because a Jewish peasant quoted from a Semitic book on the origin of all things? But the Galilean’s Jewish friends believed that the Roman had been confounded and there were whispered exclamations of satisfaction, to which neither the Healer nor my colleague paid the slightest attention. For Sergius Cumanus was really intent on something else and I think the Galilean divined his thoughts. “Tell me how you heal,” the Emperor’s physician requested. And before the Galilean could say a word the Roman hurried on with personal observations and assertions. “Luke Galen and I are physicians, as you well know. We were taught specific methods of healing—taught in the same school. Sometimes we heal; often we fail; but it is said that you never fail to cure the sick. We—”

A sharp interruption came from the Galilean. “But I do fail to heal; I have failed more than once,” he admitted.

“Why?” my colleague questioned, and if his surprise was as great as my own he

was even dumfounded.

“Because of the unbelief of the sick themselves,” Jesus of Nazareth declared. “Once I was in a place where I could do no wonderful works because of their lack of faith, both in God and in me.”

My colleague had his answer. It was simple; it was profound; and he said no more.

I finished the portrait of Jesus of Nazareth on the obverse side of the marble plaque that contained his mother’s picture and, after permitting everyone to scrutinize them, I wrapped the marble with the greatest of care and stored it among my possessions. But the completed portrait of Mary Omri—the most beautiful woman I had painted—I presented to the Emperor’s physician. And so the winter passed and spring came; the sap stirred in the cypress grove; the buds began to swell; birds were in flight; and the Galilean, restless once more, began his old walks in Jewry. There were journeys in every direction save toward Jerusalem. He and the Twelve, sometimes accompanied by his mother and Mary Omri, wandered in the sunlight of spring through the province of Perea, all of which lay east of the Jordan; and once they entered the Decapolis, the ten-town Grecian area, pagan throughout.

But we learned that there were few acts of healing now. Mostly beautiful parabolic stories of life and death occupied his time. But there was one event that puzzled us. We heard that he had banded another company together—seventy this time—and sent them out with instructions how to heal the sick, cast out demons and obtain mastery of their foes. When we heard this we regretted that we had not accompanied the Galilean, for it was evident that we had missed something essential to our medical mission. Then, unexpectedly and hurriedly, the Galilean and the Twelve returned to the old stone house and there was excitement among them.

Fearing that they had been set upon by certain foes, barely escaping to the fastness of the mountain valley, we questioned Simon Peter and John without delay. They told us that their Master had received word of the death of his friend, Lazarus of Bethany, and that he was going to journey there.

“What for?” I asked in some concern, for this would take him again to the walls of Jerusalem. “Won’t the funeral be over before he can arrive?”

They stared at each other doubtfully and then John gave answer: “The Master says that he is going to Bethany to rouse Lazarus out of his sleep.”

It was now the turn of my colleague and myself to stare at each other and we did so in growing wonder. We read each other’s thoughts—thoughts that formulated a question: Was Jesus of Nazareth going to attempt the impossible miracle, the resuscitation of the dead? Surely he would not jeopardize his whole career, as

wonderful as it had been, by attempting to raise the dead. But we soon learned that he was going to attempt this very feat and I knew, as soon as we heard of it, that I had failed with the Emperor's physician, failed in the one thing that had been uppermost in my thoughts from the first time we had seen the Healer. He now seemed just that and nothing more.

The more I thought of the Galilean's proposal to go to Bethany and resuscitate a dead man, the greater became my disappointment that he had committed himself to the impossible. I knew that fakirs, all the way from Egypt to India, had laid claims to performing such a miracle and I believed that it had never been accomplished. But now that Jesus of Nazareth, of all men, was about to descend to such deception—whether it deceived or not—all but broke my spirit.

My colleague, sensing my emotions, never appeared more noble when he said, "The Galilean may not be wholly responsible at this hour. He may be beside himself. Has he not acted somewhat irrationally for weeks? Grief, disappointment, or whatever it is that has been gnawing at his mind may have all but toppled it. Do not overlook this, Luke Galen, before you make up your own mind about his irrational proposal to bring a dead man back to life."

But I was inconsolable, for I had been the one who, throughout all our experiences with the Healer, defended him against my colleague's belief that he was little more than a miracle-monger. And now I wondered—wondered if I had been the victim of illusions or if our own therapy, in a number of instances, had been of greater value than the ministrations of the Galilean, which always had come so late.

"This turn of events in our medical mission nonpluses me," I confessed sadly, helplessly.

But the Emperor's physician, in the spirit of the true scientist, was active toward the whole situation. "I am going to Bethany and you are going with me," he declared. "For it would be very short-sighted if we, men of medical science on a special mission, failed to observe whatever phenomena remain to be observed. But the first duty before us is to hurry to Jerusalem and acquaint Captain Titus with the whole situation."

"Why so?" I questioned, feeling that I did not care to include him in my own disappointment, for I knew him to be inordinately fond of the Galilean.

"For reasons of safety," my colleague said. "Bethany, outside the walls of Jerusalem, will be a more dangerous position for the Healer than the heart of Jerusalem, where Captain Titus would have him under constant scrutiny. Malchus is bound to learn of the Galilean's proximity and after nightfall in an unguarded village—well, let your imagination have full play, my honored friend." He paused,

ostensibly to give me time to reflect, but he went right on to add, “Besides, we must permit nothing to interfere with the attempt of the Galilean to revive his dead friend, otherwise—” Purposely, I think, he refrained from concluding what he was saying.

“Otherwise, I might remain still deceived about Jesus of Nazareth. Is that it?” I said.

His rejoinder was brutally frank. “Yes,” he admitted. “That is it.”

“You are about to win a great victory over me,” I complained bitterly.

“But only in the name of the very science you profess,” he reminded me.

I don’t believe he aimed to goad me, but his words hurt; then something impelled me to strike back defensively. “But what if the Galilean should bring his friend back to life?” I cried.

He gave me a startled look which, as quickly, passed into a critical one. “Are you losing your own mind?” he said.

Our revelation to the others that we were going to Jerusalem at once provoked neither surprise nor inquiry among the Twelve, nor did the Healer’s mother, nor Mary Omri, make any comment. But, conversing privately with Chuza and Joanna, we discovered that they were highly nervous, though they refrained from commenting on the greatest of all the works the Healer would attempt. They, in keeping with the others, informed us that they would go with the Master wherever the journey might lead. Before my colleague and I left the seclusion of the mountain valley there was an atmosphere of tense expectancy among the Healer’s friends that sobered everyone. Was it expectancy or foreboding?

Bidding them farewell—and there was something too solemn about the parting—we left the valley and descending to the flood-plain of the Jordan, made for Jericho, less than an hour’s walk eastward. For there we planned to hire camels, not relishing the long, slow climb to Jerusalem. Late March winds swept the lowlands, rippling the young grass like the surface of a sea, and the palm trees shivered and rattled noisily. At Jericho we found that the Ninth Legion, after wintering there, had pushed on down to Fortress Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, and were holding back hordes of Arabians who would have overrun Perea and destroyed Herod Antipas. Securing camels we went up to Jerusalem and surprised Captain Titus once more. He was troubled when we told him that the Galilean Healer was coming into Bethany on the morrow, for, just as Sergius Cumanus had said, the barracks commander thought Jesus of Nazareth would be in far greater danger in the village on the Mount of Olives than within the walls of the city.

“What brings the Healer here at this time?” he inquired. “For it is a full two weeks before the Passover.”

Seeing that the Emperor's physician would not make reply to the captain's interrogation, I, haltingly and in embarrassment, revealed everything. Captain Titus, naturally, was astonished; he was also credulous in the face of our skepticism.

"I cannot believe that anything is impossible with this man," he said, "for haven't I already witnessed the impossible?"

The Emperor's physician opened his mouth to argue the point but as quickly changed his mind. All he said was, "Will you place a guard out at Bethany, Captain Titus?"

"Certainly," was the immediate rejoinder. "And I will lead it in person."

We spent the night at the barracks, feeling more at ease in our proximity to the Praetorium, for Pontius Pilate had not yet come to Jerusalem in preparation for the April Passover. We discussed all plans with the barracks commander before we retired, and when morning came we rode out to Bethany with him and located the house of the dead man, Lazarus. It stood in a grove of olive and palm trees, surrounded by a waist-high stone wall—a commodious house of the better sort, well back from the Jericho-Jerusalem highway that bisected the village. A narrow footpath led to it from the road, but the house itself barely could be seen from the street, so tangled was the shrubbery.

From within the garden came the low sound of a dirge and, now and then, we caught the added sound of lamentation. It was, so we learned from the watchers at the gate, the third day of mourning; they also informed us that the body of Lazarus was in a limestone grotto at the rear of the long, narrow garden. We were invited to enter, as they supposed us to be friends of the family, and join in the mourning, but we declined and moved on down the highway and stationed ourselves on a wooded knoll that overlooked the garden's entrance.

Captain Titus' detail of soldiers came over the ridge from Jerusalem at midmorning. Of interest to us was the fact that they were led by the soldier we attended in the barracks, the man so desperately wounded in the Temple riot of nearly a year ago, and the one Jesus of Nazareth was supposed to have healed. He was now a centurion, highly dependable and deeply interested in helping defend the man who, as Captain Titus doubtless told him, saved his life through the performance of a miracle.

But Captain Titus took temporary command of the guard, placing the soldiers at strategic points and practically out of sight of the street pedestrians. Then we sat down on the hilltop and conversed, watching the road into Bethany from Jericho, for from this direction the Galilean and his friends would come. And come they did, right at the noon hour, walking unhurriedly, and in their midst were the three women

mounted on the donkeys. They passed below where we sat and turned from the highway and went up the footpath to the garden gate of Lazarus' home. Taking the women and Chuza and John and Simon Peter with him, and leaving the others at the entrance, the Galilean led the way into the garden and vanished.

"Come!" the Emperor's physician said, getting to his feet. "Now is the time for us to go to the tomb of Lazarus and see all that transpires."

If the men the Galilean had left at the gate were surprised to see us they gave no indications of it, though they regarded Captain Titus with questioning looks, all of them having seen him before. But when we started to enter the garden the burly Zelotes blocked the way. "The Master forbids anyone else to enter," he declared.

The Emperor's physician became angry at once. "Out of the way, Zealot," he growled. "We have important business in this garden."

Zelotes, who had never liked my colleague, was fully as bold in his denial, while the others supported him in their voluble manner.

"We must not persist if our presence will be an intrusion," Captain Titus said tactfully. And I agreed. But Sergius Cumanus was wrathful.

Swearing roundly, he warned me that the one great opportunity to see the Galilean fail was slipping away; but we all were against him and while we argued there came outcries of grief from within the garden.

"Well," commented my colleague, as he paced up and down in front of the gate that Zelotes was guarding so well, "from the wails within I must believe that the dead are yet dead, Luke Galen."

It was an unfeeling remark; still, I was well aware of the frame of mind of my blunt-speaking companion. But as we stood listening the lamentations ceased and a solemn hush came down on the group at the garden gate. Would the cries of sorrow break out once more? Cries suddenly broke out, but they were not lamentations. A woman screamed; men shouted; and all of the instruments of music ceased. Then Peter and John came running and their faces were pale. "Lazarus!" Peter shouted as they saw us. "Lazarus, the friend of the Master, is alive."

I seized him by the arm. "What are you saying, Simon Peter?" I demanded. "Do not speak foolish things."

"Lazarus is alive, I tell you," he shouted. "The Master called him from the tomb and he came."

"We saw it with our own eyes," John said in an awed voice. "God of my Fathers!" he cried, breaking into sobs. "What a sight!"

And just then Chuza came and he was trembling, though emotion rather than excitement shook him. "Noble physicians!" he burst out joyfully. "I have seen the

dead rise up.”

And no sooner had he spoken than Zelotes, followed by the ten who had not gone into the garden, broke into a run through the shrubbery, leaving the way open for us to follow if we desired.

“Shall we enter now and see for ourselves?” I said to the Emperor’s physician.

“What is there to see?” he demanded, wheeling on me in the deepest irritation imaginable. “The whole thing was nothing more than a well-rehearsed affair. No wonder the Healer didn’t want us to follow him into the garden. For we are men of science and he would not risk our insight into his charlatanry.”

“But,” I persisted, “the Galilean’s orders were not meant for us. He did not know that we were within miles of this place.”

But my companion was bitter and stubborn. “Where would he expect us to be?” he fairly roared at me. “Everyone in the old stone house knew that we came to Jerusalem. The Healer is shrewd; he easily surmised our coming; he knows that we are difficult to deceive; so I contend that his commands for no one to enter this garden after him were more for us than anyone else.” He stopped his harsh, loud speaking and took me by the arm. “Come with me, Luke,” he said in quiet tones, “and I will tell you something that has not occurred to you.”

And telling Captain Titus that we would see him later, we turned and went down the street with the eyes of all the others upon us.

## XXIX

“All you need do, Luke, is to look at the crowds coming out of Jerusalem to know that what I have contended for hours is true. The thaumaturgist designed deliberately, shrewdly, even daringly, assisted by a man who simulated death, to focus the eyes of the city on himself. His motives are not clear but the results are excellent. For he has the eyes—and the ears—of the key city of the Jews, a city that has always been hostile to him. And tomorrow he may have their hearts and hands in whatever he may undertake. I don’t care what he undertakes, even if it is a revolution against Caesar, but I am not insensible to the fact that he, at last, has reverted to what he was from the beginning—a charlatan, a fakir, whose intellectual dishonesty knows no bounds. Please do not expect me to have anything more to do with him, and I shall be greatly surprised—and disappointed—if you do.”

It was a long speech for the Emperor’s physician, but it was given without heat, analytically and with a finality about it that numbed me. I had no defense, for on the



face of all things Jesus of Nazareth had descended to charlatanry. Whatever else I believed he had done of mighty works I did not believe he had brought back to life a man who had been dead four days. That Lazarus was alive and sitting at meat in his house with the Galilean, the Twelve and the women, simply meant that he had never been dead.

I could not gainsay the penetrating contentions my colleague poured into my ears as we stood on the hill overlooking the road along which scores of curious people were coming and going. For the whole countryside seemed stirred by news of the miracle and Captain Titus and his men had their hands full to keep the crowds on the move and not permit too many, at one time, to enter the grounds where stood the house of Lazarus. The whole affair had turned into a spectacle and I was compelled to weigh the things that my colleague kept pouring into my ears as we stood and watched.

The Emperor's physician refused to let me forget that Jesus of Nazareth for many weeks had brooded over his failure to win the great city of the Jews and had even lost some of his hold upon the multitudes in Galilee. For we had come to believe that his melancholy was the outcome of a loss of prestige, or at least his failure to meet the growing demands of the restless and rebellious elements in Jewish society who seemed ripe for revolution. Had he not, in the face of great danger, gone up and down the land, when he should have remained in the mountain retreat, striving to stir the multitudes? Had he not, finding himself and the Twelve unable to meet the increasing demands for the miraculous, sent out seventy others with power over evil spirits? And was it not his hope that by doing mighty works he would, at last, shake the foundations of Jerusalem itself?

The picture grew clearer and clearer before me, for my colleague, among many other accusations, had said, "The whole affair was nothing more than a well-rehearsed plan. We must not forget that the Healer was at the home of Lazarus during the feasts he attended in the city yonder. So, conscious of his failures despite his successes, he was driven to desperation and planned with Lazarus what has come to pass. And you see the results: the people are stirred, the priests, long his foes, are silenced, and the recent claims made for him by the Twelve that he is the long-looked-for deliverer of the Jews—I think you called it Messiah—are substantiated. But for men of science like yourself, wholly regardless of the singular phenomena you have witnessed in the past few months, the so-called miracle was nothing more than a desperate ruse. It has worked for the ignorant and the superstitious but has failed—for which I am thankful—for you, my good friend."

I was beaten and my sorrow was almost greater than I could bear, for somehow

the Galilean had come to mean hope, hope for the flesh and the minds of Jewry's sick and depressed, even hope, in an ever-widening arc, for the solution of the problems which gave birth to our medical mission. In a word, I had, out of the experiences that befell me on this mission, begun to build a new therapeutical philosophy, far-reaching, so I prayed, in its effects on all pathological and sociological problems. But now—now my dream was rudely shattered.

My colleague's voice aroused me from my sad reverie. "I've got to get Mary Omri away from all this," he said, "and you must help me, Luke Galen."

"Gladly," I asserted. "But how? Your problem is far more than a physical one," I went on by way of definition. "Mary Omri undoubtedly is of the same belief of the others—the belief that the Galilean restored life to a dead man. So what do you propose?"

"Deception, first of all," he replied, startling me. "We will meet deception with deception. We will go, after dark and after the mobs have gone from the streets, and enter the house of Lazarus, just as if we believed that he was dead and was resuscitated through the miraculous power of the Healer. That must be our first step."

"And then?" I waited expectantly yet doubtfully.

He frowned, saying, "That is as far as I have gone. I will take a second step after the first one. But come," he broke off, "we should consult with Captain Titus before the night. We must not forget that the Galilean may still be in great danger from his Jerusalem enemies, which means the woman I love is not safe."

I agreed, and we descended to the street and sought out the barracks commander. Watchers at the gate told us that he was somewhere within the garden and we sent for him. He came at once and his manner was solemn yet joyous. "I have seen the man who was dead and is now alive," he said as he greeted us.

"We wish to see him after dark," my colleague replied. "But what are your plans for guarding the house? The foes of Jesus of Nazareth may come here in the night; doubtless some of them were here mingling in the crowds."

Captain Titus nodded agreement but said, "Malchus, if you are thinking of him, has not been out to Bethany. My spies inform me that he has not stirred beyond the walls of Jerusalem all day. He may—for he loves the dark—come out here tonight. I have prepared for that. Trusted soldiers, under the centurion, will guard the house of Lazarus until dawn. No human hand will be able to hurt the Galilean, I promise you. But I shall return to the barracks for the night and you must go with me and be my guests again."

The Emperor's physician made instant protest. "There is a small inn up the

street,” he said. “We will go there for the night, for it may be late before we leave our friends in the house of Lazarus.”

Captain Titus looked at me and smiled, understandingly he thought, and I nodded and smiled in return. It may have been that each one of us was thinking of the beautiful Mary Omri.

The day lengthened and a cloud rose beyond the walls of Jerusalem. The night would be dark if not stormy. So we parted from Captain Titus and sought an inn and found lodging.

We both were silent and dejected during the meal; we had lost something, or I had, and he was afraid that he was about to lose the woman he loved. So each nursed his own sorrow as the darkness settled over the Mount of Olives until it became a great black tent. Then we went out into the night.

The streets were deserted; scarcely a candle gleam showed from any window; and there were no sounds save the *pat-pat* of our own sandals on the dark, winding roadway that led toward the house of Lazarus. But through the far blackness burned two beacons at the top of the pylons of the Temple like low stars in the evening sky.

I was just about to remark to the Emperor’s physician that the village of Bethany was the blackest spot I ever had felt, for the blackness gripped us, when there came a dull thud and he sank to the ground without a groan. Then came the sound of running feet behind me. I wheeled, but all I saw was a dark figure speeding. Quickly kneeling beside my prostrate friend, I called his name. There was no response, only labored breathing and a choking sound. I gathered him in my arms and staggered back through the darkness toward the inn. I thought I would never reach it. I could feel the warm blood of the Emperor’s physician creeping down the sleeve of my coat. I made the inn, calling for help.

The innkeeper and his family came running and we carried the heavily breathing Sergius Cumanus to a room and placed him on a cot.

“Bring hot water,” I ordered as I slipped out of my cloak and tugged at the fastening of my coat. Then I bent down, thankful that we never went abroad without certain medicines and surgeon’s instruments, and examined the wound.

The Emperor’s physician had been struck by a jagged iron bar just above the right ear. His skull was crushed and I knew, after the first superficial examination, that he was terribly, if not fatally, wounded.

“Go to the house of Lazarus without delay,” I begged the innkeeper as he entered with a basin of water and clean cloths, “and ask for Chuza. A centurion is there on guard. Bring them here quickly. I will pay you well.”

The man hurried out of the inn, calling for one of his sons to follow him, and I

bent to my task, bringing all my skill to bear and praying for more. While I worked the innkeeper returned on the run, alone and frightened.

“A fight rages in the garden,” he cried. “Men shout and strike one another. Some screamed as do stabbed men. Others groaned as men dealt hard blows. All was dark, confused. I and my sons ran for our lives, for there are dead men in that garden who will never be brought back to life.” And I knew he had Lazarus in mind.

The innkeeper was so frightened that he bolted his doors and he and his family cowered in an upper room while I worked steadily over my beloved colleague. As I worked I tried to piece together the probable facts of the garden conflict. Undoubtedly Malchus and his men had stolen into Bethany under cover of the darkness; doubtless some of his spies—as thick as ripe olives and as black—had mingled with the crowds throughout the day and knew just where my colleague and I had gone to lodge; and, beyond the shadow of a doubt, Malchus himself, watching the door of our lodging place, hoping or expecting that we would venture forth, saw and followed us and struck the blow. Then he had gone on to lead the attack against the Galilean and the Twelve, perhaps unaware that soldiers from the barracks lay concealed in the garden of Lazarus’ house. Or if aware of the presence of the Roman guard, Malchus may have brought twice their strength from his own Temple lictors, determined to settle two scores at once. But had he counted on the fighting qualities of Zelotes and others of the Twelve? I felt I would soon know, and I did, for as I worked there came a loud knock on the bolted door at the front of the inn.

“Do not open it,” the keeper of the inn implored as I called to him and he would not respond.

“Knavel!” I yelled at him, and went and unbolted the door.

Two of Captain Titus’ soldiers stood before me—the centurion and one other, and the latter was bloody.

“What has happened?” I cried.

“Malchus and his hirelings came to seize the Healer,” the centurion explained. “There were many of them, but we gave them battle. Our short swords were too much for them in the darkness. So were the knives in the hands of the Healer’s friends. By Jupiter!” he swore. “How those Jews can fight with daggers! We killed one of Malchus’ men and wounded many. They escaped in the gloom. But we have some wounded men, sir, and we wish assistance from the noble physicians.”

Instantly the incongruity of the whole situation flashed into my mind. “Why not have the Healer attend them?” My question was out before I had time to think how tactless it might have been.

But the centurion’s answer was frank. “Because the Galilean and the women

with him vanished during the fight and are not to be found,” he revealed.

More trouble! But why should I now be troubled over the Galilean and his friends? For my colleague lay at the point of death.

“Sir,” the soldier again said, “will you and the Emperor’s physician come and attend the wounded? Captain Titus told me where I could find you if you were needed.”

“Come with me,” I said, and led the way to my colleague’s bedside. “He was assaulted in the dark a little while ago,” I went on to explain. “I cannot leave him.”

“Let us help you,” the centurion said generously.

“Then return to the house of Lazarus and inform the man called Chuza, or any of the others, that I am at this inn and with me is the Emperor’s physician, badly wounded.”

The soldiers bowed and hurriedly left the inn and I turned to my task of love once more. As I worked I prayed, for was I not the offspring of a race of men who always prayed and who prayed in great faith that the Lord God would hear? But, somehow, as I prayed, the face of Jesus of Nazareth rose before me. I could not escape this man.

Hours passed. My friend was dying. My skill could do nothing. Sergius Cumanus, the foremost physician in the Empire, lay unconscious—powerless to heal himself. Chuza did not come, and I surmised that he had gone with the Galilean and the women. But where? Would morning reveal their whereabouts? How I needed them!

But morning, dismal with March rain, brought nothing except delirium for my colleague. So here I was, practically a prisoner in a village inn, not more than two miles from an unfriendly city and with a desperately sick friend in my care. And that man was physician in private to Caesar himself, with Caesar far away; Lucius Vitellius was not near; the Galilean and the Twelve had vanished, and with them Chuza and Joanna and the one woman I would have near—Mary Omri. Then, in desperation, I sent for Captain Titus.

On receiving word from me he mounted a swift steed and raced it across the Kidron, up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and down to Bethany and to me.

“There isn’t any doubt about the guilt of Malchus,” he declared after hearing my story. “But we have no proof; besides, the family of the High Priest will defend him.”

“When will Pontius Pilate come for the Passover?” I asked in helpless rage and sorrow.

“Perhaps not for another week,” Captain Titus made known. “And when he does—well, I will have to give an account to him for the killing of one of the Temple

Guard by my soldiers. He will want to know why troops from the barracks were in a brawl at Bethany and I will have to tell him. I will be charged with treason for using Roman soldiers to protect Jewish Zealots. I expect such a charge and it will be made by the High Priest. Malchus will see to it. But I do not care, for I am about to sheathe my sword and follow Jesus of Nazareth.”

What he meant was of no great concern to me at that moment; but where the Galilean might be was of great moment, and I asked him if he knew. “Yes,” he said, greatly to my joy. “He and the others are in the house of Zebedee. They will be safe as long as I command the garrison. Shall I inform them of the plight of the Emperor’s physician?”

The question was not casual; it held a world of meaning, for the Roman soldier was thinking of the same thing that occupied my mind—the doubtful condition of the Emperor’s physician.

“Yes,” I cried. “Go at once and give the word to Mary Omri who loves him and to Jesus of Nazareth—”

“Who can heal him,” Captain Titus interrupted with startling suddenness.

In that moment all my half-doubt began to give place to perfect faith and I sobbed, “Go and tell the Master to come.”

It was near sunset when they came. I saw them while they were a great way off, for I had done little except pace up and down in front of the inn after Captain Titus departed on his errand of mercy. But there was no haste in their approach and I hurried toward them, crying, “Oh, my friends! The Emperor’s physician is at the gates of death.”

My cry was a confession—the confession that my medical science, standing alone, had failed. Sergius Cumanus was dying; a noble, brilliant life was going out like a candle burning to its socket, and I could do nothing to check it.

The Galilean did not speak but Mary Omri said, “Take us to him.”

I shall never forget her tones. They were love-filled but not possessive; neither were they the tones of a woman who had lost body and soul to a man; rather were they the tones of one who had discovered something beyond the flesh and its fires, for in them were surrender, resignation and spiritual illumination.

I led the way to the bedside of the Emperor’s physician and as they stood and gazed upon him I looked appealingly at them. Grief was stamped upon the face of the woman; compassion made the face of the Galilean almost feminine. His lips moved slowly as he said, “What is it you would have me do?”

Then it was that the last shred of doubt dropped from me like the final leaf of a winter-smitten tree and I stood naked and needy. I dropped to my knees as I had

seen Chuza in the streets of Cana, and holding up my hands, I cried, “Master, have mercy upon me and have mercy upon the Emperor’s physician and heal him.”

The Galilean’s matchless eyes traveled from my face to the face of Mary Omri—smiling eyes now that were also questioning. And she, too, sank to her knees, whispering, “Heal him, my Master. Give him back—back to those who love him.”

Jesus of Nazareth reached down and took one of the limp, cold hands of Sergius Cumanus in both his own and in what he said was the final revelation of his healing art. “According to the faith of your friends, O Roman, it will be done to you.” The Galilean lifted his eyes from the pallid face of my friend to—where? Surely to infinity where divinity awaits all supplications of men in the flesh. Once more his lips moved slowly but his voice was barely audible. I strained to hear and in hearing I learned the deathless secret of his power over the ills to which the flesh is heir. For I caught the whispered prayer, “Grant me this, O my Father, if it is the will of heaven.”

The Galilean ceased speaking and, with my anxious eyes on the face of my colleague, I waited, watched, prayed. He was as motionless as death itself; I could not even hear him breathe. Suddenly his eyes fluttered open and rested on the compassionate face of Jesus of Nazareth.

“My Lord and my God!” I cried humbly.

My cry reached the ears of the Emperor’s physician and he looked at me as I knelt at the foot of his couch; then he beheld Mary Omri, radiant at that moment with spiritual light and beauty. And she was smiling through her tears. Then he said, “My beloved, my friend, and—” his eyes sought the face of the Galilean once more —“and my Master.”

THE END





## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected.  
Inconsistencies in punctuation have been maintained.

[The end of *The Emperor's Physician* by J. R. Perkins]