

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

Sydney Watson

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CHAPTER SIX

"A REED LIKE A ROD"

EVENTS moved with startling rapidity. Events which, in the swift-moving times of the last years of the nineteenth century, would have occupied a decade to bring to pass, now occupied no more than the same number of days. The revived Roman Empire was an established fact. Moved by Satan, the ten kings had united to make Lucien Apleon their Emperor. The nations, having cast off all belief in the orthodoxy of the previous centuries, refusing to believe GOD's truth, utterly scouting it, in fact, they had laid themselves open to receive Antichrist's lie, and had swallowed it wholesale.

Babylon had been rebuilt, and had become the Commercial center of the reign of Lucien Apleon, even as Jerusalem was now to become his religious center.

Ralph Bastin was still Editor of the "*Courier*," though each week, each day, in fact, he wondered if it would be his last of office, even as he often wondered if he might not have to seal his testimony as a God-inspired editor, with his blood, his life.

Already, all who, like himself, would live Godly, had to suffer bitter persecution. Many of the Godly had been found mysteriously murdered, and always the murders had been passed over by those who were in authority.

Ralph was on the point of leaving his office for luncheon, (he always lunched in the city), when a visitor was announced.

"Rabbi Cohen, to see you, sir," announced Charley.

"Show him in at once," replied Ralph, and rising to his feet he went to the door to meet his friend.

The Rabbi entered with a little eager run, and the two men grasped hands heartily, their respective faces glowing with the gladness they each felt.

As it had been with Tom Hammond and that other Cohen, the Jew, who had shared in the translation of the Church, so with the Rabbi who was now visiting Ralph, he had been drawn to call upon Ralph, in the first place, because of his editorial espousal of the Jewish people and their interests.

Between Ralph and the Rabbi, there had grown up a very strong friendship, and though for some weeks, they had not met, each knew that the other's friendship was as ever.

After a few ordinary exchanges between the pair, the Rabbi, suddenly looked up eagerly, saying: "I have come to say good-bye, to you, my friend, unless, by any fortunate chance, I can persuade you to accompany me, or, at least, follow me soon."

"Good-bye, Cohen?" cried Ralph, "Why – what - where are you going?"

"To Jerusalem, Bastin!" There was a curious ring of mixed pride and gladness in the manner of his saying "Jerusalem."

"You know," he went on, "that we Cohens are the descendents of Aaron, that we are of the priestly line. I am the head of our family, and my people have chosen me as the first High priest for our new Temple worship."

Brimming with his subject, he spoke rapidly, enthusiastically: "The Temple is to be formally opened on the tenth of September. The tradition among my people, and handed down to us in many of our writings is this: that the Great Temple of Solomon - opened in the seventh month, as all our scriptures, yours as well as ours, say - was dedicated and opened on a day corresponding with the modern tenth of September. Our new Temple will be opened on the tenth of this month."

On entering the room he had laid a long, cylinder-shaped japanned roll upon the table. This he now took up, took off the lid, and drew out a roll of vellum. Unrolling the vellum, he held the wide sheet out between his two outstretched hands, saying:

"I brought this on purpose for you to see, friend Bastin."

He smiled pleasantly as he added: "I expect you are the only Gentile who has seen this finished drawing."

For a few moments both men were silent. Ralph was speechless from amazement, the Rabbi from eager interest in watching his friend's amaze.

The "drawing," as the Rabbi had called it, was in reality a superb painting of the most marvelous structure possible to conceive. The bulk of the vellum surface was occupied with an enormous oblong enclosure. The outer sides of the enclosure showing a most exquisite marble terracing, the capping of the marble wall was of a wondrous red-and-orange-veined dark green stone. The bronze gates were capped and adorned with massive inlayings of gold and silver, while the floral parts showed the colours of the precious stones used to produce each separate colored flower.

A huge altar, the ascent to which, on three of the sides was by flights of wide steps, occupied the forepart of the courtyard inside the gates of the main entrance - there were five entrances, each with its own gates. Two entrances on each side of the oblong enclosure, and one at the courtyard end.

Beyond the altar was a huge brazen sea, resting upon the hind-quarters of twelve bronze oxen. Beyond the brazen sea was the temple itself, entered by a wide porch of wondrous marble, the pillars of which were crowned with golden capitals of marvellous workmanship. The porch was surmounted by a dome. Then came the temple proper, its form a square above a square, the upper square surmounted by a huge dome, supported upon columns similar to those found in the porch, and in the base-square.

What the actual building must be like Ralph could not conceive! The picture of it was a bewildering vision of almost inconceivable loveliness.

Now and again he asked a question, the Rabbi, at his side, delighted with his admiration, answering everything fully.

"What has your wonderful temple cost?" Ralph presently asked, as the picture was being rolled up, and replaced in the japanned cylinder.

"Twenty million pounds, a full third of which has been spent upon precious stones for studding the walls, and gates, and pillars!"

Ralph gasped in amaze. "Twenty-million-pounds!" He repeated the words much after the manner of a man who, recovering from a swoon, says, "Where-am-I?"

They talked together for a few moments of the how of the financing of such a costly undertaking. Then suddenly, Bastin faced his friend, a rare wistfulness in his face and in his voice, as he said:

"I wish, dear Cohen, you, and your dear people could see how futile all this work is! I do not want to hurt you by speaking of JESUS of Nazareth. But suffer me to say this, that probably the only references which GOD's word makes to this Temple of yours, are in Daniel 12:11 and in the Christian New Testament, Matthew 2; Mark 13:2; II Thessalonians 2:14; and Revelation 11:1, and there it is mentioned in connection with Judgment.

"In the first verse of our eleventh of Revelation, the temple is to be measured, but it is with a reed like a rod. Not the ordinary measuring reed, but like a rod, the symbol of Judgment.

"And that, dear Cohen, will be the end of your beautiful temple - it will be destroyed in Judgment, and soon - all too soon - it will be cursed and defiled by the abomination of desolation of which your beloved prophet Daniel speaks, in the twelfth chapter and the eleventh verse."

With a sudden new eagerness, but as sad as he was eager, he said: "In your extremity, and in your desire to be established in the land of your fathers, you talk of making a seven years covenant with Lucien Apleon, Emperor of the European confederacy?"

Cohen, evidently impressed by Ralph's manner, nodded an assent, but did not speak.

"Oh, Cohen, my friend, my friend!" Ralph went on. "Would to GOD you and your people had your eyes open to the true character of that man, Lucien Apleon! If you had, you would see from your own prophets that he was prophesied to be your foe. Remember Daniel nine, twenty-seven (according to the modern chaptering and verses) **"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:** (a week of years, of seven years) **and in the midst of the week** (at the end of the first three and a half years) **he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate."**

Cohen's face was a picture of wondering amaze. Twice his lips parted as though he would speak, but no sound came from them, and Ralph went on:

"I could weep with very anguish of soul, dear friend, at all that you, and every truly pious Jew will suffer; when, at the end of the three years and a half (**'the midst of the week'**) the foul fiend whom you are all trusting so implicitly, will suddenly abolish your daily sacrifice of the morning and evening lamb, and will set up an image of himself, which you, and all the Godly of your race, will refuse to worship. Then will begin your awful tribulation, **'the time of Jacob's trouble.'**

"It is in your own Scriptures, dear friend, if you would but see it. And in our New Testament, in Matthew twenty-four, which is all Jewish in its teaching, our Lord and Saviour, foretold all this as to come upon your people. He even showed them to be in their own land, saying, **'let them which are in Judea flee into the mountains . . . and pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath day:'** (for you Godly Jews would not go beyond Moses' **'Sabbath day's journey,'** and Antichrist's myrmidons would then soon overtake you)."

As if to jerk the talk into a new channel Cohen said, almost abruptly:

"Why do you say, my friend, that our temple, the temple which we shall dedicate on the tenth of this month, has probably so few mentions in the Scriptures, and those in judgment. When we say that the whole of the nine last chapters of our prophet Ezekiel are taken up with it. Nearly all our plans have followed the directions, the picture of Ezekiel's Temple?"

"That temple, sketched in Ezekiel," replied Ralph, "is the millennial temple. There was no temple in the nineteen hundred odd years between the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and the translation of The church, a few months ago. There could be no temple as regards GOD's people - The Church - because all that nineteen hundred years was a spiritual dispensation.

"GOD's Temple then was composed of living stones, wherein a spiritual priesthood offered up spiritual sacrifices.

"But to go back to the temple described by Ezekiel in the last nine chapters of his prophecy - this is the temple which will be reared in the Millennium, but it will not be in Jerusalem. Read carefully over all that Ezekiel's description, and you will see that when your Messiah, our CHRIST, comes to reign for that wonderful time of a thousand years of perfect righteousness.

Then your land - the land given in promise by GOD to your father Abraham - is to be re-divided (Ezekiel forty-five one to five). Ezekiel's Temple, and the division of the land, stand and fall together, and it is a subject that cannot be symbolized.

"Now when the land is divided into straight lines, '**a holy oblation**' is commanded of sixty square miles - if the measurement be by reeds, or fifteen square miles if the measurement be by cubits. This oblation land will be divided into three parts. The northern portion will be for the priests, and the new temple will be in the midst. The second division of land, going South will be for the Levites. And the third, the most Southerly portion, will contain Jerusalem. So that that temple of the Millennium - Ezekiel's temple - will be fully thirty miles from Jerusalem.

"Solomon's temple, and the one your people have just reared are both situated on Mount Moriah, but Ezekiel's temple will not be on Mount Moriah, for according to Isaiah two, two, '**It shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.'**

"Read carefully, dear Cohen, your own loved Scriptures (in this connection, especially Isaiah 50) and you will see that Gentiles shall help, financially, as well as by manual labor to build the place, which shall make the place of The Lord's feet glorious - that must be His Temple, and not the city. Though Gentiles will also help to build the walls of your new city of Jerusalem in that day."

For fully another half hour the subject was pursued. Cohen was amazed, puzzled, but because his mind was not an open one to receive the Truth - nothing blinds and obstructs like a preconceived idea - he failed to grasp the Scriptural facts as presented by Ralph.

The moment came for the farewell word between them. "I may never see you again on earth, dear friend," Ralph remarked. "For, believe me, the day is near at hand when all of us who will cleave to our GOD, your GOD - the GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will have to seal our testimony with our blood.

"In three years and a half you, dear Cohen, and all the Godly ones of your race, will be at issue with Lucien Apleon, for according to your own prophet, Daniel (apart from our New Testament Scriptures) he, the antichrist, will autocratically put a stop to your sacrifices in your Temple, and will set up his own image to be worshipped, and if you will not worship that image, or if you do not succeed in fleeing to a place of safety, your lives will be forfeited. May GOD bless you dear, dear friend, and lead you into the Truth of His own plain statements of the facts you have to face."

Cohen was quiet, subdued, almost sad. Then, as if to bridge an awkward moment, he said, with a forced eagerness:

"Why not come to the opening of the Temple yourself, instead of sending a representative to report to your paper?"

Ralph shook his head; "I could not get away, dear friend."

He did not voice the actual thing which weighed with him, that any day now he might cease to be Editor of the "*Courier*."

The two men shook hands, and parted as men part who never expect to meet again.

Bastin left alone dropped into a "brown study." He was suddenly recalled to the present, by the arrival of the mail. The most important packet bore the handwriting of Sir Archibald Carlyon, Ralph's proprietor.

He smiled as he broke the envelope, recalling the thought of his heart only twenty minutes ago, and wondering whether his foreboding was now to be verified.

The letter was as kindly in its tone as Sir Archibald's letters ever were. But it was none the less emphatic. After kindest greetings, and a few personal items, it went on:

"All the strange happenings of the past months have strangely unnerved me. I cannot understand things, 'I dunno where I are,' as that curious catch-saying of the nineteenth century put it. I live like a man in a troubled dream, a night-mare. Several members of our church have been taken, and I, who prided myself on my strict churchmanship, have been left behind. My boon companion, the rector of our parish, a man who always seemed to me to be the beau ideal clergyman, he too is left, and is as puzzled and angry as I am. I think he is more angry and mortified than I am, because his pride is hurt at every point, since, as the Spiritual head (nominally at least) of this parish, he has not only been passed over by this wonderful translation of spiritual persons, but being left behind he has no excuse to offer for it.

"The curate of our church and his wife, whom we always spoke of as being 'a bit peculiar,' they disappeared when the others did. By the bye, Bastin, good fellow, what constitutes 'peculiarity,' in this sense? It seems to me now, that to be out and out for GOD - as that good fellow and his wife were, as well as one or two others in our parish - is the real peculiarity of such people. GOD help us, what fools we have been!

"Our village shopkeeper, a dissenter, and a much-vaunted local preacher, is also left behind, but his wife was taken. A farmer, a member of our own church, who used to invite preachers down from the Evangelization Society, London, is gone, but his wife, a strict churchwoman like myself - but a rare shrew - is left.

"But to come to the chief object of my letter, I am afraid you will be sorry - though perhaps not altogether unprepared for what I have to say - if have sold the *Courier*.' It may be the only daily paper, (as you wrote me the other day) that 'witnesses for righteousness,' but my mind is too harassed by all this mysterious business of the Translation of men and women, to think of anything else but the future, and what it will bring. I have sold the paper to Lucien Apleon (through one of his agents, of course, since now that he is made Emperor of this strangely constituted confederation of kings and countries) he cannot be expected to personally transact so small a piece of business as the purchase of a daily paper."

Ralph lowered the letter-sheet, a moment, and a weary little smile crept into his face.

"I might have guessed that Apleon would have done this," he mused, "if he is, as I believe, the Antichrist!" He lifted the letter again, and read on:

"He wanted to take possession at once, and give me £5,000 extra as a retiring fee for you. But I was obstinate on this point, and told his agent that he could not have possession until a month from today.

"Between this and then I shall hope to see you, dear Bastin. I want to see you very much on my own account. Your utterances from 'The *Prophet's Chair*,' have aroused strange new thoughts and desires within me, and I want you to help me to a clearer view of the events of the near future. Then, as to the sundering of our business relations, you know me so well that you know I shall treat you handsomely when you retire from the Editorship.

"Talking of finance, what special use can money be to a man like me now, if all that you have lately written in the '*Courier*' - as to the future - be true?"

The letter wound up most cordially. Then there followed a "P. S."

"My old friend, the Rector of the parish, who has always been keen on theatricals - he would have made a better actor than parson - is having the church seated with plush-covered tip-seats like a theatre, and proposes to have a performance every Sunday Evening, and as often in the week as funds, and interest in the affair, will warrant. Good Heavens! What has the world come to? Then only to think that England's King, is under the supreme rule of a Jew, whose antecedents no one appears to know - that is to say, previous to his meteoric-like appearance when he was twenty-five. **How are the mighty fallen!**' "

"How, indeed!" murmured Ralph, with a sigh, as he let the letter fall on his table.

For a moment or two he stared straight in front of him, then, half aloud, he murmured:

"A month only! GOD help me to make good use of the thirty days! If I can but wake up some of the people of this land to the real position of affairs, I shall be only too thankful."

For a few moment's longer he sat on, deep in thought.

Then suddenly he started sharply, grew alert in every sense, and sounded a summons for his messenger boy. When the lad appeared, he asked:

"Do you know if Mr. Bullen is on the premises?"

"Yus, sur, he is!"

"Ask him to step this way, at once, please!"

George Bullen, was a keen, up-to-date young journalist, a man of thirty-two only, but with a fine record as regarded his profession. A close personal friendship existed between his chief and himself, for he had been wholly won to GOD through Ralph's efforts.

In a few words Ralph explained to the younger man, the changes that were near at hand. Then continuing:

"But while you and I, George, represent '*The Courier*,' we will make it all the power for GOD and for humanity that lies in our power. Though I am not sure that we can do much with humanity, now. The strong delusion has got such an almost universal grip upon the race, that they will gladly, eagerly swallow all the lie of the Arch-liar, the Antichrist. In the old days, before the translation of the church, the Bible spoke of '**the whole world lieth in wickedness** (in the arms of the Wicked One),' and that is truer than ever now. Well, George, we must do all we can.

"But now to the chief thing for which I sent for you. The new temple at Jerusalem is to be opened on the tenth. I want you to go, to represent the '*Courier*.' What I am especially anxious for you to do, is to note everything that will show the true inwardness of things, so that the little time left to us, on the dear old paper, shall be a time of holy witness for GOD.

"Your knowledge of the East, your acquaintance with Yiddish, and Syrian and Hebrew, the very swarthy skin of your face, and blackness of your hair, dear boy, may all serve you in good stead. For, if you feel led to it, I should suggest that you adopt that Syrian costume I once saw you in. This course would have many advantages, for while you could the more readily mix with the people, and obtain entree often where you otherwise could not, your identity as representative of '*The Courier*,' would not be made known.

"I am not sure, George, but that if you presented yourself as our representative, that all kinds of obstacles might not be put in the way of your obtaining information, or, more likely, in transmitting it. You might even be quietly put out of the way. Spare no expense, dear boy, where other men spend five pounds, spend a hundred, if it will serve us better."

For a time the two men held deep consultation. Then when they gripped hands in parting, each commended the other to GOD.

George Bullen started for the East next afternoon. His stock of Eastern garments was full and varied, and not one Eastern in a million would have known him from a Syrian native.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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