

# THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### HERO-WORSHIP

NEITHER George Bullen, or the "Lebanon Rose," whom he had so opportunely saved, had had any idea of how rapidly time had fled during that afternoon. On reaching the street, and looking at his watch, George was amazed to find that it was past six o'clock. Moving as briskly as it was wise to do, so as not to call attention to himself, he made his way to where the noise of the multitude told him that something extra was happening.

He soon discovered that the excitement came from a kind of impromptu mass meeting that had followed upon the appearance of Apleon riding on his now celebrated black charger.

The first thing which struck Bullen was the fact that, already, everyone seemed to be wearing the "Covenant" sign - "The Mark of the Beast." He himself appeared to be the only person who was not wearing it. And - was it fancy? or did Apleon's eyes fix on him with a momentary scowl.

The second thing which struck him, was the intense admiration and homage of the great crowd - all classes alike seemed absolutely infatuated - for this Emperor-Dictator of the world, Lucien Apleon, "The Antichrist."

Two cries rose loud and laudatory from the multitude "Who is like Apleon? Who dare oppose him?" It was the ultimate fruit of the jingoism of the previous years!

"This is what John beheld," Bullen told himself. "all the world wondered after the Beast!" They are, already, worshipping him, in their poor deluded hearts, as a GOD!

Almost, it seemed to the young journalist as though there was headed up in this one man - the Man of Sin - all that men through the by-gone ages had worshipped. The captivating power of ancient Babylon. The mighty prowess of the Medo-Persian, the power that held all the world in subjection and awe. The Grecian polish. The Roman legal acumen, and martial perfection. All these things seemed combined in this one notable man.

And added to all this, there was his resistless attractiveness, his beauty of face, his grace of form, his wondrous voice, his regal air - "all the world wondered after him."

As, after awhile, he walked slowly homewards, George Bullen asked himself the question:

"How can it have come to pass, that in comparatively so short a time, it should be possible for all the world to be ready to yield an almost idolatrous obedience to one man?"

Unconsciously to himself his pace slackened, it was as though his mind had willed to have time to review things that should answer his question, before he should reach his rooms, and the consideration should be broken into.

"There was first," he mused "that gradual falling away from the Truth of GOD, for a full half of the nineteenth century - very gradual, very slow, and very subtle at first, but growing bolder each year, until, in the early part of the first decade of the twentieth century, men calling themselves Christians, taking the salaries of Christian ministers, openly denied every fundamental truth of the Bible - Sin, the Fall, The Atonement, The Resurrection, the Immaculate Birth of CHRIST, His Deity, the Personality of Satan, the Personality of The Holy Spirit, and everything else in GOD's Word which clashed with the flesh of their unregenerate lives.

"Then there was the giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons (demonology, called Spiritism) 'forbidding to marry' (doctrine of Lust, known as 'Free Love').

"Great forces were at work during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and more especially in the early part of the twentieth, all of which were preparing the way for the Antichrist.

"What blinded intellects called 'Progress,' was really Apostasy. And Scientists, Materialists, and Humanists, and the world's teachers were all looking for some great outstanding genius, some super-man.

"The Believing Church, before the 'Rapture,' had its Hope, a Hope given by GOD of a Man who should head all things up in Himself, and clothe His Church with His own glory. And that Man came, the Man CHRIST JESUS, the Lord of Glory. And all the time the world had its hope, and just as CHRIST, the Hope of the Church, said '**I will come again,**' so He also said, as regards the world's hope, '**Another shall come in his own name,**' and now-"

George Bullen paused in his walking and looked back to where the laudatory shouts of the deluded multitude, still rose around Apleon.

"And now," he continued, "that other has come, come in his own name, and the world has received him. As late as nineteen hundred and eight, one of the world's so-called 'great thinkers,' a D.D., too, said:

" 'We still wait for The Genius who shall state our fundamental faith in accordance with that insight which the modern man has gained.'

"That 'great thinker,' if he is living, ought now to be satisfied, for his 'Genius' has appeared. And if he still possesses a Bible, let him turn to Revelation, thirteen eighteen, and he will know how all his fancied man-progress was prophesied for nearly two thousand years ago in the words:

**'Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is THE NUMBER OF MAN; and his number is 666.'**

"Oh, yes, in a hundred and one ways, the coming of the Antichrist, and the consequent worship of his Satanic-energized personality, was well-paved; for the world relegated to the limbo of the past, GOD's evangel as effete, superstitious, worn-out, and it was then prepared for the Devil's lie, the Great Delusion."

By this time George's feet had carried him to the door of the house. He knocked, as arranged before leaving, three slow, deliberate knocks and two others, sharp, quickly-following.

Almost instantly Rose appeared at the door. She had prepared an evening meal, and over the supper-table he told her all that he had seen and heard, while out, adding:

"The whole world will be abjectly at the feet of that man of Satan, presently."

For a few moments they talked on together, then she rose to clear the table. His eyes followed her in all her movements, for, in spite of her bruised stiffness, all that she did was done so deftly, and every movement of her beautiful form was full of the grace of perfect ease.

Now, almost for the first time, it came to him with full seriousness, "What am I to do with her? since, saving her, housing her I have, to a certain extent, made myself responsible for her?"

When she returned to the room, after clearing the last thing from the table, he said:

"We must face your future, Rose! What are your plans, or haven't you any?"

"I am afraid I have no plans," she returned. "You see, good George, I was so terrified at all I heard from my brother, that I simply got away as quickly as I could, without any plan for the future, other than that there has always been, at the back of my mind, an idea, that should I ever (from any cause whatever) become a refugee, I should make my way to England. For, rightly or wrongly; I believe the peoples of all the world have always associated with England the two thoughts of safety and liberty."

Lifting her eyes to his, a bright smile filling all her face. she went on:

"I am not without money. I have nearly twenty-five pounds with me. The question is, where would one - who would rather die than wear the 'Mark of the Beast' - be safest? In England, do you think?"

"I don't know, Rose. My place is there, because my duty lies there. And now that I have, I think, finished all that I can do here, I ought to be getting back, at once. I ought, I think, to go to-night."

At ten-thirty there is a good service to the West, but I cannot leave you alone here. I fear that death, in some way, must have overtaken the people of this house, so that I cannot remain here, but must leave the house to its fate. But about you, Rose? I cannot leave you, like the house, to your fate!"

With the absolute trust of a little child, she stretched her hands towards him, saying:

"Good George, my saviour already from one dreadful death, save me again please. Take care of me until we get to England, take me with you, I will be no expense to you, I will give no trouble, I will-"

Her clinging, child-like trust moved him greatly. He took the two pretty, plump little hands in his, and holding them in a clasp, firm and tight, as though by his grip upon her he would give her an assurance of safety, he said:

"Take you with me, little one, of course I will. And now that is settled we will talk over our plans, for I think we ought to leave by that ten-thirty Western-bound service. Each hour after to-night, the service will become more crowded, and we had better avoid the crowd, if we can."

George Bullen had never had much to do with women. No woman had ever quickened by one extra beat his heart or pulse. Yet now he felt himself strangely, mysteriously drawn to this sweet young Lebanon girl. He realized that it was no time for courting, yet he would have been of marble not to have been moved by her trust in him, and by her sweet, gracious personality.

At ten-thirty that night they were clear of the place, and homeward-bound to England.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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