THE PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICE BUREAU

ELMA, WASHINGTON
ADAH, THE DAUGHTER
By Lola Lamoreux

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No 684 A

The early life of Jepthah, the father of our first heroine Adah, was not happy. Because he was an illigitimate son of Gilead, he was thrust out of his home by his brothers so that he would have no share in their inheritance. Although he was a man of courage and valor he fled to Tob to escape from the wrath of his brothers. Jepthah must have had a certain amount of popularity for the Scriptures tell us that many went out of the land of Gilead with him.

In the process of time the children of Ammon made war against Isreal. The leders of the house of Gilead, lacking a leader and recognizing the courage of Jepthah then came to him and urged him to return and be their captain. But Jepthah was not too easily persuaded. He reminded them of their former unkindness to him and refused to return unless he would be made their captain and head. This the leders solemnly promised and the covenant between them was made at Mizpah.

Jepthah then returned to Gilead and immediately sent a message to the children of Ammon asking for an explanation of their unfriendly acts. When it was found that the children of Ammon would not listen to reason nor to Jepthah's messages, he organized and equipped his army.

Then the Bible says, "Jepthah vowed a vow unto the Lord and said:'If Thou wilt deliver the children of Ammon unto mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

The Scripture continues, "So Jepthah passed over unto the Children of Ammon to fight against them; the Lord delivered them into his hands."

Tepthah's reputation as a great leader was fully upheld in the confliction there was a great slaughter and twenty cities held by the Ammonites were conquered. Little did Jepthah realize what a fearful price he would be called upon to pay for this victory.

On his return journey he was met on all sides with flowers, music and great acclaim. There was unheard of rejoicing throughout the land.

At Mizpah, where he lived vast preparations were being made to receive him as a hero and conqueror. A rapturous welcome awaited him. As he neared his own home behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child; beside he had meither son nor daughter. And there fell on Jepthah a blow more cruel and fearful than he had ever received in his life before, for he recalled his vow, "Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace shall surely be the Lords."

Then he saw her, Jepthah in his anguish, rent his clothes and cried out, "Alas, my daughter thou hast brought me very low, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back." As Jepthah with deep suffering related the story of his vow, Adah was struck with horror at unhappy fate; but the courage born in her triumphed over fears and he made this reply, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth."

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Where can we find greater courage? This young girl resorted to no quibling, no thought of subterfuse or permissable redemption. "Forasmuch as the vow was made unto the Lord" it must be without question in her mind fulfilled; and she would not have been Jepthah's daughter if she dis suaded him to let the thought of her life and happiness deter him from keeping his vow.

Only she asked, "Let this thing be done for me, let me alone two months, that I may go up and down the mountains and bewail my virginity. And her

father said, "go".

She returned at the end of two months to her father who did to her according to the vow which he had vowed. There has been much conflicting opinion as to whether Jepthah literally did according to his vow, probably brought about by the revulsion of feeling at the thought of such a sacrifice, and also because such a sacrifice was not in conformity with the Jewish law. But the conclusion of the narrative in Judges leaves us little room for doubt as it states it was a custom of Isreal, that the daughters of Isreal went yearly to lament the daughter of Jepthah the

In the present/day Jepthah's vow seems entirely unjustifiable. In the first place he had no business to make the vow, and secondly he had no right to fulfil it after it was made. Henry Ward Beecher says: No man has a right to break a pledge which he unwittingly made in respect to things that are moral and are in the rightful control of his will but no man has a right to make a promise or vow that is unmoral. When he makes a blind covenant, he has no right to keep it when it involves others in cruelty or injustices.

Adah, faithful to her duties, no matter how overwhelmingly difficult they are we see her brave and courageous in the face of death itself. We see her forgetting self to save her father's honor. No sacrifice which she is called upon to make is too great.

Might not all these virtues of a courageous life be a beautiful lesson to us? We are not called upon to make as great a sacrifice as Adah, but each day we are called upon to show our colors. Will these colors be the blue of fidelity? Will we have the courage of our convictions and be as dauntless and serene as Adah? Let each one of us take the lesson taught by her life to heart and walk in the paths of truth and right.

"For sweet Adah weep not; let the word be:
"Joy to the captive, freed from earthly dust;
Joy for one witness more to woman's trust;
And lasting honor, Mizpah, be the strain
To her who died in light without a stain."

She will not veil her pure and loving eyes, As fearing death-for hers is death sublime, Lo, with determined heart and eyes she stands, Her face upturned toward celestial lands.

The story of Jepthah's daughter has other lessons for us also. Jepthal made a rash vow, one that he surely would not have made if he had perfered upon it. Whom should he expect to be the first to come out of house if not his daughter? We all have much in common with Jepthah

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No 684 A Adah, the Daughter Page 3 in as much as we too, speak before we think. We fail to guard our tongues, forgetting that words once spoken can never be recalled. We are hasty to criticise. Most of these faults do not come from an inner meaness but from a lack of thought. Obviously, it did not occur to Adah to object to her fate. She was obedient to the demands of her father. She did what she could loyaly to lighten the burden her father had assumed. We too, can be just as obedient to the demands of honor and justice. We can be loyal to our family, friends and country. We can be courageous in word and deed. All these lessons are shown in the life our heroine, Adah.

izes fidelity. In earlier rituals the color of the veil was black as a sign of mourning. How glad we all are that in the process of changing and improving our ritual it was changed to this more appropriate color.

The emblems are the sword and veil. We like to pass over the thought of the sword which slew our heroine but we love to dwell upon the veil. Agah would not stay in the darkness-she loved the light. She would not cover her face to hide the inevitable. This she would face squarely and hake whatever lot might befall her. We too, should live in the light. Like her, we also should bravely face life. Running away from a bad situation will not clear it up. We all know that hiding our heads in the sand is pure foolishness and I wonder why we do it so often. We might as well meet our problems with heroic endurance. In so doing we not only strengthen our own characters but become good examples to others.

The blue violet is appropriate to Adah. The blue for fidelity, a great virtue which is needed as much today as in times of old. The violet has always been a symbol of modesty and sweetness and beauty of character.

And so we will leave our courageous heroine tonight with these lines which might well have been her prayer and which should be ours.

Lord, if I had the choice to don one virtue as a cloak of gold, It would be the cloak of courage I would wear. Courage to speak when speech can help; The strength to leave unsaid the words That passing anger tempts the lips to speak; Courage to fight when only death can be the end, And fight so well that men shall see in death but victory. Courage to lift my thoughts above the mundane cares that strangle life;

Courage to bring none harm; courage to dream, So when the end comes, I may pass Into the vale that lies beyond, And wear this cloak of Courage as I go.