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THOMAS MANN

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

I-JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

II • YOUNG JOSEPH

I I I • JOSEPH IN EGYPT

IV • JOSEPH THE PROVIDER

Translated from the German by H. T. Lowe-Porter

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ALFRED A. KNOPF

THOMAS MANN

YOUNG JOSEPH

Translated from the German for the first time by H. T. Lowe-Porter

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YOUNG JOSEPH

1

THOTH

OF BEAUTY

THE STORY goes on to tell how Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. That is correct; and we have instances of the fact which the saga further states: namely, that Joseph brought unto their father their evil report. It would not be hard to find a point of view from which Joseph could be regarded as an unlicked cub. It was the brothers' point of view. I do not share it; or, rather, I might entertain it for a moment, but I would give it up. For Joseph was more. The passages I have quoted, however, require explanation, each in turn, that the lie of the land may be clear, and that which has shrunk away into the past may be expanded again into its true proportions and presentness.

Joseph was seventeen years old, and in the eyes of all who saw him the most beautiful among the children of men. I confess that I do not care for talk about beauty. The word and the idea are alike tiresome. For beauty is a conception as pallid as it is lofty — a schoolmaster's dream. There are supposed to be laws of beauty. But a law addresses itself to the understanding and not to the

emotions — for these do not brook the understanding's control. Hence the vapidness of perfect beauty, which leaves nothing to be forgiven. For the emotions need something to forgive, else they turn away in sheer boredom. Nobody but the schoolmaster, with his love of the accepted and formalized, can pay so much honour to mere perfection as to wax enthusiastic over it, and to that kind of enthusiasm it is hard to ascribe much depth. A law is outwardly binding and edifying, but inward compulsion is a matter not of law but of magic. Beauty is a magic worked upon the emotions — as such always half illusory, very vacillating and ephemeral in its effect. Set an ugly head upon a beautiful body, and the body itself is no longer beautiful in any sense which can touch the emotions — except perhaps in the dark, and then delusion comes in. And, indeed, how much delusion, trickery, and deceit are involved in this matter! The world is full of stories about youths disguised as women, turning men's heads; of girls in doublet and hose, awaking the passions of their own sex. And in every case, when the fraud is discovered, the emotions subside, because the beauty no longer serves a practical end. Perhaps, even, human beauty, in its effect upon the feelings, is nothing at all but the magic of sex, sex itself become visible; so that one might better speak of a complete man, a perfectly feminine woman, than of a beautiful one. Only by dint of a victory over self can one woman, or one man, speak of another as beautiful. Cases in which emotional effectiveness triumphs over obvious unpracticality are rare, though of course they occur and can be proved. What comes into play here is the moment of youth; that is to say, a magic which the emotions are

prone to confuse with beauty. So that youth, if it is not marred by all-too-disturbing flaws, affects the beholder as beauty, and is even so affected itself, as its smile unmistakably betrays. For it possesses charm, a phenomenon which of its very nature for ever hovers between the masculine and the feminine. A youth of seventeen is not beautiful in the sense of perfect masculinity. Nor yet in the sense of fruitless femininity — that would be worst of all. But so much we must admit: that beauty in the guise of youth must always both inwardly and outwardly incline toward the feminine. That is its essence, that conditions the tenderness between it and the world; that is betrayed by its smile. At seventeen, it is true, one can be more lovely than woman or man, lovely like woman and man, lovely in both ways and in all — " beautiful and well-favoured " to a pitch that makes both men and women fall head over heels in love.

So was it with Rachel's son, and so it is that we are told that he was the most well-favoured among the children of men. That was exaggerated praise, since there were and are hosts of his like. Since the time when man no longer lived in the deep or crawled on his belly, but had travelled some way toward the bodily image of God, many a youth of seventeen has displayed to admiring eyes quite as slender legs and narrow hips, quite such a well-shaped throat and golden-brown skin. Many a youth has seemed neither too tall nor too short, but precisely the right height; many have known how to stand and to walk in a way that is half divine, many have found the exquisite mean between delicacy and strength of form. And it is not extraordinary either that upon such a body there should sit not a dog's head but a very winning hu-

man one, smiling to boot with a smile that is half divine. That happens every day. But in Joseph's world and in his circle his was the person and his the presence which practised the magic of beauty upon the emotions of **the** beholder. It was generally felt that upon his lips — which, save when they moved to speak or smile, were certainly too full — the Eternal had poured out grace. True, there was an opposition party, here and there was ill-will against him. But it proved nothing, and one cannot even say that it did not share the prevailing opinion. For much goes to show that the brethren's hatred for Joseph was nothing but the reverse side of the universal adoration.

THE SHEPHERD

So much for Joseph's beauty, and his seventeen years. That he kept the flocks with his brothers — that is, with the children of Zilpah and Bilhah — is a statement which likewise calls for explanation, qualification, and expansion.

Jacob, the man of the blessing, was a stranger in the land, a *ger,* as they said, a tolerated and respected guest. Not because he had dwelt so long out of his own land, **but** by nature, rank, and inheritance, as son of his fathers, who also had been *gerim.* He had not become an established citizen and member of the ruling class in the city; not therein lay the dignity he possessed. It had its source in wisdom and riches, both together, and in the impressiveness of his person and bearing. **But** not in his manner of life; for that was lax, though quite legal, **and** characterized by what one might call a regular irregularity. He lived in tents before the walls of Hebron **as once he had dwelt before** Shechem's gates, and **might**

one day set out again to seek other springs and pasture-lands. And yet he was no Bedouin, with the mark of Cain upon his brow, the sign of vagrancy and rapine, a terror and an abomination to town-dwellers and peasants alike — that not at all. His God was like the other Baals of the land in their deadly enmity against Amalek, as he had many times proved by arming his people that they might help the dwellers in Hebron and the cattle-keeping peasantry to thrust back the oncoming hordes from the deserts of the south — camel-breeding folk bent on plunder, their faces painted with their tribal signs. Yet Jacob himself was no peasant — quite expressly and consciously not. It would not have harmonized with his religious feelings, which were so different from those of the sunburnt tillers of the soil. Moreover, as h*ger* and guest he had no right to the ownership of land, save only his dwelling-places. He rented a little plough-land, now here, now there; sometimes smooth and level, sometimes steep and rocky, with rich soil between the stones, where corn and barley might sprout. It was worked by his sons and slaves. Joseph too sometimes played sower and reaper as well as shepherd — as everybody knows. But this casual kind of farming had little meaning in Jacob's life. He practised it half-heartedly, as evidence of some sort of permanence. For his life's true riches and substance lay in his teeming movable property, the flocks. He exchanged all they produced for plentiful supplies of corn and oil, figs, pomegranates, honey, even silver and gold; and the possession of them determined his relation to townsfolk and country-folk — a relation carefully regulated and qualified by many contracts which gave him civic standing despite the anomalous character of the life he led.

And for the sake of his flocks he required good business relations with the inhabitants, the tradesmen in the town and the peasants who worked for or rented of them. If Jacob wanted any settled life at all, if he did not wish to be thought of as a nomad who had broken into others' land and laid it waste, he needed to have fixed and friendly contracts with the people of Baal, stipulating that he might drive his flocks into the stubble and let them rove and crop over the fallow land. For the moment, indeed, there was less of this up here in the hills. There had been a long and blessed season of peace; the highways were full of coming and going, the land-exploiting town-dweller grew fat on the caravan trade, on payments for warehousing, lading, and convoy for goods that came from the land of Marduk via Damascus, along the road east of the Jordan, through that district to the sea and thence to the land of mud — or the other way round. And the town-dweller accumulated land, farming it by the labour of slaves or debtors; its produce enriched him, aside from the profits he made on his business. Thus, even as the sons of Ishullanu did to Laban, he got the peasants under his thumb by making them loans. Cultivation and settlement rapidly increased, they encroached upon the grass-land, and it came about that as once the meadows of Sodom could not support both Lot and Abram together, so now the land could no longer support Jacob. He had to divide his flocks. It was arranged that the larger part should be sent to pasture five days' journey to the north, in that well-watered vale of Shechem where he had been before. Thither went in the main the sons of Leah, from Reuben down to Zebulun, while only the four of Bilhah and Zilpah and the two

of Rachel lived with their father. So that it was as with pictures of the signs of the zodiac, of which six only are visible to the eye at a time — an image or parable to which Joseph never tired of referring. The six at Shechem did, it is important to say, return when it was harvest time at Hebron, and more hands were needed. But mostly they were four or five days distant, an equally important fact, which explains the saying that Joseph was with the sons of the maids.

But Joseph did not work every day with the brethren in meadow and field. We must not take his labours too seriously. Not always did he tend the flocks or turn up the plough-land for the winter sowing when it was soft from the rains. Rather he only worked now and then, when he thought of it or felt like it. Jacob his father granted him much free time for labours of a higher kind, of which I shall presently speak. But when he did work with the brethren, in what character was it: as helper, or as overseer? The brothers never knew. They would order him about as the youngest, and roughly enough; but he did little work and behaved not as though he belonged with them, one among the sons of his father, but as the father's representative and emissary, set there to spy. The result was that they disliked having him, and yet were vexed when he took a notion to stop at home.

LESSONS

WHEN that happened he sat with old Eliezer beneath the tree of God, the great terebinth beside the well, occupied in the pursuit of knowledge.

People said of old Eliezer that he was like Abraham in the face. Actually they could not know this, for none of them had seen the Chaldaean, nor had any picture or likeness of him come down the ages. The assertion could only be an indirect way of saying that Eliezer's features helped them when they tried to conjure an image of the original wanderer and friend of God. This was not so much because they were large and stately, like his whole figure and bearing, but rather because there was something about them of the tranquilly generalized and divinely inexpressive, which made it easy to transfer them to a venerable unknown of past time. Eliezer was a little older than Jacob, and dressed like him, in garments which were partly Bedouin, partly in the fashion of the people of Shinar, with looped and fringed draperies and a scarflike girdle wherein his writing-materials were stuck. His forehead, so far as the head-cloth left it free, was serene and unwrinkled. The still dark eyebrows ran in a flat, narrow curve from the broad and shallow base of the nose to the temples. Beneath them the formation of the eyes was such that the almost lashless upper and lower lids, heavy and as it were swollen, looked like lips, between which the black eyeballs rounded out. The nose, thin-nostrilled and flat-boned, drooped down to the narrow moustache which ran from the corners of the mouth and lay upon the yellowish beard. Below it hung the even red line of the lower lip. The cheeks, with a thousand little wrinkles in their yellow skin, stood out above the line of the beard; and this line, where cheek and beard met, was so extraordinarily even as to suggest that the beard was fastened behind the ears and could be taken off. Or, rather, the whole face suggested a mask,

with Eliezer's own underneath. Joseph remembered thinking so as a child.

There were current all sorts of absurd stories about Eliezer himself and his origins, with which I will deal further on. For the present it is enough to say that he was Jacob's house steward and eldest slave, could read and write, and was acting as Joseph's teacher.

"Tell me, son of the true wife," he might address the lad, as they sat together in the shade of the tree of enlightenment, "for what three reasons did God create man last, after the beasts and all growing things?"

To which Joseph would make answer:

"God created man last, firstly lest someone might say he had holpen at the rest of the work; secondly, for the humbling of man, that he must needs say to himself: 'The blowfly was born before me'; but thirdly, that he might sit down straightway to the meal, as the guest for whom all things had been made ready."

Whereto Eliezer would respond with satisfaction: "Thou sayest," and Joseph would laugh.

But that was the least of it; it was only one instance of all the exercises in quick wit and memory, the countless little sayings and snatches of ancient time in which the boy must become versed. Eliezer had begun this teaching in Joseph's tender childhood, and Joseph had long known how to enchant his hearers with his graceful repetitions, though they were silly enough about him even without that.

Thus at the well he had tried to divert his father with his fable of names and naming, how the damsel Ishchara demanded the name of God from the lustful messenger; and how no sooner had she learned the true and rightful

one than she had called it out and vaulted upwards, thus bringing to scorn the importunate Senhazai. And how the Lord had received her in great favour on high, saying unto her: " Thou hast escaped from the snare of sin and therefore will We give thee thy place in the heavens." And how that was the origin of the constellation of the Virgin. But Senhazai, alas, had had to stop down below in the dust, until that day when Jacob, son of Yitzchak, dreamed by Bethel his dream of the ladder leading up to heaven. Only upon that ladder had Senhazai been able to mount once more, deeply humiliated that he could do so only in a human being's dream.

We can scarcely call this learning. No, for it was only half true — an adornment, merely, to the mind, though calculated to discipline it for the reception of austere and sacred truths. Thus Joseph learned of Eliezer about the universe, the heavenly one: ideally composed of the upper heaven, the heavenly earth of the zodiac, and the southern ocean of the heavens. And about the earthly universe as well, which precisely corresponded, being likewise in three parts, the skyey heaven, the kingdom of the earth, and the earthly ocean. This last, so he learned, ran round the earth's disk in a band, but was also beneath it, and at the time of the great flood might break through all the cracks and mingle its waters with those of the downrushing heavenly sea. But the earthly kingdom was just like the firm-trodden earth to look at, and the heavenly earth up above was like a mountainous country with two peaks, the sun and the moon, Horeb and Sinai.

Sun and moon, together with five other moving stars, made up the seven which is the number of the planets and

bearers of the command, which went round the dam of the zodiac in seven circles of differing circumference; so that this was like the seven-tiered tower whose rings of terraces led up to the highest heaven of the north and the Almighty's seat. Yes, there sat God, and His holy mount glittered as with fiery precious stones — just as Mount Hermon in the north glittered in his snows above the land. As he talked, Eliezer pointed to the gleaming white height in the distance, visible from everywhere and so also from the tree of enlightenment; and Joseph distinguished not between earthly and heavenly.

He learned the wonder and the mystery of numbers: sixty, twelve, seven, four, and three; the divineness residing in measure, and how everything agreed and corresponded, so that one could only wonder at and adore the greatness of the harmony.

Twelve were the stations of the zodiac; they formed the stations of the great circle, and were the twelve months of thirty days each. But the small circuit corresponded to the great; for it too was divided into twelve sections; thus there was a space of time sixty times as great as the course of the sun, and that was the double hour. It was the month of the day, and proved just as significantly divisible. For the diameter of the sun's course was contained in the course of the sun as visible at the equinox, precisely as many times as the year had days: namely, three hundred and sixty times; and on just these days the rising of the sun, from the moment when its upper rim appeared over the horizon to that when it stood full and clear, lasted the sixtieth part of a double hour. That then, was the double minute; and as the great circle was formed out of summer and winter, out of **day**

and night the small one, so from the twelve double hours came twelve single ones, for the day and for the night, and sixty single minutes for each hour of the day and night.

What order, harmony, and satisfaction in all that!

But mark once more, Dumuzi, son of the true wife! Make thy senses clear, calm, and alert!

Seven was the number of the moving stars and bearers of the command, and to each belonged a day. But seven was also and especially the moon's number, which marks a path for its brothers the gods there in the sky; for the number of its quarters are seven days each. Sun and moon were two, like everything else in the world and like yes and no. Thus one might group the planets as two and five — and how rightly too, considering the five! For that number had a wonderful relation with twelve, seeing that five times twelve make the sixty already shown to be sacred; but even more wonderful with seven, for five and seven made twelve. And that was not all. For by such division and grouping one got a five-day planetary week, of which seventy-two came in the year. But five was the number by which one must multiply the two-and-seventy to arrive at the glorious three hundred and sixty — and this was at once the sum of the days in the year and the result of that division of the sun's course by the longest line which could be drawn upon the disk.

How wonderful that was!

On the other hand, one might group the planets into three and four, upon the highest authority from both sides. For three was the number of the rulers of the zodiac, sun, moon, and Ishtar. Moreover it was the world-number, it determined both above and below the constitu-

tion of the universe. Again, four was the number of the quarters of the earth, to which corresponded the times of day; likewise it was the number of the parts into which the sun's course fell, each presided over by a planet; also the number of the moon and Ishtar, each of which displayed four phases. But if you multiplied four by three, what did you get? You got twelve!

Joseph laughed. But Eliezer lifted up his hands and spoke: " Adonai! "

And how did it come that if you divided the days of the moon by the days of its quarters — namely, four — you got again the seven-day week? That was the work of His finger!

With all this young Joseph, under his elder's watchful eye, played as with a game, amusing and profitable at once. He perceived that God had given man understanding, in order that he might deal with these sacred matters and make them more consistent: man, then, had had to make the three hundred and sixty-five days match up with the solar year by intercalating five days at the end. They were hard and evil days, days of dragons and cursings and wintry nights; only when they were over did spring appear and the blessing once more prevail. Here the number five appeared in intolerable aspect. But thirteen was also bad — and why? Because the twelve moon months had only three hundred and fifty-four days, and from time to time extra days had to be shoved in, which corresponded to the thirteenth sign of the zodiac, the raven. Its remainder character stamped the thirteen as an unlucky number — just as the raven was a bird of ill omen. Therefore it was that Benoni-Benjamin had wellnigh died, when he went

through the gates of birth as through the narrow pass between the peaks of the high mountains of the world, and was almost overcome in the struggle against the powers of the underworld — all because he was Jacob's thirteenth child. But Dinah had been accepted as a sacrifice in his stead, and Dinah perished.

It was well to see into the absolute and penetrate into the nature of the mind of God. For His wonder-working with numbers was not quite without flaws, and man had to have wits enough to adjust it. But the adjustment was attended with misfortune and cursings, and even the number twelve, otherwise such a fine number, became ominous, for it had to be added to the three hundred and fifty-four days of the moon year to bring them up to the three hundred and sixty-six days of the lunar-solar year. But if one took three hundred and sixty-five days as the right number, then there was always lacking, according to Joseph's reckoning, a quarter of a day; and this amounted in the course of time to fourteen hundred and sixty quarters, or an entire year. That was the period of the dog-star; and Joseph's conception of time and space now became superhuman, it passed on from the little circles to more and more mammoth ones which circled far round them, to closed years of awe-inspiring extent. The day itself was a little year, with its times and seasons, its summer, daylight and winter night, and the days were closed into a great circle. But it was great only relatively speaking, and one thousand, four hundred and sixty of them closed to comprise the year of the dog-star. The world, however, consisted of the overpowering course and cycle of the greatest — or even then perhaps

not quite finally the greatest — years of all, of which each had its own summer and winter. Winter came when all the constellations were in the sign of Aquarius or Pisces; summer when they were in the sign of the lion or the crab. Every winter began with a flood, every summer with a fire; so that all the great circles and world-revolutions had their definite beginning and end within which they were comprised. Each of them contained four hundred and thirty-two thousand years and each precisely repeated all those before it, since the constellations returned to the same position and must reproduce the same effects in great and in small. Hence it was that the world-revolutions were called " renewals of life," also of course " repetitions of the past" and " everlasting recurrence." Likewise their name was Olam," the aeon "; but God was the Lord of the Ages, El Olam, He living throughout the ages, Hai Olam, and He it was who had given to man *olam* in his heart; that is to say, the capacity of thinking in aeons and thus in some sense the mastery of them.

This was knowledge of the most majestic; Joseph received it in the grand style. But how much else did Eliezer not know: mysteries which made of knowledge a pleasure at once great and flattering, precisely because it was mysterious, the property on earth of only a small number of highly discreet and exceeding clever folk in temple and lodge, and not shared by the masses of mankind. For instance Eliezer knew and taught to Joseph that the Babylonian double ell was the length of the pendulum which made sixty double oscillations in a double minute. Joseph, prattler that he was, repeated this to no one; for

it displayed once more the sacredness of the number sixty, which, multiplied by the excellent number six, produced the most sacred of all, three hundred and sixty.

He learned the measures of length and distance, deducing them both from his own pace and from the course of the sun. This, Eliezer assured him, was not presumptuous, since man was a little universe, in all things corresponding to the great one. And thus the sacred numbers of the planetary cycle played their role in the whole structure of measure and in time which became space.

It became volume, and thereby it became weight. Joseph learned the weights and money values of gold, silver, and copper, according to Babylonian and Phoenician, the royal and the common usage. He practised himself in business calculations, learned how to exchange copper for silver, and an ox for such measures of oil, wine, and grain as corresponded to its value in metal. In all this he was so quick-witted that Jacob, as he listened sometimes, made a clucking sound with his tongue and exclaimed:

"Like an angel art thou! Like a very angel of Araboth."

Again Joseph learned the most important of the human ailments and their treatment; he learned about the human body, which likewise conformed to the cosmic trinity and was comprised of solids, liquids, and gases. He learned to associate the parts of the body with the signs of the zodiac and the planets; to understand how it was that kidney fat was more precious than all others, in that the organ which it surrounded was connected with the organ of procreation and was the seat of the vital energies; to recognize in the liver the seat of the emo-

tions; and to get by heart a system of instruction written out in sections on a clay model, from which it appeared that the entrails were a mirror of the future and a source of dependable omens. Next he learned about the peoples of the earth.

There were seventy of these, or more probably seventy-two, since that was the number of the five-day planetary weeks. Some of them had quite extraordinary customs and religious practices. This was true in particular of the barbarians of the furthest north, who dwelt in the land of Magog, far beyond the heights of Mount Hermon and also beyond the country of Hanigalbat, north of Taurus. But the extreme west, called Tarshish, was frightful too; thither men who knew not fear had come from Sidon, having sailed the length of the great green seas, for uncounted days. And people of Sidon and Gebal had penetrated as far as Chittim, that is to say Sicily, bent on trade and distance, and had there founded settlements. They had indeed done much to make known the ends of the earth. Not for Eliezer's use and behoof, that he might have wherewith to teach; but because they felt the urge to visit distant parts and cry up their purple stuffs and skilled embroideries to the inhabitants thereof. There were winds that bore one effortlessly to Cyprus or Alashia and Dodanim or Rhodes. And thence without too grave perils of the deep they would be borne on to Muzriland or Egypt, whence a trade wind would take their ship back home. But the people of Egypt themselves had subdued Kush and opened up to knowledge the lands of the Negroes further south up the Nile. They had boldly taken ship and had discovered the incense-lands furthest south on the Red Sea, Punt, the kingdom of the Phoenix. In the

furthermost south of all lay Ophir, the land of gold, according to all accounts. As for the east, there was a king in Elam, whom no one yet had been able to ask whether he could see further than his own domains in that quarter of the heavens. Probably not.

All this is only an extract from the information imparted by Eliezer to Joseph as they sat under the tree of wisdom. The lad wrote it down under the elder's direction and read it aloud to himself, with his head on one side, until he knew it by heart. The reading and writing were of course the basis and the accompaniment to all else; otherwise it would have been nought but a whispering and hearsay among men and then died away. So Joseph had to squat very erect under the tree, his knees apart, holding in his lap the writing-tools, the clay tablet on which he made wedge-shaped signs with a style; the leaves made of reeds pressed together; or the smoothed piece of sheep- or goatskin on which he made rows of pot-hooks with a reed chewed or sharpened to a point and dipped into the red or the black part of his paint-saucer. Sometimes he wrote the ordinary writing of the country, in order to practise himself in the language of his time and surroundings, also to learn to write business letters and statements in cleanly fashion, as the Phoenicians did. But at other times he wrote the writing of God, the official and sacred script of Babel, the script of the law, the doctrine, and the sagas; for these he used the style and tablet. Eliezer possessed many beautiful models: writings about the stars, hymns to moon and sun, chronological tables, weather records, even tax lists, as well as fragments of the great versified fables of primitive time. None of these were true, yet they were clothed in words

so bold and impressive as to make them seem real to the mind of the reader. They were about the creation of the world and man; about Marduk's fight with the dragon, Ishtar's elevation from servitude to royal dominion, and her journey into hell; about the herb of birth and the water of life, the astonishing things that happened to Adapa, Etana, and that Gilgamesh whose body was divine flesh and who yet did not manage to achieve immortality. All this Joseph read with his index finger, writing it down in the prescribed posture, erect, with only his eyelids dropped. He wrote down and read about Etana's friendship with the eagle, who bore him upwards towards Anu's heaven; so high, in fact, that the earth beneath them looked like a cake, and the sea like a bread-basket. But when both had disappeared, fear had seized upon Etana, and he had plunged down into the depths, together with the eagle — a most mortifying issue. Joseph hoped that he would, in like case, have borne himself better than the hero Etana. But better than this story he liked that of the man of the forest, Engidu, and how the woman of the city of Uruk converted him to civilization. She taught the brute beast to eat and drink in seemly fashion, to anoint himself and wear clothes, in short to be like a man and a dweller in cities. Joseph found all this fascinating. It was capital, how the harlot taught the man, after having made him sensitive to refinement by seven days and seven nights of love. He recited the lines, the language of Babel falling in dusky splendour from his lips; Eliezer kissed the hem of his pupil's robe and cried out:

" Hail to thee, son of the lovely one! Thy progress is brilliant; soon thou wilt be the Mazkir of a prince, and

the admonisher of some great king. Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom! "

And then Joseph would swagger out to his brethren in the field or plain, to play at working under them. But they, showing their teeth, would say:

" Look, there he cometh swaggering, the inky-fingered fool, and hath been reading stones of the time before the flood. Perhaps now he will graciously milk the goats; but perhaps he hath come only to spy and see whether we cut out pieces from a sheep for our cook-pot. Lay it only in our hands, he should not go empty away, but we should beat him — as now we dare not, for fear of Jacob."

OF BODY AND SOUL

IF we consider not the details but the general bearing of the bad relations between Joseph and his brothers, as they grew with the years; not the daily vexations and misunderstandings but the fundamental causes of the trouble, these would be found to lie in envy and in arrogance. The most justice-loving would find it hard to decide which fault, or personally speaking which sinner, the single one or the troop who made ever more threatening their common cause against him, was the chief source of the trouble. Strict justice and the upright desire to put aside any temptation to partisanship might perhaps lead one to consider arrogance as the primary evil and source of mischief. But on the other hand he will in very justice be driven to confess that not often in the world has there been so much occasion for arrogance — and indeed for envy — as here.

It is seldom indeed that beauty and wisdom are com-

bined upon this earth. Rightly or wrongly, we are accustomed to think of learning as ugly, and charm as mindless— and, indeed, as is fitting for the possessor of charm, mindless with a good conscience. For what need has charm of letters, mind, or wisdom, when it even runs a risk of being warped and destroyed if it possess them? The typical bridging over, however, of the gulf between mind and beauty, the union of both excellencies in a single being, appears as the release of a tension, which one is used to think of as based upon the natural and human and makes one quite involuntarily think of the divine. The unprejudiced eye must look with rapture upon such a manifestation of godlike ease and absence of strain; while it can only give rise to feelings of bitterness in those who have reason to find themselves injured or eclipsed by its light.

So it was here. That delighted acceptance which certain sights find at once in the human heart and which we are accustomed objectively to call their beauty was invariable in the case of Rachel's first-born son; whether or no we could now subscribe with such enthusiasm, everybody then found him so well-favoured that his charms early became proverbial over the countryside. And not only so, but they added unto themselves the arts of the intellect, which they absorbed with the greatest readiness and then recoined, stamped with their own seal; so that there seemed no longer any contradiction, and almost no difference between the two. I said that the harmonizing of the conflict must have seemed to result in the divine; a sentence that needs interpretation. The two elements were not resolved *into* the divine — for Joseph was a human being, and a very erring one to boot,

with far too good an understanding not to recognize the fact. No, but they were resolved *in* the divine; that is to say, in the moon.

I have already described a scene which was very typical of the relations, physical and mental, which Joseph cherished with that wonder-working star. It was behind his father's back of course, who, as he came up, made haste to rebuke his son for baring himself in flirtation with the naked splendour there above. But in the youth's mind the thought of the moon was associated with more than the mere idea of beauty. It had just as close connection with the conception of wisdom and of letters. For the moon was the heavenly image of Thoth, the white ape and inventor of signs, the speaker and writer of the gods, recorder of their words and protecting deity of all those who write. Thus it was the combined magic of beauty and of learning, together and as a unity, which had ravished his soul and given its peculiar meaning to his solitary worship. As a cult it was vague, confused, and prone to degenerate — calculated to alarm the careful father — but just on that ground intoxicating, because mental and physical emotions were therein so enchantingly mixed.

Beyond a doubt every human being holds and cherishes, more or less consciously, some conception, some treasured idea, which forms the source of his secret passion, and by which his vital sense of life is nourished and sustained. For Joseph this precious idea was the cohabitation of body and spirit, beauty and wisdom, and the reciprocally strengthening consciousness of both. Chaldaean travellers and slaves had related to him how when Bel purposed to create mankind he had had his **head cut off, his blood** had mingled with the earth, and

out of those blood-besprent clods of earth life had been created. He did not believe the tale; but if he wished to feel aware of his own existence and know a mysterious sense of rejoicing in it, he would recall that blood-boltered mingling of the earthy with the divine and be conscious of peculiar bliss in being of such substance. He would be smilingly mindful that the consciousness of the body and of beauty must be improved and strengthened through the consciousness of the mind and spirit, as well as the other way round.

What he believed was that the spirit of God, whom the people of Shinar called "*Mummu*" brooded upon the face of chaos and had created the world by the might of the Word. What a marvel! he thought: the world had arisen by the might of the free and external Word; and even today, let a thing be ever so present, it was in actual fact only actually present when man has given it life in words and called it by name. So did his pretty and well-favoured little head convince itself of the importance and wisdom of the Word.

But all these teachings and tendencies, indulged by Jacob on grounds yet to be mentioned, served only the more to estrange Joseph from the sons of Leah and of the maids. It set him apart; and this in itself bore the seeds of arrogance and mistrust. It goes against my grain to say that the brothers, those first-born males of Jacob's seed whose names everybody knows by heart, were in the main very ordinary fellows. To two of them at least, the complicated and suffering Jehudah and the fundamentally decent Reuben, the characterization does scant justice. In the first place, one could not speak of beauty in connection with any of them; neither of those who were

near Joseph's age nor those who were well on in the twenties at this time — though they were stout fellows, particularly Leah's brood, and rejoiced in physical strength and agility, most of all Reuben, but also Simeon, Levi, and Jehudah. As for wisdom and the word, not one among them but would have prided himself on his complete ignorance and contempt of such talents. Bilhah's Naphtali, indeed, was known from his youth up for his gift of the gab. But the popular standards in this matter were modest, and the sum total of Naphtali's powers amounted to a shallow glibness without foundation in any higher things. All the brethren, in short, were — as Joseph too should have been in order to fit into their society — shepherds, and farmers on the side. In both which capacities, of course, they were very much worth while, and felt, as was natural, great resentment toward their younger brother, who imagined, with his father's connivance, that he might be farmer and shepherd too, but only incidentally, his real occupations being those of scribe and reader of tablets. Later on they had a name for Joseph, which expressed to the full the height of their hatred: the " dreamer of dreams." But at this time they mockingly called him Noah, Utnapishtim, the exceeding wise one, the reader of stones from before the flood. He, on his side, retorted with " dogs'-heads " and " people who know not good from evil," calling them these to their faces, protected only by their fear of Jacob, for otherwise they would have beaten him black and blue. That would have been painful to see; yet his beauty must not blind us to the fact that his retort was no better than their mockery. Worse, even; for what use is wisdom if it cannot shield us from the sin of arrogance?

But Jacob the father — how did he stand to all this? He was not a scholar. Of course, in addition to his south-Canaanitish dialect he spoke Babylonian, perhaps even better. But he had no Egyptian, probably because, as we have seen, he mistrusted and condemned everything that came from that country. It stood to him as the home of immorality and feudal abuse. The service of the state, which obviously conditioned all things in that country, offended his hereditary sense of independence and personal responsibility; while the cult of animals and of the dead which flourished there was to him folly and abomination, the latter even more than the former. For all that worship of the under-earth, which began even with the earth, even with the seed-corn which fruitfully rotted therein, was to him synonymous with lewdness. He called the land of mud down there not Kemt or Mizraim, but Sheol, hell, the kingdom of the dead. His disgust, on grounds both ethical and intellectual, extended to the exaggerated respect which, as he had heard, was paid there to letters. He, personally, could not do much more in that line than sign his name to contracts — and even so he mostly stamped it. All the rest he left to Eliezer, his eldest servant, and was justified in so doing, for the skill of our servants is as our own, and in any case Jacob's weight and dignity rested not upon such, being essentially personal, native, and freely arising. They were based upon the power of his feeling and experience, upon a fullness of shrewd and significant anecdote, upon the natural spirituality which radiated from him and was perceptible to everybody, upon the preponderant personality of a gifted man who dreamed bold dreams and had immediate relations with God; a man, in short, who need

not trouble about book-knowledge. It would be idle to compare Jacob with Eliezer — certainly the idea of doing so would never have occurred to the latter. But, after all, would Eliezer ever have dreamed the dream of the ladder, or with God's help have made discoveries in the natural kingdom such as the part played by sympathetic magic in the breeding of the streaked yeanlings? No, never.

But then why did Jacob approve of Joseph's education and look with a favouring eye upon teachings the danger of which to the lad and to his relations with his brethren could not have escaped him? He had two reasons, both of which sprang from his love of Joseph: one of them was ambitious in its nature, the other had to do with his care for the disciplining of the boy's character. Leah, the unloved wife, had of course known whereof she spoke when she had said to herself and the sons of her body, at the time of Joseph's birth, that they would now all be as nothing in Jacob's eyes, and light as air. Since the day when the child of the true wife, Dumuzi, the only scion and son of the virgin, had been vouchsafed to him, Jacob had thought of nothing else but to set this late comer before the early ones, to place him at their head and make him, who was only Rachel's first-born, the first-born of them all. His anger when Reuben had so forgotten himself with Bilhah had been real enough; but also ulterior in its nature, and his expression of it somewhat calculated. Joseph had not known, or had only been half conscious; but when in childish malice he had repeated to his father what he had seen, Jacob's first thought had been: "Now I can curse my eldest-born and the place will be free for the little one." But he was conscious of

the thought and also he was afraid of the anger of the sons who came after Reuben. Thus he had not dared to take advantage at once of the opportunity to set Joseph in the ill-doer's room. He held off, waiting and as it were keeping warm the place for the little one. For of course what we are dealing with here is the blessing of Abraham, which Jacob owned, which he had received in Esau's stead from his blind father, and which now he had in mind to hand on in a way which was not aboveboard, but underhanded. If he could possibly manage it, this great good should be Joseph's; who was quite obviously, both in flesh and in spirit, more fitted to receive it than the heavy-handed and light-headed Reuben. He would clutch at any means to make clear to others, even to the brethren, Joseph's higher gifts — for instance, learning. The times had changed. Up till now the spiritual heirs of Abraham had not needed this good gift. Jacob himself had not suffered from its lack. But who knew if in the future it might not be perhaps not necessary, yet useful and desirable that the bearer of the blessing should also be a scholar and learned. Whether great or small, it was an advantage, and Joseph could never have too much of anything that would set him before the brothers.

This was one ground of Jacob's consent. The other lay deeper in the father's careful heart; it had to do with the boy's salvation and religious sanity. We have seen how Jacob, in that scene by the well, had cautiously questioned his son about the coming rainfall — holding as it were his hand protectingly over him the while. He had not liked to ask. Only his great need for information on this all-important subject had made him turn to ad-

vantage a mood in his son which none the less it disquieted him to see, though he was not without admiration for it.

He was aware of Joseph's tendency to states approaching the ecstatic; to half-pretended, undeveloped, but at times genuinely prophetic seizures. His attitude toward these, as a parent, fluctuated, impressed as he was by the equivocal mixture of evil and holiness in such tendencies. The brethren — dear me, none of them showed any faintest sign of belonging to the elect; they did not look in the least like seers or sufferers. One need lose no sleep over them! Ecstasies, whether for good or for evil, were not in their line; it did in a certain way fall in with Jacob's hopes that Joseph differed from them in these matters: you could interpret the fact as a distinction which, along with the others, made the choice a convincing one.

None the less, Jacob was not quite at ease over what he had seen. There were people about — God forbid that Joseph should become one of these! — holy innocents, slaverers, possessed of spirits, who earned their bread by foaming at the mouth and delivering prophecies. Human oracles who went about babbling or were visited by the inquiring in caves and earned food and money for jobs of finding lost articles or prophesying lucky days. Jacob, on religious grounds, loved them not at all, but then, nobody did, though all took care not to offend them. They were dirty, with crazed and disordered ways; children ran after them shouting out: " *Aulasaulalakaula* " — in imitation of their babbling. They wounded and mutilated themselves, ate polluted food, went about with a yoke on their necks or a pair of horns on their heads; sometimes they went naked. That was like them: the

horns as well as the nakedness. It was not hard to know the source of their behaviour: the filthiness of the worship of Baal, the ritual whoredom, the fertility magic and orgiastic sacrifices at the feet of Melech the Bull King. That was no mystery; everybody knew the ideas and their associations. But the people round about Jacob knew it with a sort of matter-of-fact respect which was quite different from the sensitiveness of Jacob's spiritual tradition. He had nothing against a reasonable oracle, say of the arrow or by lot, to find out the favourable time for a business transaction; and he probably took note of the way birds flew or smoke blew at a sacrifice. But where god-given understanding went to pieces and rank frenzy took its place, then began that which he called " a foolishness " — which was in his mouth a strong word, strong enough to express the extreme of disapproval. It was " Canaan "; it was all that which had to do with the sinister story of the grandfather in his tent, and who should go naked, with his manhood bared, whoring after the Baals of the land. Exposing oneself, round singing, intemperate feasting, official unchastity with the temple women, cult of Sheol — yes, and *aulasaulalakaula* and wild epileptic prophesyings — it all went together, it was all one, and it was " a foolishness " in Jacob's eyes. It tortured him to think that Joseph's childish tendency to roll his eyes and dream dreams could have any connection with this impure region of the soul. Jacob too, as we know, was a dreamer — but in all honour! He had seen in his dream God the King and His angels, and to the surging music of the harps he had received from Him the most heartening promises. But certainly such a lifting up of the head from affliction and outward humiliation was distinguished by reason, measure, and

spiritual integrity from every sort of evil-working magic. Alas, that such honourable gifts and blessings of the fathers could dwindle down to elegant corruption in their unstable sons! It was charming to see the parent in the guise of the son, but alarming and suspect to see him dwindling down. At least there was consolation in the thought that Joseph was still so young; he would lose his instability, become more solid and robust, and ripen to sobriety in godlike understanding. But it did not escape Jacob's sharp eye that the lad's proneness to a suspicious kind of seizure had to do with nakedness, so with abandonment, so with Baal and Sheol, with death magic and under-earthly unreason; and here, then was the ground of Jacob's approving the influence of the man of letters upon his beloved son. It was good to have Joseph learn something, good that he practised himself under informed guidance in the word and in the art of writing. He, Jacob, had not needed this; his wildest dreams had all been modest and honourable. But Joseph's, the old man felt, might need to be disciplined by application of reason and exactitude. Thus there might come a blessing to the steadying of his unstable youth, and then he would bear no resemblance at all to horned and naked vagrants and epileptics.

So Jacob considered within himself. Certain dark elements in the composition of his beloved seemed to him to need release and clarification in the intellectual. Thus we see that he, in his considering way, came to Joseph's own boyish conclusion, that the awareness of the body must be corrected and justified by the awareness of the mind.

2

ABRAHAM

OF THE OLDEST SERVANT

ABRAM **may actually have resembled Eliezer — and again, perhaps, he may have looked quite different. He may have been lean, puny, twitching with restlessness, and bitten by the tooth of care; the assertion that Eliezer, Joseph's teacher, looked like the moon-wanderer certainly had nothing to do with the person of the learned head servant as now manifest in the flesh. People spoke in the present, but they referred to the past, and transferred the one to the other. Eliezer, they said, " resembled " Abram in the face; the tradition might easily be justified in view of the one-time wooer's birth and origin. For presumably he was Abram's son. Indeed, some would have it that Eliezer was the servant whom Nimrod of Babel had given to Abram when he was obliged to let him go; but this was improbable to the point of impossibility. For Abraham never came into personal touch with the great power in whose reign his exodus from Shinar had taken place; the latter had never troubled his head about him. The conflict which had driven Jacob's spiritual forefather from the land had been a silent and internal one; and all the accounts of personal contact between him and the lawgiver, of his martyrdom, his**

languishing in prison, of a trial by fire in a lime-kiln — all these tales, of which we can dwell only upon such as Eliezer told to Joseph, were either a random combination of legend or were handed down from the most distant past and crystallized upon a past much nearer; that is to say, only six hundred years old. Abram's king, who in his time restored the towers and made them taller, had not been called Nimrod, for that was only a regal and dynastic title, but Amraphel or Hammurabi, and the real Nimrod had been the father of that Bel of Babel of whom it was said that he had built tower and city and who became a god-king, after he had been a man-king, like the Egyptian Osiris. The figure of the original Nimrod thus belongs to times before Osiris; from which one can guess at the historical gap which divided him from Abram's Nimrod; or, rather, one at least becomes aware of its immeasurable nature. As for the events supposed to have taken place during his reign: for instance, how the birth of a boy very dangerous to his power was foretold to him by his star-gazers; whereat he had resolved upon a general slaughter of innocents; how a boy named Abram escaped from the massacre and was brought up in a cave by an angel, who fed him on milk and honey from his finger-tips, and so forth — all these of course have no discoverable historical foundation. In short, the figure of Nimrod the king is much like that of Edom, the Red: it is a presentness, through which shine ever older pasts, losing themselves in the divine, which in its turn issued out of the human in still profounder deeps of time. The day *will* come when we shall feel that the same was true of Abram. But for the moment we shall do well to stick to Eliezer.

Eliezer, then, was not given to Abram by " Nimrod " as a present. We must regard that as a fable. Rather, in all probability he had been Abram's natural son, begot upon a slave woman and born probably at Damascus during the stay of Abraham's people in that flourishing city. Abram had later given him his freedom, and his rank in the family was somewhat lower than that of Ishmael, son of Hagar. As for Eliezer's sons, Damasek and Elinos, the Chaldaean had long regarded the former as his heir in default of legitimate ones; until first Ishmael and then Yitzchak the true son were born. But Eliezer retained his place and importance among the people of Abraham; and his had been the honour of going to Naharina to woo a bride for Isaac, the rescued sacrifice.

Often and with relish, as we know, Eliezer related to Joseph the tale of this journey — yes, I am betrayed perhaps all too willingly into writing here simply the word " he," although quite aware that according to our habits of thought it was certainly not Abram's Eliezer who was speaking to Joseph. What leads me astray is the natural way in which he used the first person when he spoke of the bridal journey, and his pupil's silent acquiescence in this lunar syntax of his. Joseph smiled indeed, but he nodded as well, and whether the smile implied any criticism, the nod any suggestion of courteous forbearance, one cannot tell. Personally I prefer to believe in his smile rather than in his nod; I incline to think that Joseph's attitude toward Eliezer's manner of speech was clearer-eyed than was that of Jacob's worthy half-brother.

We are justified of reason for thus referring to Eliezer, **for that** was what he **was. Isaac,** the true **son,** before **he**

became blind, had been a man of strong desires, who had by no means confined his attentions to Bethuel's daughter. The circumstance that she like Sarah remained long unfruitful must have determined him betimes to seek an heir elsewhere; for years before Jacob and Esau were born he had had a son from a beautiful slave; which son was named Eliezer and had later received his freedom. It was, in fact, traditional that such a son should receive his freedom and should be called Eliezer. One might find Yitzchak's conduct the more excusable on the ground that there had to be an Eliezer. There always had been one in the courtyards of Abraham's spiritual family, where he played the role of house steward and head servant and was, whenever possible, sent as a proxy wooer for the son of the true wife. Regularly, also, had the head of the family given him a wife, from whom he had two sons; namely, Damasek and Elinos. In short, he was an institution, like Nimrod of Babel; and when he and young Joseph sat at the lesson hour in the leafy shade of the tree of wisdom, beside the well, and the boy, his arms clasped round his knees, gazed into the face of the old teacher who " looked like Abraham " and knew how to say " I " in so ample and majestic a way, strange thoughts and feelings must have floated through that young mind. His lovely and well-favoured eyes were fixed on the figure of the narrator; but he looked through him into an endless perspective of Eliezer-figures, who all said " I " through the mouth of the present manifestation. They sat in the twilight shades of the great tree; but behind Eliezer the sun-drenched air quivered in the heat, and the succession of identities lost itself not in darkness **but in light. . • .**

The sphere rolls; never can it be certainly known where a story has its original home, whether in heaven or on earth. The truth is best served by the statement that it takes place simultaneously and concordantly both here and there, and only to our eyes does it appear that it came down and went up again. The story comes down, as a god becomes a man, it becomes earthly, becomes bourgeois, so to say. A good instance of what I mean is afforded by a favourite boast of Jacob's seed: the so-called battle of the kings; namely, how Abram defeated the army out of the East in order to set free his " brother " Lot. Later learned editors and commentators state as their opinion that Abram followed the kings, defeated and drove them beyond Damascus, not with three hundred and eighteen men, as Joseph knew the tale, but quite alone with his boy Eliezer; and the stars had fought for them so that they conquered and routed the foe. It happened that Eliezer himself told Joseph the story in this form also — the lad was familiar with the variants. Everybody can see, however, that told like this the story loses the earthly and therewith the heroic character given it in the saga and assumes another instead. When one hears it, it is — Joseph too had this impression — as though two gods, master and servant, had fought and conquered superior numbers of giants or inferior Elohim. And this can only mean that the event is reconverted, in the interest of truth and justice, to its heavenly form, and re-established therein. But should we on this account deny its earthly one? On the contrary, we might even say that the truth and reality which clothed it in heaven go to prove the same qualities on earth. For what is above comes down; but what is beneath would not

know how to happen and could not, so to speak, occur on its own account, without its heavenly image and counterpart. In Abram became flesh that which had previously been celestial; he based on the divine, he supported himself upon it, when he victoriously scattered the robbers from beyond the Euphrates.

Again, had not, for instance, the account of Eliezer's journey to woo Rebecca its own story on which it was founded and on which its hero and narrator might found himself, as he lived and told the tale? This too the old man sometimes metamorphosed in a singular way, and in such a form has it been cherished and handed down to us. It is said, namely, that Eliezer, when Abram sent him wooing for Isaac to Mesopotamia, covered the journey from Beersheba to Harran, a journey which takes twenty days or at the very least seventeen, in three days, and that the earth " sprang to meet him." We can only understand this figuratively, since the earth never runs or springs toward anybody; yet it seems to do so to him who moves across it with great ease and as though on winged feet. Moreover, the commentators pass over the fact that the journey was made, as usual, with caravan, with beast and pack; they do not speak of the ten camels. Rather the light which they cast upon the story tends to suggest that Abram's messenger and natural son covered the distance alone and with wings to his feet; with such celerity, indeed, that winged feet would not be enough, he would need wings on his hat as well! . . . To come to the point, we must conclude that the account of Eliezer's earthly and fleshly journey is an earthly tradition based upon a heavenly one. Thus it came that in telling the tale to Joseph he confused not only the Ian-

guage but also the matter of the story somewhat, and said the earth had " sprung to meet him."

Yes, when the young pupil's musing gaze rested upon the present fleshly Eliezer-manifestation, the perspective of his personality lost itself not in darkness but in light. And this was true not only of Eliezer's identity but of other people's as well — it is easy to surmise whose. And here, as a sort of advance light upon Joseph's history, let me say that those impressions were the most real and enduring, which he got from his hours with old Eliezer. Children are not inattentive when their masters say they are. They are only attending to other, perhaps more important things than those which the severely practical master is commending to their attention. Joseph, however absent he might seem, was more observant than the most observant child — in fact probably much more so than was good for him.

HOW ABRAHAM FOUND GOD

IN the above, I have in some sense been putting Eliezer's master, Abraham, in the same category as the eldest servant. What did Eliezer know of Abraham? Much, and of various kinds. He spoke of him as it were with a double tongue, sometimes thus and then again quite differently. At one time the Chaldaean had been simply the man who had found God, whereat the latter had kissed His fingers in joy and cried: " Up to now no man hath called Me Lord and Highest, so now shall I be called! " The discovery had cost much labour and even pain; Forefather had tortured himself no little. And indeed his pains and performances had been conditioned

and compelled by a conception quite peculiar to him: the conception that it was highly important whom or what thing man should serve. That made an impression on Joseph; he grasped it at once, particularly the part about taking things seriously. For in order to give any sort of importance or significance to things — or any one thing — one had to, before God and man, take them seriously. Forefather had beyond a doubt taken seriously the question as to whom man should serve; and had given it a remarkable answer, to wit: one should serve the Highest alone. Remarkable indeed. For the answer revealed a self-assertiveness which might be called excessive and arrogant. The man might have said to himself: " What am I and of what avail, or the human being in me? What mattereth it which little god or idol or minor deity I serve? " He would have had an easier time. But instead he said: " I, Abram, and humanity within me, must serve the Highest and nought else." And that was the beginning of it all (as it pleased Joseph to hear).

It began with Abram thinking that to mother earth alone was due service and worship, for that she brought forth fruits and preserved life. But he observed that she needed rain from heaven. So he gazed up into the skies, saw the sun in all its glory, possessed with the powers of blessing and cursing; and was on the point of deciding for it. But then it set, and he was convinced that it could not be the highest. So he looked at the moon and the stars — at these with particular expectation and hope. It may have been the first cause of his vexation and his desire to wander, that his love for the moon, the deity of Uru and Harran, had been offended by the exaggerated official honours paid to the sun-principle,

Shamash-Bel-Marduk, by Nimrod of Babel, these being an offence to Sin, the shepherd of the stars. Perhaps it was duplicity on God's part, born of desire to glorify Himself in Abiram and through him to make His name great, that stirred up in the moon-wanderer, through his love of the moon, that first conflict and unrest, employed them to his own ends, and made them the secret spring of all Abram's later acts. For when the morning star rose, both shepherd and sheep disappeared, and Abram concluded: " No, neither are they gods worthy of me." His soul was greatly troubled and he thought: " High as they are, had they not above themselves a guide and lord, how could the one set, the other rise? It would be unfitting for me, a man, to serve them and not rather Him who commands over them." And Abraham's thought lay so painfully close to the truth that it touched the Lord God to His innermost and He said to Himself: " I will anoint thee with the oil of gladness more than all thy fellows."

Thus out of impulse toward the Highest had Abraham discovered God; had by teaching and by taking thought shaped Him further and bodied Him forth and therewith done a great good deed to all concerned: to God, to himself, and to those whose souls he won by his teaching. To God, in that he made ready the way of realization of Him in the mind of man; to himself and to the proselytes especially, in that he laid hold upon the manifold and the anguishingly uncertain and converted it into the single, the definite, and the reassuring, of whom everything came, both good and evil — the sudden and frightful as well as the blessed usual, and to whom in any case we had to cling. Abraham had gathered together the

powers into one power and called them the Lord — exclusively and once for all. It was not as for a feast-day, when one sung praises and heaped all power and honour upon the head of one god, Marduk or Anu or Shamash — only to do the same to another god on the next day or in the next temple. " Thou art the Only and the Highest, without Thee is no judgment given, no decision made; no god in heaven or on earth can oppose Thee, Thou art lifted up above them all! " How many times had that not been said and sung out of ephemeral devotion in Nimrod's kingdom! Abram found and declared that it could and might with truth be said and sung only to One, who was always the same, who was utterly the known, because everything came from Him, and who thus made all things known after their source. The men among whom he grew up anguished themselves sore not to fail this source in prayers and thanksgivings. If they were doing penance in some calamity, they set at the head of their prayer a whole list of invocations to their deities; painstakingly they called upon each single god whose name they chanced to know, that the particular one who had sent the affliction — they could not tell which it was — might not be left out. But Abraham knew which it was, and taught his people. It was always and only He, the Highest and Uttermost, who alone could be the true God of mankind; who unfailingly answered man's cry for help and his song of praise.

Joseph, young as he was, well understood the boldness and strength of mind which expressed themselves in first Forefather's thoughts of God — though many there had been to shrink back in horror from the teaching. Whether **Abram had** been **tall** and goodly to look on in his **old**

age like Eliezer, or whether he had been little, lean, and bent of stature, at least he had had the courage, the consummate courage, which was needed to concentrate all the manifold properties of the divine, all blessing and all affliction, upon the one and only God; to take his stand there and to cling solely and undividedly to the Most High. Lot himself, white with fear, had said to Abraham:

" But if thy God forsake thee, then art thou forsaken indeed!"

To which Abraham had answered:

" It is true, thou sayest it. Then can there be no forsakenness in heaven or upon earth like to mine in extent — it is consummate. But bethink thee, that if I appease Him and He is my shield, nothing can lack me and I shall possess the gates of mine enemies! "

Whereupon Lot had strengthened himself and spoken:

" Then will I be thy brother! "

Yes, Abram had known how to communicate his exaltation of spirit. He was named Abiram; that is to say: " my father is exalted," or also, probably just as correctly, " father of the exalted." For in a way Abraham was God's father. He had perceived Him and thought Him into being. The mighty properties which he ascribed to Him were probably God's original possession, Abraham was not their creator. But was he not so after all, in a certain sense, when he recognized them, preached them, and by thinking made them real? The mighty properties of God were indeed something objective, existing outside of Abraham; but at the same time they were also in him and of him. The power of his own soul was at certain moments scarcely distinguishable from them; it inter-

laced and melted consciously into one with Him, and such was the origin of the bond which then the Lord struck with Abraham. True, it was only the outward confirmation of an inward fact; but it was also the origin of the peculiar character of Abram's fear of God. For since the greatness of God was something frightfully objective outside of him, yet at the same time coincided to a certain extent with the greatness of his own soul and was a product of it, so was this fear of God somewhat more than fear in the regular sense of the word: it was not alone trembling and quaking, but also and at the same time the existence of a bond, a familiarity and friendship. In fact Forefather had sometimes had a way of going about with God, which must have aroused the amazement of heaven and earth, if one did not take into consideration the extraordinary involutions of the relationship. For instance the familiar way in which he had addressed the Lord at the destruction of Sodom and Amorra was not far from insolence, considering the awful greatness and power of God. But, after all, who should be offended, if God were not? And God was not. " Hearken, 0 Lord," had Abram said then, " it must be one way or the other, but not both. If thou wilt have a world, then thou canst not demand justice, but if thou settest store by justice, then it is all over with the world. Thou wouldst hold the cord by both ends: wouldst have a world and in it justice. But if thou dost not mitigate thy demands, the world cannot exist." He had even accused the Lord of double-dealing, and upbraided him: once he had revoked the flood of water, but now he would invoke the flood of fire. But God, who probably could **not** have dealt otherwise with the cities after what had

happened or almost happened to His messengers at Sodom, had taken all lhat Abram said in good part or at all events not ill; for He had enveloped Himself in a benevolent silence.

This silence was the expression of a tremendous fact, which had to do with the outward side of God as well as with the inward greatness of Abraham, whose own actual creation it probably was: the fact that the contradiction in terms of a world which should be living and at the same time just resided in God's greatness itself; that He, the living God, was not good, or only good among other attributes, including evil, and that accordingly His essence included evil and was therewith sacrosanct; was sanctity itself and demanded sanctity.

Oh, wonder! He it was who had dashed in pieces Tiamat, and cloven the dragon of chaos; the exultant cry with which at the creation the gods had greeted Marduk and which the people of Abram's country repeated every New Year's day, belonged by rights to Him, the God of Abram. From Him issued order and joyous confidence. It was His work that the early and the late rains fell at their appointed time. He had set bounds to the monstrous sea, the residue of the original flood, the home of leviathan, that in its most awful turbulence it could not pass beyond them. He made the sun to rise in its creative power to the zenith and at evening begin its journey to hell; likewise the moon to measure time by her ever recurrent change of quarters. He made the stars to shine, likewise ordered them to form pictures; and He ruled the lives of men and beasts, nourishing them according to the seasons. From places where no man had been the snow fell and watered the earth, whose disk

he had fixed upon the flood of waters, so that it never or only very seldom swayed or shook. How much of blessing, of goodness, and of benefit was there in all this!

But as a man who conquers an enemy, by the victory adds unto himself the properties of the conquered, so God, it would seem, when He clave the monster of chaos, embodied in Himself its essence and perhaps only thereby grew to the full height of His living majesty. The struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, blessing and Rightfulness upon this earth was not, as the people of Nimrod believed, the continuation of that war which Marduk waged against Tiamat. Neither the darkness, the evil and the unknown terror, the earthquake, the crackling lightning, the plague of grasshoppers darkening the sun, the seven evil winds, the dust Abubu, the serpents and the hornets — none of these but were from God, and if He was called the Lord of the pestilence, it was because He was alike its sender and its physician. He was not the Good, but the All. And He was holy! Holy not because of goodness, but of life and excess of life; holy in majesty and terror, sinister, dangerous, and deadly, so that an omission, an error, the smallest negligence in one's bearing to Him, might have frightful consequences. He was holy; but He demanded holiness too, and that He demanded it by His mere being gave the Holy One greater significance than that of mere awfulness. The discretion which he enjoined became piety, and God's living majesty the measure of life, the source of the sense of guilt, the fear of God, and the walking before Him in holiness and righteousness.

God was present, and Abraham walked before Him, consecrated in his soul by that outward nearness of His.

They were two, an I and a Thou, both of whom said " I " and to the other " Thou." It is true that Abraham composed the properties of God, with the help of his own greatness of soul — without which He would not have known how to compose them or name them, so that they would have remained in darkness. But after all God remained a powerful Thou, saying " I , " independent of Abraham and independent of the world. He was in the fire but was not the fire — wherefore it would have been very wrong to worship fire. God had created the world, in which such tremendous things happened as the storm wind or leviathan. This had to be considered in order properly to measure His own outward greatness, or, if not to measure it, at least to conceive it. He must be much greater than all His works, and just as necessarily outside of His works. *Makom* he was called, space, because He was the space in which the world existed; but the world was not the space in which He existed. He was also in Abraham, who recognized Him by virtue of his own power. And it was just this that strengthened and fulfilled Abraham's sense of his own ego; which was not at all minded to be lost in God, to become one with Him and be no more Abraham, but rather held itself stoutly upright in face of Him — at a great distance, certainly, for Abraham was but a man, and made of clay — but bound up with Him through knowledge and consecrated by the high essence and presence of the Deity. It was on this basis that God had made His compact with Abraham, that covenant so full of promise for both sides; of which God was so jealous that He would be honoured entirely alone by His worshippers without the flicker of an eyelash toward those other gods of whom the world

was full. For here was the important fact: through Abram and his bond something was come into the world that had never been there before and which the peoples did not know — the accursed possibility that the bond might be broken, that one might fall away from God.

Much besides did Forefather know of God — but not in the sense in which others knew of their gods. There were no stories about God. That was indeed perhaps the most remarkable thing: the courage with which Abram represented and expressed God's essence from the first, without more ado, simply in that he said "God." God had not proceeded, had not been born, from any woman. There was also beside Him on the throne no woman, no Ishtar, Baalat, mother of God. How could there be? One had only to use one's common sense to understand that, considering the nature of God, it was not a possible conception. God had planted the tree of knowledge* and of death in Eden, and man had eaten of it. Birth and death were of man, but not of God; He saw no divine female at His side, because He needed not to know woman, but was Baal and Baalat at one and the same time. Neither had He children. For the angels were not so, nor Sabaoth who served Him, nor yet those giants whom some angels had begotten upon the daughters of men, led astray by sight of their lewdness. He was alone; such was the mark of His greatness. The wifeless and childless condition of God might perhaps explain His great jealousy concerning His bond with man; however that may be, it certainly explains the fact that He has no history and that there is nothing to tell of Him.

Yet even so, one may only take all this in a qualified sense; referring it to the past, but not to the future — if

indeed we may speak of the future in this sense at all. For God did after all have a story; but it referred to the future, a future so glorious for Him that His present, splendid as it always was, could not compare with it. And that very discrepancy between the present and the future lent to God's sacred majesty and greatness a shadow of strain and suspense, of suffering and unfulfilled promise, which we must frankly recognize in order to understand the jealous nature of His covenant with man.

There would come a day, the latest and last, which alone would bring about the fulfillment of God. This day was end and beginning, destruction and new birth. The world, this first or perhaps not first world, would be dispersed in ultimate catastrophe; chaos, primeval silence would reign once more. Then God would begin His work anew and more wonderfully than before — being Lord of destruction, as Lord of creation. Out of chaos and confusion, out of slime and darkness His word would call up a new cosmos; louder than ever before would ring the jubilations of the onlooking angels; for the renewed world would exceed the other in every respect, and in it God would triumph over all His foes!

So it would be: at the end of days God would be king, king of kings, king over men and gods. But then, was He not that already, even now? Of course He was, in all quietness and in the consciousness of Abram. Yet even so, not everywhere recognized and admitted, and thus not entirely realized. The realization of God's great and boundless kingship was reserved for that first and last day, for the day of destruction and resurrection; when out of the bonds wherein it still lay, His absolute splen-

dour would rise up before the eyes of all. No Nimrod would exalt himself against God, with shameless terraced towers; no human knee would bow save before Him, no human mouth give to another praise. God, as in truth from Everlasting, now actually would be lord and king over all other gods as well. In the blare of ten thousand trumpets directed slantwise at the skies, in the singing and thundering of the flames, in a hailstorm of lightnings, He, clothed in majesty and terrors, would pace away to His throne across a world praying with forehead in the dust, to take possession in sight of all and for ever of a reality which was His truth.

Oh, day of God's apotheosis, day of the Promise, expectation, and fulfillment! It would, be it remarked, embrace the apotheosis of Abraham, whose name thenceforward would be a word of blessing, with which the races of mankind would greet each other. That was the Promise. But this resounding day lay not in the present, but in the uttermost future; and until then was a time of waiting; this it was that brought lines of suffering into the countenance of God of today, which were the mark of the to-be and of the not-yet-accomplished. God lay in bands, God suffered; God was held in prison. That mitigated His exaltedness; all the suffering might adore Him and He consoled those who were not great but small in the world; it gave them to feel scorn in their hearts against all that were even as Nimrod was, and against the shamelessness of vaunting greatness. No, God had no stories like Egyptian Osiris, the sacrifice, the mutilated, the buried and arisen one, or like Adonis-Tammuz, for whom the flutes wailed in the gorges; Tammuz, lord of the sheepfold, whose side Ninib the boar did tear

and he went down into prison, and rose again. Far be it from us, and forbidden, to think that God was associated with the nature-myths — nature, withering in affliction, freezing in anguish, that she might be renewed according to the promise, in laughter and billows of flowers; with the seed-corn, that decayed in darkness and in the prison of the earth, that it might arise and sprout; with dying and sex; with the corrupt worship of Melech-Baal and his ritual at Tyre, where men offered their semen to the God of abominations in base-begotten folly and deathly shamelessness. God forbid that He could have had any dealing with such affairs! But He lay in bonds and was a God of waiting upon the future; and that made a certain likeness between Him and those other suffering god-heads. Therefore it was that Abram at Shechem talked long with Melchisedek, who alone might enter the temple of the Baal of the Covenant and El Elyon, over the question whether and up to what point any likeness of essence subsisted between Adon and Abraham's God. But God had kissed His finger-tips and cried, to the private resentment of the angels: " It is unbelievable, what knowledge of Me is possessed by this son of earth! Have I not begun to make Myself known through his means? Verily, I will anoint him! "

THE MASTER OF THE MESSENGER

IN such wise, and so simply, had Eliezer painted Abraham to Joseph with his words. But unconsciously his tongue forked in speaking and talked of him quite otherwise as well. Always it was Abram, the man from Uru, or more **correctly from** Harran, of whom the forked tongue

spoke — calling him the great-grandfather of Joseph. Both of them, young and old, were quite aware that, unless by moonlight, Abram was not the man, that unquiet subject of Amraphel of Shinar; likewise that no man's great-grandfather lived twenty generations before him! Yet this was a trifling inexactitude compared with others at which they had to wink; for that Abraham of whom the tongue now spoke, changefully and inconsistently, was not he, either, who had lived then and shaken the dust of Shinar from his feet; but rather a different figure perceptible far behind the other, visible through him, as it were, so that the lad's gaze faltered and grew dim in this perspective just as it had in the one called Eliezer — an ever brighter vista, of course, for it was light that shone through.

Then came into view all the stories which belonged to that half of the sphere in which master and servant, not with three hundred and eighteen men, but alone save for the help of supernatural powers, drove the foe beyond Damascus; and in which the ground had sprung towards Eliezer the messenger; the story of Abraham's birth foretold by prophecy; of the massacre of innocents on his account; of his childhood in a cave and how the angel fed him while his mother sought him round about. All that bore the mark of truth: somewhere and somehow it was true. Mothers always wander and search; they have many names, but they wander about the fields and seek the poor child that has been led away into the underworld, murdered or mutilated. This time she was called Emathla, also probably Emtelai —names in which Eliezer probably indulged his fantasy; for they were better suited to the angel than to the mother — the latter, in-

deed, in an effort at verisimilitude on **the part of the** forked tongue, may also have had the form of **a goat.** Joseph found it all very dreamlike; his eyes changed their expression as he listened and heard **that** the **mother** of the Chaldaeans was called Emtelai; for the name quite plainly signifies " mother of my elevated one," or, in other words, " mother of God."

Should the good Eliezer have been reproved for talking like that? No. Stories come down as a god becomes man; they civilize themselves as it were and become earthly, without thereby ceasing to take place on high and to be narratable in their celestial form. For instance, the old man sometimes referred to the sons of that Keturah whom Abram in his old age took for a concubine: Medan, Midian, and Jokshan, that is, Zimran, Ishbak and whatever their names were. These sons had " glittered like lightning " and Abram had built for them and their mother a brazen city, so high that the sun never shone inside it, and it was lighted by precious stones. His listener would have had to be much duller than he was not to see that this brazen city signified the underworld, as whose queen, in this version, Keturah accordingly appeared. An unassailable conception! Keturah was indeed simply a Canaanitish woman whom Abram in his old age honoured by his couch; but likewise she was the mother of a whole series of Arabian progenitors and lords of the desert, as Hagar the Egyptian had been mother of Ishmael; and when Eliezer said of the sons that they glittered like lightning, that meant nothing else than seeing them with both eyes instead of with one, in token of the simultaneous and the unity of the **doubled: that** is, as homeless Bedouin chiefs, and as

sons and princes of the underworld, like Ishmael, the wrongful son.

Then there were other moments in which the old man spoke in strange accents of Sarah, Forefather's wife. He called her "daughter of the unmanned" and " Heaven's queen "; adding that she had given birth to a spear, and that it was quite proper that she had originally been called Sarai — namely, heroine — and only been toned down by God to Sarah — that is to say, lady. A like thing had happened to Sarah's brother-husband: for he was reduced from Abram, which means " the exalted father " and " father of the exalted," to Abraham, which is to say " the father of many," of a swarming posterity, spiritual and physical. But had he therefore ceased to be Abram? By no means. It was only that the sphere rolled; and the subtle tongue, forking between Abram and Abraham, spoke of him now so and then again so.

Nimrod the father of the land had sought to devour him, but he had been snatched away, fed in a cave by a goat-angel, and when he was grown up had played so shrewd a game with the greedy king and his idolatrous majesty that one might even say that the latter came to " feel the sickle." He had suffered much before achieving his position. He had been held captive — it was heartening to hear how he had employed his imprisonment to make proselytes and to convert the keepers of the dungeon to the Most High God. He was sentenced to be sacrificed to Typhon; in other words, to be burned; had been put in the lime-kiln or — Eliezer's versions varied — had mounted the stake. This last sounded

genuine to Joseph, for he knew that even in his time in many cities a feast of the stake was celebrated. And are there ever feasts without an idea at bottom — feasts without a root, unreal feasts? Do people, at New Year's, on the day of creation, perform in pious mummery things which they have sucked out of themselves or out of an angel's fingers and which never really happened? Man does not think himself out. He is of course exceeding clever, since he ate of the tree, and is not far from being a god. But with all his cleverness how should he be able to find something which is not there? Yes, there must have been some truth in the story of the stake.

According to Eliezer, Abraham had founded the city of Damascus and had been its first king. A specious utterance; but towns are not in the habit of being founded by men, nor do the beings which one calls their first kings wear human countenances. Hebron itself, called Kirjath Arba, outside which they were sitting, had not been built by human hands, but by the giant Arba or Arbaal, at least so ran the legend. Eliezer, on the other hand, stuck to it that Abram had founded Hebron as well. That may have been no contradiction to the popular idea, nor should have been so. Forefather must himself have been of a giant's greatness; that was already clear from the fact that according to Eliezer he had taken steps a mile long.

What wonder, then, that to Joseph, in dreamy moods, the figure of his forefather, the founder of cities, merged to the distant view in that of Bel of Babel, who built the tower and the city and who became a god after he too had once been a man and been buried in the Baal-tomb?

With Abraham it seemed to be the other way round. But again what does that mean, in such a connection? Who will say what Abram had been at first and where the stories are originally at home, whether above or below? They are the present of the revolving sphere, the unity of the dual, the image that resolves the riddle of time.

3

JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN

THE GROVE OF ADONIS

HALF an hour distant from Jacob's straggling settlement, his tented huts, his stalls, penfolds, and barns, there was a gully filled with myrtle bushes of strong, sturdy growth, a sort of miniature grove, of which the folk of Hebron thought as sacred to Ashtar — or even more to her son, brother, and spouse, Tammuz-Adonai. The air within it, though hot in summer, had a pleasant bitter tang, and the thicket was not impenetrable, but pierced by numerous crooked openings which one might take for paths. Choosing one at random and making for the lowest part of the glade, one came upon a free space made by grubbing up the bushes. It had a shrine. A four-sided stone pyramid somewhat above a man's height, with procreation symbols stamped upon it, a Massebe, itself probably a symbol of procreation, was erected in the middle of the clearing. At its base lay offerings, in the shape of clay vessels filled with earth, from which pale greenish sprouts were springing. Also more complicated artistic efforts, such as wooden laths fastened together in a square and covered with canvas, upon which a clumsy

human figure stood out. The women who presented these had drawn the figure with mould upon the linen, sown it with seed, and trimmed the sprouts to even growth, so that the figure showed in relief against its background.

To this spot Joseph came often with his brother Benjamin, now eight years old. Benjamin had begun to outgrow the tendance of womenfolk and liked to try to keep up with his elder brother's pace. He was a chubby-cheeked child, no longer running about naked, but clad in a short-sleeved, knee-length garment of rust red or dark blue, with an embroidered hem. He had beautiful grey eyes, which he would lift to his elder's with utter trustfulness; and thick, shining hair, which covered his head like a metal helmet from the middle of his forehead down to the nape of the neck, with bays for the ears. These were small and firm, like his nose and his short-fingered hands, one of which he would slip into his brother's as they walked together. He had a confiding nature, Rachel's friendly spirit was in him. Yet his whole little person was weighed down by a certain melancholy and shyness. He knew that for which all unbeknownst he had been responsible, knew the hour and the manner of his mother's death; and the tragic and guiltless guilt which he bore about with him was enhanced by Jacob's bearing toward this son of his. It was not untender, rather it was marked by a painful reserve, the father avoiding instead of seeking his son's gaze; yet from time to time he would press his youngest-born long and fervently to his heart, call him Benoni, and whisper in his ear of Rachel his mother.

Thus when the little one grew too old to cling to the women's skirts, he could have no natural, unembarrassed

intercourse with his father, and hung the more upon his brother, whom he in every way admired. Joseph might be smiled at by all he met, yet in a certain way he stood isolated and could therefore feel grateful for the small brother's loyalty. He too felt deeply the natural bond and made of this nearest of kin his friend and intimate, despite the difference in age, to an extent which was almost more of a burden than a pride or happiness to Benjamin. This clever and fascinating Jossef — for so Benoni pronounced it — told him so much that he could not take in! His very eagerness to do so deepened the shadow which lay upon the pathetic little mother-slayer.

Hand in hand they left Jacob's olive orchard on the hill, where the sons of the maids were plucking and pressing. These latter had in fact sent Joseph away, after he had gone to Jacob, where he sat in the cattle-yard with Eliezer standing before him giving account, and reported that the fruit on almost all the trees had been allowed to get too ripe and would not yield the best oil; also that in his opinion the brothers were using too much violence in crushing them in the mill. Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher had accordingly been reproved, and thereupon with outstretched arms and mouths open on one side ordered Joseph to take himself off. Joseph had called Benjamin and said to him:

" Come, let us go to our place."

On the way he said: " I said ' on almost all the trees.' Well, that was an exaggeration, such as one uses in speaking. I admit that it would have been more exact to say ' on some of them.' I climbed myself into the old one with three trunks, the one with the wall round it, and plucked the fruit and tossed it into a cloth, whereas the

brethren, alas, were using sticks and stones; and with my own eyes I saw that on that tree at least the fruit had got too ripe — of the others I will say nothing. But they behave as though I were simply lying, and as though one could get really fine oil by mangling the precious gifts with stones. Could I look on and not complain? "

" No," Benjamin answered, " thou knowest better than they, and thou art obliged to go to the father that he may know too. I am glad thou hast quarrelled with them, little Jossef, for now thou hast called me to come with thee."

"And now, my noble Beni," said Joseph, "let us take a jump and fly over this little wall; one, two, three — "

" Yes," responded Benjamin, " it is good, but keep fast hold on me. Together it is more fun and also safer so for my little self."

They ran, jumped, and went on again. Benjamin's hand would get hot and wet as Joseph held it in his own; then the elder would take it by the wrist and flap it in the air that the breeze might dry it. This so amused the little one that he always laughed until he stumbled and fell.

When they came to the myrtle glade and the sacred grove they had to separate and walk one behind the other in the narrow paths. They took endless pleasure striking about in this labyrinth, finding a winding opening which would permit them to pass for a certain distance, where they would stick fast; or, twisting and turning, uphill and down, they might find a way on, only to issue at last in a cul-de-sac. They fought their way, talking and laughing, shielding their faces from scratches and blows. Joseph as he went broke twigs from the bushes, blossom-

ing white with spring, and took a store of them for the wreaths he loved to wear in his hair. Benjamin had wanted to do the same; he had gathered twigs and begged his brother to make a wreath for him too. But he soon saw that Joseph did not care to have his little brother adorned with myrtle green. He did not say so straight out, but he wanted to keep the decoration for himself. Benoni knew that some kind of idea was behind the reserve; he had seen that Joseph often had such secret thoughts, which he did not confide — especially not to him, the little brother. But Benoni suspected that the jealousy about the myrtle garland had to do with the inherited first-bornship and blessing, which, as everybody knew, was in the father's mind hovering above Joseph's head.

" Never mind, little brother," Joseph might say, kissing the other on his cool little helmet of hair. " At home I will make thee a wreath of oak leaves or bright thistles, or a garland of mountain ash with its scarlet pearls. What dost thou say, is it not far finer? What wouldst thou of the myrtle? It doth not suit thee. One must needs choose the right sort of adornment."

Whereto answered Benjamin:

" Clearly thou art right, I see it well, Josephja, Yaschup, my own Jehosiph. Thou art wise above all others, and what thou sayest, that could I never say. But when thou speakest, then I see and agree so that thy thoughts become mine and I am as wise as thou makest me. I see that each must make his choice and that not all adornments would suit everyone. And I see that thou wouldst stop there and leave me as wise as I was before. But wert thou to go on and tell thy brother things more clearly,

thou wouldst see I would follow thee; thou wouldst not be disappointed in thy little brother."

Joseph was silent.

" So much have I heard people say," Benjamin went on, "that the myrtle meaneth youth and beauty; that is what big people say. If I say it, it maketh us both to laugh, for how could we say that the words fit me? Young I am, indeed, or rather small, not so much young as dwarfish. Young art thou, and lovely, so that the world is full of the report of thy beauty. But I, I am more a matter for jesting than for wonderment. When I look at my limbs I see that they come short as respects the rest of me; and I have a fat little paunch as one who still taketh his mother's milk and my cheeks puff out as though filled with wind, to say nought of the hair of my head, which is like to a cap of an otter's fell. So then if the myrtle suiteth to youth and beauty and standeth therefor, then verily it suiteth to thee and not to me, and it were a fault in me to assume it. I know well that one can err and do oneself harm in such matters. Seest thou, quite of myself and before thou speakest, I understand much; yet of course not all, and thou must aid my understanding."

" Brave little man," said Joseph, and laid his arm about him, " I love thy otter cap, thy little paunch, and thy chubby cheeks, and thou art my dearest and only true brother and flesh of my flesh, for out of the same abyss came we both, which is called *absu,* but for us is Mami, the sweet one, for whom Jacob served. Come and let us go down to the stone and rest."

" Right gladly," answered Benjamin. " Let us look at the frames and the pots which the women have put there, like to a little garden, and thou shalt explain to me the

meaning of the stone, for that I love to hear. Because, at least," he went on as they followed the sloping path, "after all, Mami died of me, and half of my name meaneth ' son of death'; at least in that sense might the myrtle become me too, since I have heard folk say that it might also be a tiring of death."

" Yea," said Joseph, " there is lamenting in the world for youth and loveliness, for that Ashera maketh to weep and bringeth to destruction those whom she loveth. That must be why the myrtle is a tree of death, and a garland for the same. Therefore likewise hath it that sharp and bitter smell, as thou canst tell from the twig in thy hand. For it is the adornment of the whole sacrifice, set apart for one set apart, and destined for the predestined. Dedicated youth, that is the name of the whole sacrifice. But the myrtle worn in the hair, that is the herb touch-me-not."

" Thou hast taken away thine arm from about me," Benjamin remarked, " and lettest thy little brother walk alone."

" Here is mine arm again," cried Joseph. " Thou art my true and own little brother, and at home I will make thee a wreath of every colour of the rainbow of all the flowers of the field, so that he that seeth thee shall laugh for joy. Shall that be a bargain twixt thee and me? "

" It is sweet and good of thee," said Benjamin. " Lend me thy coat that I may kiss the seam of it with my lips."

He was thinking: " Plainly it is the inheritance and the blessing he hath in his mind. Yet it moveth me anew and strangely that he maketh reference to the whole sacrifice and to the herb touch-me-not. It may be that he thinketh of Isaac when he speaketh of the whole sacrifice

and of the one set apart. Certainly he meaneth me to understand that myrtle is the sacrificial garland, and that disquieteth my mind."

Aloud he said: " When thou speakest as now, thou art doubly beautiful; in my folly I cannot tell whether the scent of the myrtle cometh from thy words or from the trees. But lo, here is the shrine. And the gifts are more than when we were last here: two gods in frames and two sprouting vessels have been added. There have been women here. They have put little gardens in front of the grotto; I would look at them. But the stone is untouched, not rolled away from the grave. Is now the Lord within, His beauteous form, or whither hath He gone? "

He referred to a rocky hollow framed in shrubbery, carved out of the hill-side; not high, but as deep as the height of a man, and partially closed with a stone at its mouth. This hollow served the women of Hebron for the ritual of the feast.

" Nay," answered Joseph to his brother's question, " the figure is not here, nor is it to be seen throughout the year. It lieth preserved in the temple at Kirjath Arba and is brought forth only at the feast of the solstice, when the sun beginneth to decline and the light to go down to the lower world, and the women do with it according to their custom."

"They entomb it there in the cave? " Benjamin inquired. He had asked thus on the first occasion and Joseph had instructed him; since then he had often pretended forgetfulness, in order to hear the story anew and have Joseph tell him of Adonai, shepherd and lord, the murdered one, for whom arose lamentation throughout the world. For then he listened as it were to the thoughts

in between Joseph's words, to the tone and the rhythm of his speech; for he was vaguely possessed by the idea that so he might come upon his brother's secret thoughts, in solution in his words as salt is in solution in the sea.

" Nay, the burying cometh later," answered Joseph. " For first they seek Him." He was sitting on the base of the shrine of Ashtaroth, a rough-hewn pyramid of blackish stone, the surface of which looked as though it were broken out into tiny pustules. Already he was busy weaving the myrtle wreath, and the fine tendons stood out as they moved on the backs of his hands.

Benjamin looked at him from the side. Cheeks and chin showed a dusky smoothness, they betrayed that Joseph already shaved. He used a mixture of oil and potash, and a stone knife. If he were to let his beard grow, what then? It might be that it would have changed him a good deal. Quite possibly he had not as yet much beard; yet even so what would have become of his beauty, that especial beauty of his seventeen years? He might just as well wear a dog's head on his shoulders — the difference could not have been much greater. Certainly we must agree that beauty is a very perishable good. " They seek Him," Joseph went on, " for He is noble and He is lost. Some of them have hidden the figure in the shrubbery, but they search with the others, they know where it is and know it not, they purposely bemuse themselves. And they all lament as they move about in the searching, they lament in chorus and singly: [4] Where art thou, 0 my adored god, my spouse and my son, my bright shepherd-bird? I long for Thee. What hath befallen Thee, in the grove, in the green meadow, in the world?'"

" But they know," put in Benjamin, " that the Lord is dead and mangled? "

"Not yet," Joseph responded. "That is the feast. They know it because the figure hath been discovered before, yet know it not because the hour to discover it again is not yet come. In the feast each hour hath its knowledge, and each of the women is the goddess, seeking what she hath not yet found."

" But then they find the Lord? "

" Thou sayest it. He lieth in the bushes, and His side is torn. They rush to Him, they fling up their arms and shriek."

" Thou hast seen and heard it? "

" Thou knowest I have already twice seen and heard it; but I had thy promise not to tell our father. Hast thou kept silence? "

" Indeed have I , " Benjamin assured him. " Shall I offend our father? I have enough offended him with my very life."

" And when the feast cometh round, I will go again," said Joseph. " At the moment we are equally distant from the last and the next. The solstice cometh with the next pressing of the oil. It is a wonderful feast. There lieth the Lord, stretched out in the shrubbery, and His wound gapeth wide."

"How doth He look?"

"As I described Him to thee. Of beautiful form, carven of olive wood, with wax and glass, for His eyeballs are of black glass and they have eyelashes."

" He is young? "

" I have told thee already He is young and beautiful. The grain of the yellow wood looketh like to veins upon

His body, His locks are black, and His loincloth embroidered in divers colours with pearls and glass paste and purple fringes."

[44] What hath He in His hair? "

" Nought at all," answered Joseph shortly. " His lips and nails and the marks on His body are made of wax and likewise the frightful wound of Ninib's teeth is marked with red wax. It bleedeth."

" Thou sayest the laments of the women are very great when they find Him? "

" They are very great. At first they were but mourning of the loss, but now beginneth the mourning of the finding, and that is incomparably louder. There is the wailing of the flutes for dead Tammuz; for the flute-players sit here on the spot and blow with all their might upon little flutes, so that their sobbing maketh the bones to quake. And the women let down their hair and give free vent to gesture as they lament over the corpse: [4] 0 my spouse and my child!' For each of them is as the goddess, and each laments: [4] None loved Thee more than I ! "

" Joseph, I cannot forbear to weep. For I am so small, the death of the Lord is almost too great a pain for me and rendeth me within. Why was it the young and lovely one had to be mangled, in the grove, in the green field, and in the world and be lamented with such anguish? "

" That canst thou not yet understand," Joseph said. "' He is the sufferer and is the sacrifice. He descendeth into the abyss that He may rise again and be glorified. Abram knew that of a surety, when he raised the knife against his true-born son. But when the knife fell, there was a ram in the place. Thus it is that when we sacrifice

a ram or a lamb, we hang about him a seal with the image of a man, as a sign that it representeth the man. But this mystery of the substitute is greater than that: it comprehends the whole stellar position of man, god, and beast and is the mystery of substitution. Man offereth the son in the beast; so too the son offereth himself in the beast. Ninib is not accursed, for it standeth written: ' A god shall they slay,' and the meaning of the beast is the meaning of the son, who knoweth his hour as he doth in the feast, and knoweth moreover when he shall overset the dwelling of death and come forth out of the hollow."

" Ah," said the little one, " if only it were now, and the feast of joy were beginning! Do they lay the Lord in the grave and in the hollow there? "

Joseph, at his weaving work, rocked lightly from his hips as he hummed:

" In the time of the feast of Tammuz play upon the flute of lazuli,
And upon the ring of cornelian play thou likewise.'

" With wailing and lamenting," he said, " they bear it hither to the stone. And the flute-players play ever louder so that their wailing pierceth the heart. I saw the women busy over the form of the corpse in their laps. They washed it with water and anointed it with oil of nard, so that the face of the Lord and His mangled body glistened in the light. Then wrapped they it in bands of wool and linen, shrouded it in purple cloths, and laid it upon a bier here at the stone, lamenting unceasingly the while to the sound of the pipes:

* Woe, alas, for Tammuz!
Alas for my beloved son, my spring and my light!

Adon! Adonai!
We sit down with tears,
For Thou art dead, my God, my spouse, my child.
Thou art a tamarisk, which in its bed hath drunk no water,
Whose tips in the field brought forth no shoot.
A sprig art Thou, not planted in the stream,
A shoot whose roots have been torn out,
An herb that in the garden hath drunk no water.
Alas, my Damu, my child, my light!
None hath loved Thee more than I ! ' "

" All the words of the wailing thou knowest, then? "

" I know them," Joseph said.

" And they go near to thy heart too, so it seemeth to me," added Benoni. " For as thou sangest, it was to me twice or thrice as though the words would pierce thy heart too from within, even though thou well knowest the women do as they have learned and that the son is not Adonai, the God of Jacob and Abram."

" He is the son and the beloved," said Joseph, " and He is the sacrifice. But what sayest thou? For it hath not touched me. I am not small and puling like to thee."

" Nay, for thou art young and beautiful," said Benjamin meekly. " And so thy garland is ready, which thou reservest to thyself. I see thou hast made it higher and wider in front than behind, like a crown, that it may display thy skill. I am rejoiced that thou wearest it, instead of the wreath of the rowan which thou wilt weave for me. But the beautiful God lieth now four days upon the bier? "

"Thou sayest, and hath held it in thy memory," Joseph answered. " Thy understanding waxeth and will soon be round and full, that one may speak with thee of all things without exception. He lieth exposed until the

fourth day, and daily the townsfolk come out from the town, with their musicians, and beat their breasts at sight of Him and wail:

' 0 Duzi, my Lord, how long liest Thou there?
0 Lord of the sheepfold, how long liest Thou powerless there?
1 will eat no bread, I will drink no water,
For dead is youth and dead is Tammuz! '

And in the temple and in the dwellings they send up the same lament. But on the fourth day they come and lay Him in the coffer."

" In a box? "

" One must call it a coffer. ' Box' would be just as good a word, only not admissible here. ' Coffer' is the word that has always been used. The Lord fitteth exactly into it, it is made to measure, out of wood painted scarlet and black, and could not fit better. So soon as He is within they shut down the lid and put pitch all round the edge, and then they entomb Him there in the hollow place with weeping, roll the stone to the mouth, and return home from the grave."

" And then doth the weeping cease? "

"Thou hast forgotten. They lament in temple and dwelling the space of two and a half days. But on the third day, at dusk, beginneth the feast of lamps."

" That I loved. Then they light a few lamps? "

" Lamps without number they light, everywhere," Joseph said, " as many as they have, round about the houses under the sky as well as on the ways hither and here upon the spot and among the bushes — everywhere are burning lamps. They come to the grave and again they lament, the most bitter lamenting of all; never

wailed the flutes so piercingly to the lament * 0 Duzi, how long liest Thou there? ' Never have the women so beaten their breasts as in this affliction. Their bruises will last long. But at midnight all is still."

Benjamin clutched his brother's arm.

" And the stillness is very sudden? " he asked.

" They all stand without motion or sound. The stillness is long. Then from afar cometh the sound of a voice, a single voice, swelling loud and joyous: 'Tammuz liveth! The Lord is risen! He hath overthrown the abode of the shadow of death. Great is the Lord!' "

" Ah, what a word is that, my Joseph! I knew that it would come at the time of the feast, but yet the words pierce me to my marrow as though I had never heard them before. Who is it that calleth? "

" It is a maiden, of delicate countenance, chosen and named anew each year. Her parents are proud and held in high honour on account of it. She who bringeth the tidings cometh walking, a lute in her hands, and she striketh it and singeth:

' Tammuz liveth, Adon is arisen!
Great is He, great, the Lord is great.
His eye, that was closed in death, He hath opened it.
His mouth, that was closed in death, He hath opened it.
His feet, that were fettered, walk,
Flowers and leaves they strew beneath His feet.
Great is the Lord, Adonai is great! '

But as the maiden cometh and singeth, they all rush to the grave. They roll away the stone, and lo, the coffer is empty."

" Where is the mangled one? "

" He is no more there. The grave hath had no power to hold Him, for lo, now three days are past. He is risen."

" Oh! But how, then, Joseph, arisen? Forgive me, chubby-cheeked urchin that I am, if I ask thy meaning. Pray deceive not thy mother's son. For thou hast told me more than once that the lovely image is kept in the temple from year to year. Then what meaning hath here arisen *c*

" Little foolish one," responded Joseph, " thy understanding still lacketh much, however it increaseth. It still resembleth a little bark gliding across the sea of the sky. Do I not tell thee of the feast as it occurreth hour by hour, and do not likewise the folk deceive themselves, knowing what is to come, yet honouring what is? For they all know that the image is kept in the temple, and yet is Tammuz arisen. I almost think thou meanest that because the image is not God, God is not the image. But God forfend that it should be so! For the image is the instrument of the present and of the feast. But Tammuz, the Lord, is Lord of the feast."

So saying he set the finished crown on his head.

Benjamin looked at him large-eyed.

" God of our fathers," cried he admiringly, " how the myrtle crown becometh thee, this that thou hast made before my eyes with thy skilful fingers! Only thee it becometh; and when I think how it would look upon my otter cap, then I see what a mistake it would be not to keep it for thyself. But go on and tell me truly: when the townsfolk have found coffer and grave empty, then, I suppose, they go home with inward joy and peace unto their homes."

"Then beginneth the rejoicing," Joseph corrected

him, " and the feast of joy bursteth out. * Empty, empty, empty,' cry they all;' the grave is empty, Adon is risen.' They kiss the maiden and cry:' The Lord is great.' Then they kiss one another in turn and cry: * Glorified is Tammuz! ' Then they hold round dances and whirl about the monument of Ashtaroth in the lamplight. And also in the lamplit town is nought but joy and merrymaking, feasting and drinking, while the air resoundeth with the crying of the glad tidings. Even next day they greet each other with exchange of kisses and the greeting: ' He is risen!

" Yes," Benjamin said, " so it is, and so hast thou told it to me. I had but forgotten it and thought they went quietly homewards. That is then the glorious feast, in each hour as it proceedeth. And the Lord hath had His head lifted up for this year, yet He knoweth the hour when Ninib will slay Him again in the greenwood."

" Not ' again,' " Joseph instructed him. " It is always the one and the only time."

" As thou thinkest, dear brother, so it is. My words were unripe, they were the language of a little urchin. The one and the first time always, for He is the Lord of the feast. But after all, when one considereth, there must have once been the first time in order that the feast should be at all; it must have been that Tammuz died and the lovely one was mangled — or must it not? "

" When Ishtar vanisheth from heaven and descendeth to awaken her son, that is the event."

" Oh, yes, that is the heavenly event. But how in the world below? Thou speakest of the event; but tell me then the story."

'' They say," answered Joseph, " there was a king at

Gebal, at the foot of the snow mountains, who had a daughter fair of face; and Nana, that is Ashtaroth, smote him with a madness of desire for her, so that he lusted after his own flesh and blood, and knew his daughter."

As he spoke, Joseph pointed behind him to the signs cut into the monument by which they sat.

" As she was now pregnant," he went on, " and the king saw that he would be the father of his grandchild, confusion seized upon him, rage and remorse, and he roused himself up to kill her. But the gods, well knowing that Ashrath had done this, changed the pregnant woman into a tree."

"What kind of tree?"

" A tree or a bush," said Joseph with some irritation. " Or a bush as large as a tree. I was not there, and I cannot tell thee the shape of the king's nose, nor what sort of ear-rings the nurse of his daughter wore. If thou wilt hear, then listen, and throw me not thy ill-considered questions, like stones into a hedge."

" But if thou chidest me I shall weep," Benjamin complained, " and then must thou console me. Therefore do not chide, but only believe I want nought more than to hearken."

" In ten months," Joseph went on with his narrative, " the tree opened and revealed itself after this space of time, and lo, it was the lad Adonai who came forth. And Ashera, who had done all this, saw him and yielded him to no one. Therefore she kept him in the kingdom of the lower world, with Queen Ereshkigal. But she too, the queen, would yield him to no one, and said: ' Never will I give him up, for this is the land of nevermore-return.'"

" Why then did these queens yield him to no one? "

" To no one, neither to each other. Thou askest all and will know all. But if one hath the power of inference, then one needeth to say but one thing, and the rest proceedeth from it. Adon was the son of the fair one, and Nana herself had a hand in his begetting — from which it followeth that he was born to be occasion for envy. Thus when the queen of the air appeared in the lower realms to ask for him, Queen Ereshkigal was affrighted in the depths of her soul and clenched her teeth. She spoke to the gate-keeper: ' Deal with her according to custom.' And thus Astarte the queen had to pass through the seven gates, leaving behind at each a piece of her garments in the gate-keeper's hands: head-cloth, draperies, girdle, and clasps, and at the last door the loincloth, so that she came naked before Queen Ereshkigal to ask for Tammuz. Then these mistresses made claws of their fingers and flew at each other."

" They flew at each other with their nails? "

" Yes, one wound the other's hair round her hand and plucked at it, so great was their jealousy. But then Queen Ereshkigal had Queen Astarte locked in the lower regions with sixty locks and afflicted her with sixty diseases, so that the earth in vain awaited her return, and the shoots were imprisoned in the earth as the blossoms on the tree. At night the field grew white, for it bore salt. No grass sprung up nor any grain grew. The bull no longer covered the cow, nor the ass the she-ass, nor man woman. The womb was closed. Life, forsaken by desire, lay numb in affliction."

" Ah, Josephja, let us get on to the other hours of the tale and speak no more of this. I cannot hear that the ass

no longer crouched over the she-ass and that the earth was leprous with salt. I shall weep, and thou wilt be troubled with me."

" And God's messenger wept too, when he saw it," said Joseph, " and showed it weeping to the Lord of hosts. And He said: ' It is not good that the blossoms should be imprisoned on the tree. I will throw Myself into the breach.' And He intervened between the queens Ashtaroth and Ereshkigal and arranged that Adonai should spend a third of the year in the lower regions, a third on earth, and a third where he himself chose. Then Ishtar led back her beloved to the upper earth."

" But where did the shoot of the tree stay in the third part of the year? "

" That is hard to tell. In various places. There was much jealousy of him and many machinations of envy. Ashtaroth loved him, but more than one god led him astray and yielded him to no one."

" Gods made in man's image, and made like me? " asked Benjamin.

" Made like thee — it is a phrase which everybody would understand," answered Joseph. " But with gods and half-gods the thing is not so clear. For many call Tammuz not master but mistress, not lord but lady. By which they mean Nana the goddess, but at the same time the god who is with her, or even they mean him instead of her— for, indeed, is Ishtar a wife? I have seen pictures of her and she had a beard. So why do I not say: 'I saw pictures of him'? Jacob, our father, imagineth no picture. No doubt that is the wisest way. **But** we must speak, and often the clumsiness of our speech **doth** not serve the truth. Is Ishtar the morning star? "

" Yea, and the evening star as well."

" So she is both. And I saw written upon a stone about her: ' At evening a woman, in the morning a man.' How could one make an image of that — and what sort of words should one choose to express the truth? I saw an image of God, showing the water of Egypt that waters the field, and its breast was half a woman's and half a man's. Perhaps Tammuz was a maiden and became a youth only in death."

" Hath death then the power to alter nature? "

" The dead is God. He is Tammuz the shepherd, who is called Adonis here, but Osiris in the underworld. There he hath twisted moustaches, even if he was a woman when alive."

" Mami's cheeks, so thou hast told me, were very soft, and smelled like a rose-leaf when one kissed her. I will have no bearded image of her! If thou requirest it of me, I shall be rude and not comply."

" Foolish child," answered Joseph laughing, " I require it not from thee. I am only telling thee of the people of the lower land and their ideas concerning things not readily understood."

" My chubby cheeks are soft and tender too," Benjamin remarked, and felt his cheeks with both his little palms. " That cometh because I am not yet even what one could call young, but only a little urchin. But thou art young. And therefore keepest thou thy face clean of beard until thou art a man."

" Yea, I keep myself clean," answered Joseph. " And thou art clean. Thou hast cheeks soft as were Mami's, tender as though thou wast still an angel of the Most High God, the Lord, who hath betrothed Himself to our seed and to whom the same is betrothed in the flesh through the bond of Abraham. For He is to us a bride-

groom by the shedding of blood, full of ardour, and Israel the bride. But then is Israel a bride or a bridegroom? That is not readily understood, and one may make no image of it, for after all he is a bridegroom, circumcised for the bride, dedicate and set apart. If I try to make a mental picture of Elohim, He looks like my father, who loveth me more than he doth our fellows. But I know that it is Mami whom he loveth in me, because I am living while she is dead — and liveth now in another nature. I and the mother are one. But Jacob, when he looketh on me, thinketh of Rachel, just as the people hereabouts think of Nana when they call Tammuz the queen."

" I think of Mami, too, when I am tender with thee, Josephja, dear Jehosiph," Benjamin cried, and flung his arms about Joseph. " Behold, that is the substitute and the representation. For our soft-cheeked mother went down to death for the sake of my life, and the little urchin is an orphan and ill-doer even from the first. But thou art to me like her; thou leadest me by the hand to the grove, into the greenwood, into the wide world, thou tellest me of the feast of God in all its hours as they pass, and makest me garlands as she would have done — even though of course thou wilt not grant me the wear of every sort of green, but keepest something for thyself alone. Woe, alas, that it had to come over her with such sharpness by the way, so that she had to die! Would she had been like the tree that sprang up and opened out so conveniently and sent forth a shoot! What sort of tree saidst thou it was? My memory is as short as my legs and my little finger."

" Come, let us go now," Joseph said.

THE DREAM OF HEAVEN

AT that time the brothers had not yet begun **to call him** " **The** Dreamer "; that came a little later. At present they named him Utnapishtim, and Reader of Stones, and the mildness of these epithets, intended to give offence, shows the poverty of the brothers' imagination. They would gladly have called him worse if they could have thought of it, and so they were glad when they could take up the " Dreamer of Dreams," as having a little more edge. But that day was not yet come. His prattle to his father about the dream concerning the winter rains had not been enough to make them take notice of his presumption: moreover, up till now he had not talked in their presence of his dreams, though he had had them for a long time. The tallest of them he never did tell, either to them or to his father; it was the relatively modest ones which he repeated, to his own undoing. But to Benjamin he told all; in their private hours he told his little brother even the most shameless ones, which otherwise he had the good sense to suppress. It goes without saying that the little urchin listened with all his ears and heard with the utmost gratification, and that he never tired of asking to hear. But even so, weighed down as he already was by such mysterious doings as that of the myrtle garland, he never was able to get rid of a feeling of unease and anxiety as he listened, though he ascribed it to his own youngness and tried to overcome it. Unfortunately there was far too good ground for the feeling; probably nobody could have helped having some concern, in view **of the rank** egotism of the dream that follows, which

Benjamin, and Benjamin alone, got to hear more than once. Precisely the circumstance that he was the only hearer oppressed the child no little, however much he recognized the necessity and felt honoured by the fact.

Joseph told his dream for the most part with his eyes closed, in a voice now dying away, now suddenly swelling forth, with his fists held clenched on his chest, plainly in a state of great emotion, though he warned his hearer not to be carried away, but to listen quietly.

" Thou must not be startled," he said, " nor cry out; thou must neither weep nor laugh, else will I not speak."

" How should I? " Benjamin would answer each time. " I may be but a little urchin, but I am no simpleton. I know well what I shall do. So long as I feel quiet, I will forget that it is a dream, that I may enjoy it to the full. But so soon as I am frightened or feel myself getting hot and cold, then I will tell myself that it is all a dream which thou art telling me. And that will cool my mood, that I make no disturbance."

" I dreamed," Joseph began, " that I was in the fields with the flocks and was alone among the sheep that pastured on the slope where I lay. I lay on my belly with a straw in my mouth, and had my feet sticking in the air, and my thoughts were as carefree as my limbs. Then it happened that a shadow fell upon me and the spot where I lay, as of a cloud which darkened the sun; and therewith was a mighty rustling in the air above, and when I looked up, lo, it was an eagle which hovered over me with outspread wings, a huge bird, large as an ox, and with the horns of an ox on its head. This it was which overshadowed me. And there was all about me a great and violent roaring of wind, for it came straight over me,

seized me by the hips with its talons, and snatched me up from the earth with flapping pinions, from out of the middle of my father's flocks."

" Oh, wonder! " interjected Benjamin. " I do not mean that I should have been afraid; but didst thou not cry out: ' Help, help'? "

"That did I not," said Joseph, "for three reasons: for first there was nobody there on the wide fields to hear me; second, my breath failed, so that I could not have cried out had I wished; and, thirdly, I did not wish, for there was instead a great joy within me, as of something long awaited and hoped for. The eagle held me by my hips from behind and held me before him with his claws, his head above mine, while my legs hung down into the great wind of our flight. Sometimes he bent down his head to mine and looked at me with his steely eye. Then spoke he from his bronze beak: 'Do I hold thee well, my child, and not clutch thee too firmly with my resistless talons? I am taking great pains not to do so, to do no injury to thy flesh, for were I to hurt thee, then woe is me.' I asked: ' Who art thou? ' He answered: ' I am the angel Amphiel, to whom this shape hath been given for this present purpose. For thy sojourn, my child, is not upon earth; thou shalt be transported; such is the decree.'"

" ' But why? ' I asked.

"' Be silent,' said the uprushing eagle,' and keep thy tongue from questioning, as all the heavenly hosts are bound to do. For it is the decree of overwhelming favour, and there is no tongue-glibness availeth against it; if thou speakest and talkest, the decree cometh down heavy-handed; let no one blister his tongue by speaking mon-

strous words.' So then I held my peace at his words and was silent. But my heart was full of fearsome joy."

" I am glad thou sittest beside me, in proof that it was all a dream," Benjamin said. " But hadst thou then no sadness, to be mounting from the earth on the wings of eagles, and hadst thou no pain at all to be leaving us, even for instance thy little one here? "

" I was leaving you not," Joseph answered. " I was taken from you and could not help it; but it seemed to me also that I had expected it. It is true in a dream too that one hath not all the happenings before one at once, but only one thing, and with me that was the fearful joy in my heart. So great was it, and so great what happened to me, that it may be the things thou speakest of looked small by comparison."

" I am not angry with thee," Benjamin said; " I only look at thee amazed."

" Thanks, dear little Beni. And thou must remember that the ascent perhaps blotted out memory, for upward I went, without pause, in the eagle's talons, and after two double hours he said to me:' Look down, my friend, on land and sea. What hath become of them?' And lo, the land had become like a mountain in size and the sea like a river of water. And then after another two double hours the eagle said again: ' Look down, my friend, and see what hath become of ocean and shore.' And the land was become like to a plantation, and the sea like a gardener's ditch. But after two double hours again, when Amphiel the eagle bade me look down, lo and behold, there was the land like a flat cake and the sea the size of a bread-basket. After I saw this I was swept upwards again another double hour and then he said:' Look down,

my friend, and see that they have vanished, the land and the sea.' And they were vanished, but I was not afraid.

"Through Shejakim, the cloudy heavens, the eagle rose with me, and his pinions dripped with wet. There were golden gleams in the grey and white, for already on the cloudy islets about us stood single angels and members of the heavenly host, all clad in golden armour. These held one hand to their foreheads and peered after us, and animals crouched upon cushions and I saw them lift their noses and sniff the breeze of our upward flight.

"Through Rakia, the starry heaven, we rose; then came a thousandfold harmonious thunder in mine ear and all about us were stars and planets, in their musical numbers, and angels stood upon fiery footstools here and there, with tablets full of numbers in their hands, and pointed with their fingers the way to those oncoming mightily, for they might not turn round. And they cried to each other:' Blessed be the glory of the Lord where it resideth!' But when we passed they were silent and cast down their eyes.

" In the midst of my joy I was afraid and I asked the eagle: ' Whither then and how high wilt thou bear me? ' He answered: ' Endlessly high, into the highest height of the north of the world, my child. For so it hath been decreed, that I should bring thee straightway and without delay unto the uttermost height and breadth of Araboth, where are the storehouses of life, peace and blessedness, and unto the highest vault, into the midst of the great palace. There is the chariot and there the seat of glory, which from now on thou shalt daily serve, and shalt stand before Him and have power over the keys, to open and

to close the halls of Araboth — and whatever else One hath in mind concerning thee.' I said: [4] If then I am elected and chosen out among mortals, then so let it be. For indeed it cometh to me not quite without my expectation.'

" Then saw I a fortress, most awe-inspiring, built of ice-crystal, the battlements manned with warriors, whose wings covered their bodies down to their feet, and their legs stood straight, but their feet were round feet, as one might say, and they shone like polished bronze. And lo, two such stood together, resting their arms on their snaky swords, bold of countenance and with prideful furrows on their brows. The eagle said: 'They are Aza and Azael, two of the seraphim.' Then heard I how Aza spake to Azael: ' Five and sixty thousand miles have I smelt out his coming. But tell me, what is the smell of one born of woman and what the worth of one grown from the white drop of semen, that he may come up to the highest height of the heavens and take service amongst us? ' And Azael, in alarm, closed his lips with his finger. But Aza said: ' Not so, I will fly with thee before the face of the One and Only and will dare to speak; for I am an angel of the lightning, and my words are free.' And the two of them flew behind us.

"And through whatever heavens the eagle bore me by my hips, and through what ever ranks of hosts and swarms of fiery ministrants, all singing praises, their song was silenced on the instant as we flew past; and of the children of the upper air some attached themselves to us, so that we were soon accompanied by hosts of the winged before and behind, and I heard the rustling of their wings like the rushing of mighty waters.

" Oh, Benjamin, believe me! I saw the seven halls of Zebul, built in fire, and seven hosts of angels stood there, and seven fiery altars. There ruled the highest prince, named * Who is like God? ' in all the splendour of priestly vestments and made fiery sacrifice and caused columns of smoke to rise on the altar of the burnt sacrifice.

" I know not the sum of the double hours nor can bring to mind the number of the miles, until we reached the heights of Araboth and the seventh terrace and set foot upon its earth, which was so soft and light that it did good to the sole of my foot all through my body even to mine eyes, that I was like to weep. The children of light passed on before and behind us, leading and following. And one took me by the hand and led me, a strong angel, naked to the waist, in a golden skirt to the ankle-bones, with arm-bands and necklace and a round helmet resting on his hair, and the points of his pinions touching his ankles. He was heavy-lidded and fleshy-nosed, and his red mouth smiled as I looked upon him, but he did not turn his head towards me.

" I lifted up mine eyes in my dream and I saw, far on into endless space, light glittering upon arms and pinions, as of countless hosts encamped about their standard and singing full-throated praise and war; it all swam about me in the colours of milk and gold and roses. I saw wheels revolving, frightful in height and round; they glowed like turquoise and one wheel went into the other, four together, and they turned not when they went. And their rings were full of eyes round about them.

"But in the midst was a mountain, sparkling with fiery stones, and upon it a palace built out of the light of

sapphires, and thither we went attended by hosts before and behind. Its halls were full of messengers, guards, and keepers. We entered into the pillared hall in the centre, and its end and depth were not to be seen, for they led me in along the length of it, and cherubim stood on both sides in front of the columns and between them, each with six wings and all covered with eyes. Thus we passed between them, I know not how far, towards the throne of the Most High. And the air was jostling with the cries of those among the columns and of those who stood in hosts about the throne: ' Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.' The throng about the throne, however, was of seraphim, which with two wings covered their feet and with two their faces, but they peered a little through the feathers. And he who led me said to me: ' Cover also thy countenance, for it is fitting.[9] Then I put my hands before my face, but I peered out somewhat too between my fingers."

" Joseph," cried Benjamin, " for God's love, tell me didst thou see the countenance of the Universal? "

" I saw Him sitting in sapphire light upon the throne, formed like a man and created in his image, in majesty well known unto us. For His beard and the hair on His temples flowed down shining, and there were furrows in His cheek, good and deep. The flesh under His eyes was soft and weary-looking, and the eyes, not very large, but brown and bright, peered at me as though in concern as I came up."

Benjamin said: " It giveth me a picture of Jacob our father looking at thee."

" It was the father of the world," Joseph responded,

" and I fell upon my face. Then I heard the voice of One speaking and saying to me: ' Child of man, stand upon thy feet. For from now onwards shalt thou stand before My throne as *metatron* and child of God, and I will give thee power over the keys, to open and to close my Araboth, and thou shalt be set as commander over all the hosts, for the Lord hath pleasure in thee.' Then through the hosts of angels there went a rustling and a roaring like the sound of a great army.

" But now, behold, there came forth Aza and Azael, whom I had heard speaking together. And the seraph Aza said: ' Lord of all the worlds, who is this one that cometh to these upper regions, to take his service amongst us? ' And Azael added, and covered his face with his two wings to lessen the force of his words: ' Hath he not been begot of the white drop of semen and from the race of those who drink up injustice like water?' And I saw the countenance of the Lord cloud over with ill-will, and his words were proud and imperious as He answered and said: ' What are you, that you speak in the midst of My speaking? For I favour whom I favour and give grace to those to whom I give grace. Truly, sooner than you all will I make him prince and lord in the heights of heaven.'

"And again there went throughout the throng that wave of sound, and it was as though the wave retreated and went back. The cherubim beat their wings and all the children of heaven made the echoes ring with crying: * Glory be to the Lord where He resideth!'

" But the King went still further in His language and said: [4] Upon him do I lay My hand and bless him with three hundred and five and sixty thousand blessings

and make him great and exalted. For I will make him a throne, like to Mine own, with a tapestry over it wove out of pure brilliance, light, glory, and splendour. It I will set at the entrance to the seventh terrace, and seat him on it, for I will magnify him beyond all words. There shall go a cry before him from heaven to heaven; have a care and take it to heart: Henoch, My servant, have I named prince and mighty over all the princes of My kingdom and over all the children of light save at most the eight powerful and awful ones who are named with the name of God after the name of the King. And every angel that hath a plea to Me shall go first before him and speak with him. But every word which he speaketh to you in My name you shall heed and obey, for the princes of wisdom and reason stand at his side. Such the cry that shall go out before him. Give Me the robe and the crown.'

" And the Lord threw over me a priceless garment with all sorts of light woven into it, and arrayed me therein. And took a heavy ring with forty-nine stones of unspeakable brilliance. This with His own hands he set upon my head in addition to the robe, before the face of the whole heavenly host, and named me by my title: ' Yahu, the little one, the immanent prince.' For indeed He went very far.

" Then again the wave of the angels swept and shrank backwards and all the sons of heaven bowed themselves and likewise the princes among the angels, the mighty and great ones, the lions of God, greater than all the hosts, who have their service before the throne; furthermore the angels of fire, of hail, of lightning, of wind, of anger and wrath, of storm, snow, and rain, of day and of

night, of the moon and the planets, who guide the destinies of the world with their hands — all these trembled too and covered their faces as though blinded.

" But the Lord stood up from His throne and carried things to the uttermost, and went on to declare and to say: ' Lo there was in the valley a tender shoot of the cedar tree; this have I transplanted upon a lofty mountain-top, and made of it a tree within which the birds can dwell. And among the hosts he was the youngest in days, moons, and years; this youth made I greater than all other created beings, simply out of My incalculable will and predilection. I made him overseer over all the treasures of the halls of Araboth, and over all the treasures of life preserved in the heights of heaven. And it was moreover his office to bind the garlands round the heads of the sacred beasts, to adorn the wheels of splendour mightily, to clothe the cherubim in magnificence, to make to shine the firebolts of heaven and enfold the seraphim in pride. Each morning he put My throne to rights, when I would mount My seat to sit in it and hold review in all the height of My power. I garbed him in a priceless garment full of pride and glory. With a heavy crown I crowned his head and I gave him of the majesty, the pomp and magnificence of My throne. And My one sorrow is that I could not make higher his throne than Mine own and his splendour greater than Mine, for it is infinite. But his name was the Little God.'

" Upon this pronouncement came a mighty clap of thunder, and all the angels fell upon their faces. But the while the Lord so singled me out for joy, my flesh was on fire, my veins glowed bright, my bones were like a fire of juniper-wood, the casting up of my lashes like a

lightning-flash, my eyeballs rolled like balls of fire, the hair of my head was a lambent flame, my limbs were fiery pinions, and I awaked."

" I tremble in my whole body," said Benjamin, " from thy dream, Joseph, for it is beyond all bounds. Thou too tremblest somewhat, I should think, and art thyself somewhat pale. I can see that, for the places in thy face that are dark and shiny from the razor stand out very plainly."

" Absurd," said Joseph. " Shall I tremble at my own dream? "

" And wast thou then eternally glorified in those heights and thoughtest no more of thine own, for example of thy little one here? " asked Benjamin.

" Thou canst despite all thy simplicity imagine," responded Joseph, " that I was a little bewildered with all that arbitrary grace and favour and had not much time to think back. But I am convinced that in a little while I should have thought of you all and had you come after me and be exalted by my side, the father, the women, the brothers, and thou. That would be but a trifle, with all the power that I possessed. But hearken now, Benjamin, and be warned. In thee I confide everything, because thou art ripe to hear and understand. Thou must not prattle to our father or to the brethren concerning my dream which I have told thee, for they might put upon it a bad construction."

" Not for my life," Benjamin responded. " That were a mortal evil. All too easily thou forgettest the difference between an urchin and a simpleton, although it is an important one. Not even in a dream will it occur to me to prattle, not even a syllable of all that hath come to thee

in sleep. But thou thyself, Joseph, if I may say so, thou must be even more careful; do for my sake, my dearest brother. For it is easy for me not to forget, out of gratefulness for thy confidence. But it doth not prevent thee, who hast thyself dreamed and art fuller of it than I, to whom thou hast only lent of the splendour and brilliance of thy dream. Therefore think of thy little one, when it itcheth thee to relate in how much gladness the Lord chose thee out and exalted thee. I for my part find it fitting and I am angry with Aza and Azael that they spoke against it. But it might cloud the father's mind with care, as such things are wont to do, and the brothers would spit and spew out their disapproval and make thee to suffer in their envy and jealousy. For they are all louts in the sight of the Lord, and that we both well know."

4

THE DREAMER

THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS

NOT for the harvesting, as had been expected, but as early as the night of the spring full moon, the sons of Leah came tumbling heels over head back to Hebron from the plains of Shechem. They came, ostensibly, to eat the Passover lamb with their father and with him to observe the moon; but actually because they had heard an exciting piece of news, affecting all of them. They came to convince themselves, on the spot, of its truth, with their very own eyes, and to see if anything about it could be changed. The thing was so startling and portentous that the sons of the maids had found it of the first importance to select one of their number to make the four-day journey from Hebron to Shechem to fetch news. Of course it was the nimble Naphtali who had been chosen. At bottom, actually, it did not matter who went, or how fast. For Naphtali rode on an ass, as another would have done; whether a longer or shorter pair of legs hung down on either side the beast was of no importance. In any case the journey took four days. But it was with Naphtali, son of Bilhah, that the idea of celerity was bound up. The role of messenger was his traditionally; and as his tongue was as nimble as his legs, there

was perhaps some sense in the idea that he would, at least in the last moment, give the brothers the benefit of what he had learned a little quicker than anyone else.

What was it had happened? Jacob had made a present to Joseph.

That was nothing new. The father in wilful indulgence of his feeling toward his son, his lamb, his scion, his heavenly youth and son of a virgin — or whatever other appellations might occur to him — had always made him gifts and tender remembrances: sweetmeats, pretty bits of pottery and stones, purple laces, scarabs, and what not. Seeing them in his careless possession, the brethren would scowl. They would feel their rights curtailed and be aggrieved. To such fundamental and almost intentionally emphasized injustice they had had plenty of opportunity to accustom themselves. But this particular gift was so startling in its nature, one could not but fear that the act was decisive. It appeared to mean a slap in the face for them all.

Here is what happened. It was tenting weather, the latter rains had come on. Jacob had withdrawn himself in the afternoon into his house of hair, that secure and complete protection against the blessing-bringing downpour: a woven felt of black goats' hair, stretched over nine stout poles and fastened by strong ropes to pegs driven into the ground. It was the largest tent in the rather scattered settlement. Jacob lived in it alone, being a rich man and setting store by being able to give the women their separate dwelling. It was divided from front to back by a curtain hanging to the middle posts. One of the rooms served as private storeroom and supply chamber: camel saddles and pockets, unused carpets

rolled or folded, hand-mills, and other gear lay about and there were skins hung up, full of grain, butter, drinking-water, and palm wine made of soaked dates.

The other half was the dwelling of the bearer of the blessing; the conveniences it displayed were in strong contrast to the half-Bedouin kind of life to which he clung. Jacob needed ease. He disliked the effeminacy of city life, but that did not prevent him from wanting certain comforts when he withdrew from the world into himself for meditation and laboured upon his thoughts of God. Open in front to the height of a man, the chamber was warmly carpeted with felt and over that with gaily coloured rugs; some of these also hung upon the walls. A cedar-wood bedstead with covers and cushions and bronze feet stood in the background. Several earthen lamps with ornamental bases and shallow bowls with short snouts for the wick were always burning here, for it would have been unfitting and poverty-stricken for the bearer of the blessing to sleep in the dark; they were even lighted in the daytime, that they might lend no sinister meaning to the phrase: "Jacob's lamp is out." Painted jugs with handles stood on the flat top of a sycamore coffer, the sides of which were decorated with intaglio in blue glaze. Another tall-legged coffer, carved and written over with texts, had a vaulted lid. There did not lack a glowing brazier in the corner, for Jacob was inclined to chilliness. Low stools were everywhere, less as seats than as places whereon to lay things: on one stood a small incense-burner, shaped like a tower, out of whose little window-openings came clouds of smoke scented with cinnamon, styrax, and galbanum. On another was a valuable specimen of Phoenician art, which

only a well-to-do person could possess: a flat gold basin on a dainty stand. When you pressed the bottom with your hand, it showed a female figure playing on a lute.

Jacob and Joseph were sitting on cushions by a low tabouret at the entrance to the tent, playing a game with pieces spread out on the engraved bronze surface. He had summoned his son to play the game at which Rachel once had been his companion. Outside the rain plashed down on stones and shrubbery and olive trees, the blessing of God's moisture upon the corn of the valley, that it might bear up under the summer's heat until the harvest time. The wind lightly rattled the wooden rings on the roof, to which the tent ropes were fastened.

Joseph let his father win the game. He had purposely got into the field of the " evil eye " and put himself at a disadvantage; thus Jacob, though playing with his attention greatly distraught, had to his pleasurable surprise finally won the game. He admitted his absence of mind and said that the victory was his more by good luck than good management.

" Hadst thou not been defeated in time, my child," he said, " I must have been so; for my thoughts wandered and I made many blunders, whereas thou hast drawn cleverly and never failed to make good thy mischances. Thy way of playing reminds me of Mami's, she used so often to put me in the corner. Even her way of biting her little finger as she considered, and certain little stratagems she loved, thou hast and I am moved by them as I play."

" All that is as nothing," Joseph answered, stretching himself, putting his head back, one arm out sideways **and** the other bent to his shoulder. " The issue speaketh

against me. If my dear father won even with his thoughts distracted, how would it have gone with the child if he had had his full attention upon the game? The end would have come quickly."

Jacob smiled. " My experience," he said, " is longer and my school the best, for as a boy I played with Yitzchak, thy grandfather upon my side, and after that often with Laban, thy grandfather on the side of my beloved, in the land of Naharain, beyond the water; he too played with great deliberation."

Jacob too, more than once, had let Laban and Yitzchak win, when he was wanting to put them in a good mood; but it never occurred to him that Joseph might have done the same.

" It is true," he went on, " that I played badly today. More than once a thought came over me that made me forget the position of the pieces. What I was thinking had to do with the approaching feast and the night of sacrifice, when after sunset we slaughter the sheep and dip the sprig of hyssop into the blood to strike it upon the two side posts, that the Avenger may pass over. For it is the night of the Passover, and the substitution of the sacrifice, in token that the firstling is slain in expiation for man and beast whom it lusteth him to slay. Upon all this I fell a-musing, for lo, a man will do much and know not what he doth. Yet were he to know and think about it, it might be that his entrails would turn over within him and he would be sick to his very bottom, as it hath happened to me many a time in my life, and the first time was when I heard that Laban, at Shinar beyond the river Prath, had slain his first-born little son as a sacrifice and buried it in a jar in the foundations to bring

good fortune to his house. But dost thou think it brought him blessing? No, but harm, hindrance, and adversity; and had I not come and given a little life to house and business, it would all have foundered in misery. Never again would he have been fruitful with his wife Adina. And yet Laban would not have walled up his little son had such a deed not brought his forbears blessing in earlier times."

"Thou sayest it," Joseph responded. He had folded his hands at the back of his neck. "And it is clear to me, from thy words, how this came to pass. Laban behaved according to outworn custom, and thereby committed serious blunders. For the outworn is repulsive to the Lord; He is already beyond it and wisheth us to be so too, and He rejecteth and curseth it. Therefore, if Laban had understood himself and the times, he would have slaughtered instead of his son a goat or a kid and struck the blood upon the posts and threshold; then would he have been glad and his incense would have mounted up to heaven."

"Again," said Jacob, "thou sayest it and takest the thoughts and the words out of my mouth. For the Avenger lusteth not alone after the beast, but also after the blood of man; and we appease his desire not only in respect to the flocks through the blood on the door-posts, but also by the sacrificial meal, which we eat and devour in haste by night that nothing of the roast meat may remain over by the morning. But when we think of it, what sort of roast meat is that, and doth the lamb atone only for the flock when we slay it? What should we slay and eat, if we were mad like Laban, and what was slain and eaten in more indecent times? Do we know what we

do in the feast, when we slay and eat, and would not our very inwards come uppermost if we thought of it, so that we vomited? "

"Let us slay and let us eat," said Joseph, lightly, in a high-pitched voice, rocking himself in his hands at the back of his neck. "The feast and the feasting are both good, and if they are also salvation, then let us joyfully save ourselves from being obscene, by dint of understanding the Lord and the times in which we are. Lo, there is a tree," he cried, and pointed with outstretched arm into the tent, as though a tree actually stood there, " splendid in trunk and crown, planted by the fathers for the delight of those coming after. Its tips move and sparkle in the wind, its roots cleave to the kingdom of the earth, in darkness, in the dust, and among the stones. But doth the blithe tip know overmuch of the dirt-encrusted root? No, for it hath come out beyond it with the Lord, swayeth in the air, and thinketh not thereupon. So, in my view, is it with the tradition and the indecency. But if we want to have the pious tradition taste well in our mouths, by all means let us leave the underneath things quietly underneath."

" Thy parable is charming," Jacob said, nodding. He stroked his beard, holding it at one side and letting it glide through the hollow of his hand. " Thy words are witty and well invented. But even so, we must still meditate, still stoop under the cares and the unrest which were Abraham's portion and must be ours for ever and ever, that we may free ourselves according to the Lord's will; and it may be are already free of that from which He would release us: namely, care. But say, who is the Avenger and what is his passing over? Doth not the

moon, on the night of the feast, go full and beauteous through the pass which is the northernmost point and zenith of his way, where he himself turneth in his fullness? But the northernmost point is NergaPs, the murderer; the night is his, Sin ruleth for him, Sin is Nergal at the time of this feast, and the Avenger, who passeth over and whom we appease, he is the Red One."

" That is clear," Joseph said. " We hardly think of it, but so he is."

" Such was the unrest," went on Jacob, " that was distracting me as we played. For it is the stars that determine this feast for us, the moon and the Red One; and on that night they change places. But shall we then throw kisses to the stars and celebrate their histories? Must we not rather distress ourselves over the Lord and the time, whether we do truly and in fact understand them and not transgress against both, considering that we continue out of sheer idle habit in the ritual indecency from which He would win us? Sometimes I seriously ask myself if I ought not to call the people together under the tree of wisdom, that they might hear my misgivings and hearken to my cares in the matter of the feast Pesach."

" My dear father," said Joseph, as he bent over and laid his hand on the old man's beside the board which registered his defeat, " is much too precise in his interpretations; I must pray him not to let himself be moved to undue haste and so to destruction. If thy child may regard himself as having been asked, then he would advise that the feast be spared and not too hotly attacked on account of its legends, instead of which perchance another might come up, which then thou wouldst relate at the roast meal: for instance the saving of Isaac, which would

be very suitable. Or else we wait on time, whether God might not for once glorify Himself in us by a great redemption and deliverance; which then we would make the basis of the feast and its legend, and sing songs of rejoicing. Have I, in my folly, spoken consolingly? "

"Thy words," responded Jacob, "are like balsam: very sage and comforting, which is what I mean by balsamic. For thou spokest for the custom and yet at the same time for the future, and that shall be reckoned to thy honour. And spokest at the same time for an abiding, which is at the same time a station on the way; and thereover my soul smileth at thine, Joseph-el, thou shoot of the tenderest tree. Let me kiss thee! "

And across the board he took Joseph's lovely head between his hands and kissed him, rejoicing in his son from the depths of his heart.

" If only I knew," Joseph said, whence wisdom cometh to me at this hour, or the small sagacity I have to meet the shrewdness of my lord in his speech! Thou saidst that thy thoughts wandered during our game; then, to be frank, so did mine. They kept slipping aside from the pieces, and the Elohim alone know how I managed to keep going on so long."

" Whither then, my child, went thy thoughts? "

" Ah," answered the youth, " thou canst easily guess. A word of thine itcheth in mine ear day and night; a word which my father spoke of late to me by the fountain, and which hath robbed me of peace, so that curiosity plagueth me wherever I go, for it was a word of promise."

"What said I, then, and what promise gave I to thee? "

"Oh, thou knowest — I can tell by thy face thou knowest! Thou haddest in mind, so saidst thou — well, canst guess now? —' I purpose to give thee somewhat to make thy heart rejoice, and which will be fitting unto thee.' Thus word for word didst thou speak. I remember it only too well, it keepeth on tickling me in my ear. What then did my little father mean with this promise of his? "

Jacob reddened, and Joseph saw it. It was a slight rosy flush, which ran up into the grey hair on his cheeks, and his eyes clouded over in mild confusion.

" It was nothing, nothing at all,[9]' he said defensively. " My child is indulging in vain imaginings. What I said was mere chance, uttered without purpose or significance. Have I not given thee various things, as my heart prompteth me? Thus, then, was the meaning of what I said, that I might give thee something some day, at a fitting hour. . . ."

" Nay and indeed," Joseph cried, sprang up and embraced his father. " This wise and good man who sitteth here cannot speak without meaning — that would be unheard of. As though I had not seen plain and clear as he spoke, that he spoke not emptily, but had a plain thing in his mind's eye, beautiful and definite, not just anything at all, but some particular and splendid thing which he thought of for me. But not only hast thou thought of, thou hast spoken and promised. May I not know what is mine and what awaiteth me? Dost thou think I could find rest or give thee any peace until I knew? "

" How thou teasest me," said Jacob, hard-pressed. " Shake me not so, and take away thy hands from the

lobes of mine ears, that I may not look like a child in thy hands. Thou wouldst know — well, why shouldst thou not know? I will tell thee, I will admit that I did have one clear thing in my mind, and not anything indefinite. Hearken then, and stand down upon the ground. Hast thou heard of Rachel's *ketonet passim?* "

" A garment of Mami's? Something she wore? Oh, I understand: thou wilt make me from her robe . . ."

"Hearken, Jehosiph! Thou dost not understand. Let me tell thee. When I had served seven years for Rachel and the time approached when I should receive her in the Lord, Laban spoke to me:' I will give thee a veil, wherein the bride may veil herself and dedicate herself to Nana and be a consecrated one. Long ago,' he said, ' I bought the *hoik* from a pilgrim and preserved it in the chest, for it is precious. It is supposed to have belonged to a king's daughter in times past and been the maiden garment of a princess, a thing easy to believe, so skilfully is it embroidered everywhere with all sorts of emblems of idols. But she shall veil her head in it and be as one of the *enitu* and like to the bride of heaven in the tower Etemenanki.' In some such words spoke the devil Laban to me. And lied not in these words which he spake, for Rachel received the garment and was a splendour incomparable in it as we sat at the wedding feast and I kissed the image of Ishtar. But when I handed the bride the flower and lifted her veil that I might see her with my seeing hands, lo, it was Leah, whom the devil had craftily brought into the bedchamber, so that I was happy only in my imagination, but not in the fact. All which maketh one to lose one's reason to think upon, so I pass it over. But at the time I was glowing in the sun

of my fancied bliss, and I folded the sacred weave and laid it upon a chair and to the bride I said: * We shall hand it down through the generations, and countless blissful brides shall wear it.'"

" And did Mami too wear the wrap at her time? "

" It is no wrap, it is a sumptuousness, a piece of material to be used as one will, ankle-length, with sleeves, and one can put it on as suiteth one's taste and one's looks. Mami? Yea, she wore it and kept it; when she went away, when we broke the dusty bolts and swindled that devil Laban, she faithfully packed it up and took it with her. Always it went where we went, and as Laban preserved it for years in his chest, so have we done."

Joseph's eyes darted about through the tent and rested on the coffers. He asked:

" Is it close to us? "

"Not far off."

" And my lord will give it me? "

" I have designed it for the child."

" Designed and promised."

" But for later, not this very minute," cried Jacob in his distress. " Be reasonable, child, and let it stop for the moment at the promise. Lo, things are in the balance, and the Lord hath not yet pronounced upon them in my heart. Thy brother Reuben fell away and I was driven to take from him his right as first-born. Is it then thy turn next, that I should give thee the right and array thee in the *ketonet?* One might say no, for after Reuben came Judah and then Simeon and Levi. One might answer yes, for after Leah's first-born fell and was cursed, then came the turn of Rachel's first-born. But all that is doubtful and unclear. We must wait and let the signs make it

plain to our understanding. But if I garb thee in the *ketonet,* then might the brethren falsely interpret it in the sense of the blessing and the choice and rise up in jealousy against thee and against me."

" Against thee? " asked Joseph, in great astonishment. " I almost think that my ears deceive me. Art thou not our father and our lord? If they murmur, canst thou not rise up and overwhelm them with thy words and say unto them: ' I choose whom I choose and show favour to whom I show favour? Who are ye that ye oppose me? Sooner than any of you will I clothe him in the garment and with his mother's *ketonet passim.'* But I think not that mine ears deceive me, they are young and keen. And especially when my dear father speaketh I prick them up. Saidest thou once to the bride: 'Countless ones among beloveds shall wear it? ' Or saidest thou not? Tell me, then! Who, saidest thou, shouldst wear it?"

" Be quiet, tempter. Leave me, and coax me not, that thy folly may not overflow and fall upon mine own head."

" Dear father — let me see it! "

"See it? Well, seeing is not having. But seeing is wanting to have. Be reasonable."

" Shall I not see what is mine and promised unto me? Shall we make a bargain? I will sit here and not stir from the spot. Then thou goest and showest me the festal garment, holding it up before thee as the merchants in the bazar at Hebron display their wares and drape the cloth upon themselves before the eyes of him who coveteth it. But he is poor and cannot buy. So then the merchant putteth it away again."

" So be it, in the name of the Lord," said Jacob. " Al-

though an onlooker would think thou tookest liberties with me. Stop where thou art. Squat upon thy heels, put thy hands behind thee. Then shalt thou see that which perhaps, under certain circumstances, might be thine."

" What is mine already," Joseph cried, " only that I may not yet enjoy it."

He rubbed his eyes with his knuckles, to see the better. Jacob went over to the round-topped coffer, slipped the bolt, and flung back the lid. On top were woollen things, mantles, covers, skirts, head-cloths, smocks, which he dropped, folded, on the floor in a pile. He found the veil where he knew that it lay, took it, turned round, and spread out the folds.

The lad stared in amaze. He drew a long breath through his open, laughing mouth. The metal embroideries glittered in the lamplight. The flashing silver and gold blotted out at times the quieter colours as the old man held it up in his unsteady arms: the purple, white, olive-green, rose-colour, and black of the emblems and images, the stars, doves, trees, gods, angels, men, and beasts, lustrous against the bluish mist of the background.

" Ye heavenly lights! " Joseph burst out. " How beautiful! 0 dearest father merchant, what showest thou to thy customer, there under thy arch? There is Gilgamesh, with the lion in the bend of his arm, I recognize him from here. And there is a man fighting with a griffin and swinging a club. Wait, wait! Ye heavenly hosts, what animals are here! I see the paramours of the goddess — bat, steed, wolf, and bright-coloured bird. Let me look — ah, let me look! I cannot make out, I cannot distinguish. And my eyes burn from staring across such a

distance. Is that the scorpion-human pair, with the prickly tails? It seemeth so, but I cannot be certain, though mine eyes water with staring. One moment, merchant, while I hitch a little nearer, still with my hands behind my back. But oh, ye Elohim, how it groweth in beauty as I come nearer it! And all becometh clear. What are the bearded spirits doing at the tree? They are fructifying it . . . And what is it that is written here?' I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?' Wonderful! Always Nana, with sun, moon, and dove. Ah. I *must* stand up! Merchant, I *must* get up, else I cannot see the top: the date palm, out of which a goddess stretcheth her arms with food and drink. I may touch it, may I not? There is no charge, I hope, if I lift it up, ever so carefully, in my hand, to feel its weight and its mixture of lightness and heaviness. . . . Merchant, I am poor, I cannot buy. Merchant, give it to me! Thou hast so many wares — give me the veil! Or be so kind to lend it me, that I show myself to the people to the honour of thy shop. No, thou wilt not — thou art adamant? Or waverest thou, perhaps, a tiny bit, and despite all thy severity wouldst like to see me in it? No, I am wrong, thou swayest a little only from the holding up and spreading out. Thou hast strained thyself much too long already. Give it to me. How doth one wear it, how put it on? Like this — or like this? Or this way? How do I please thee? Am I the gay shepherd-bird in the many-coloured coat? Mami's raiment — how doth it become her son? "

He looked, of course, like a young god. The effect he produced was only to be expected, and his eagerness to bring it about did anything but strengthen Jacob's resist-

ance. We shall do well to recognize at once the irresistible guile by which he had finessed the garment out of Jacob's hands into his own. And this was scarcely done when the thing was on his back — put there by two or three deft and assured motions which themselves evinced great skill in the art of dressing. How well it set him off! It covered his head and wrapped his shoulders, the silver doves glittered and the gay embroideries glowed, it fell in folds about his youthful form and made him look taller than he really was. But not only so. For the festal garment became his face to such an extent that nobody who saw him could have disputed the popular verdict upon his charms. It made him so lovely and so well-favoured that the phenomenon was actually no longer quite earthly; in fact it bordered on the supernatural. Worst of all, the likeness to his mother — her look, her forehead and brows, the shape of her mouth — had never stood out so clearly as in this dress; poor Jacob was so smitten by it that his eyes overflowed, and he thought nothing else than that he was beholding Rachel in Laban's house, on the day of the fulfillment.

It was the mother-goddess who stood there before him smiling, in the boy's lovely guise, and asked:

" I have put on my coat — shall I take it off? "

" No, no, keep it, keep it! " the father said. The young god rushed away. Jacob lifted his brow and his hands, and his lips moved in prayer.

THE NIMBLE RUNNER

THE excitement was tremendous. The first to see Joseph in his coat of many colours was Benjamin; but Benjamin

was not alone. Joseph found him in the women's tent, with the concubines. He entered their quarters in his new finery and said: " Greeting to you all. I have just come by chance to look in on my little brother. Lo, thou art here, my Beni; I only wanted to ask how you all are. So you are combing flax? And Turturra is helping? Do any of you know the whereabouts of old Eliezer? "

" Turturra " meant " little one " — Joseph often called his brother by this Babylonian pet name. And Turturra was already giving vent to long-drawn-out cries of admiration. Bilhah and Zilpah chimed in. He wore his robe with a careless air, drawn up and thrust through the girdle of his smock.

" What are you all chirping about and making eyes like cart-wheels? Oh, you mean my garment, Mami's veil *ketonet?* I am wearing it for a while, Israel having made me a present of it a few minutes ago."

" Joseph-el, thou sweetest lord, son of the favourite," cried Zilpah. " Hath Jacob then given thee the coat of many colours, in which he first received Leah my mistress? He hath done wisely and justly indeed, for the heart melteth within one at the sight so that one could not imagine another wearing it. One of those now on a journey perhaps, the offspring of Leah, from whom Jacob lifted it for the first time? Or my Gad or Asher, born on Leah's lap? The very idea maketh one to smile, albeit ruefully."

"Joseph-ja, loveliest one! " Bilhah cried. "Nothing more beautiful can be conceived than thy looks in this robe! One is tempted to prostrate oneself at the sight; **and** especially I, who am only a handmaid, though **sister and favourite** to Rachel thy mother, to whom by

the power of Jacob I bore thy elder brothers Dan and Naphtali. They too will fall down before thee or be like to it, when they see the youth in their mother's wedding garment. Go then swiftly and show thyself to them unawares, while they are yet all innocence and dream not that our lord hath chosen thee. Likewise thou shouldst go across country and show thyself to Leah's six red-eyed sons, that thou mayest hear their exulting shouts and their hosannas may strike upon thine ear."

It is almost incredible, but Joseph did not notice the thick layer of bitterness and spite which coated the women's words. His self-absorption, his blissful though none the less reprehensible self-confidence made him deaf and unresponsive to any warning. He sucked up the honey of their words, quite convinced that he deserved it all. It never occurred to him to look beneath the surface. But precisely therein lay the blame. Indifference to the inner life of other human beings, ignorance of their feelings, display an entirely warped attitude toward real life, they give rise to a certain blindness. Since the days of Adam and Eve, since the time when one became two, nobody has been able to live without wanting to put himself in his neighbour's place and explore his situation, even while trying to see it objectively. Imagination, the art of divining the emotional life of others — in other words, sympathy — is not only commendable inasmuch as it breaks down the limitations of the ego; it is always an indispensable means of self-preservation. But of these rules Joseph knew nothing. His blissful self-confidence was like that of a spoilt child; it persuaded him, despite all evidence to the **contrary, that** everyone **loved** him, even more **than**

themselves, and that therefore he needed to take no thought of them. To pardon such conduct as his on the score of his beautiful eyes would be weakness indeed.

But with Benjamin the thing was different. Here for once complete whole-heartedness was in place. He cried out:

" Jehosiph, thou heavenly one! Not as in our waking life but as in a dream it seemeth; and the Lord hath wrapped thee in a garment of splendour, woven full of coloured lights and hath put upon thee a mantle full of pride and glory. It must ravish the soul of a little urchin like me. Go not, I pray thee, to the sons of Bilhah, and leave the sons of Zilpah yet in ignorance a little. Stay by thy little brother, that I may admire thee the more and look my fill! "

All that Joseph might take at its face value; it rang true. Even so, he might draw a warning from his little brother's simple words. For we cannot help feeling that Benjamin was afraid of the meeting of the brothers and wanted at least to delay it. Joseph himself possessed enough instinct, if not enough insight, not to appear straightway before the children of the maids in his new garment. With the exception of a few underlings, who saw him in passing and outdid themselves in adulation, hand-kissings, and obvious envy, the only person who beheld him that day was Eliezer. The old man fell into a prolonged nodding, which might be taken for approval, but equally for a sort of general contemplation of mankind and his destiny. He then, with an abstracted and godlike mien, began to enlarge upon his so-called recollections, those which the sight of the garment called up in him. How, that is, he, Eliezer, had once as wooer in

Isaac's stead brought Rebecca up out of Harran's underworld, and when they had reached the upper regions and the bridegroom was approaching, had shrouded her in the veil. And for what reason? That Isaac might know her. For how should he have known her and lifted her veil if she had veiled herself beforehand? Eliezer's countenance, as he talked, was so unmoved that it looked like a false face, which you could perhaps take off and show another one beneath it. " A marvellous thing, my child," said he, " hath Israel given thee; for in the veil is life and death. But death is in life, and life in death, and he who hath learned this truth hath penetrated the mysteries. The sister-mother-bride had to unveil herself and stand naked at the seventh gate of hell and in the face of death. But when she returned again to the light she veiled herself, in token of life. Lo, the seed-corn, how it sinketh to earth and dieth, that it may arise again for the harvest time. For the sickle lieth already close to the blade — the sickle which waxeth in the darkness of the moon as young life, yet is it death and taketh the manhood of the father that it may assume new lordship over the world; and from the harvest of the sickle rolleth the fruit of life and death. Thus the veil signifieth life after the unveiling in death, and therewith already possesseth knowledge and death, since after all in knowledge is procreation and life. A great thing hath the father given thee, he hath given light and life when he veiled thee with the veil which thy mother had to leave behind her in death. Therefore cherish it, my child, that no one rend it from thee and that death may not know thee."

" Thanks, Eliezer," answered Joseph. " Many thanks, wise old servant, who in Abram's train struck down the

kings and toward whom the earth did spring! How weightily thou speakest of all these mingled things, of veil and sickle and seed-corn; rightly too, since these things are related and are one in God, though to our eyes they are embroidered many-fold upon the veil. But now, as for me, I will take off my coat and cover me with it upon my couch, that I may sleep beneath it as sleepeth the earth beneath the world-mantle of the stars."

Thus he did. And thus they found him sleeping, the children of the maids, when, instructed by their mothers, they entered the tent which he shared with them. The four brothers, Dan, Asher, Gad, and Naphtali, stood at his bedside, and the youngest, Asher the sweet-tooth, barely twenty-two, held the lamp to lighten his sleeping face and the gay robe that covered him.

" Behold," he said, " there hast thou it! It is precisely and no other than what the women said, when they told us that the coxcomb had shown himself to them in his mother's *ketonet passim.* He hath spread it out and sleepeth beneath it the sleep of the just, with a sanctimonious expression on his face. Is there any more doubt? Our father, poor man, hath given it him, beguiled thereto with honeyed words. Oh, for shame! For we feel equally angered over this abomination that hath come to pass; and it is Asher who taketh our combined anger into his mouth and spitteth it out over the head of this offence that here sleepeth — may it give him at the very least bad dreams! "

He greatly loved, this Asher, to be of one mind and heart with his fellows and to strengthen his sense of unity by expressing it in words which should do full justice to the common opinion; this gave him a feeling of

warmth and comfort even in the midst of his rage, and the characteristic harmonized with his humid lips and eyes and his love of eating. He went on:

" So I have cut pieces out of live rams and sheep and eaten them, have I? He told that to our dear, good, credulous father, who then gave him the *ketonet* as a reward for his lying. And so with each of us: he hath charged each one of us with some fault, and now lieth there under the garment gained by his falsity and the evil reputation he hath given to us. So then, brethren, let us stick together and be of one mind in our wrath, and let me name him by some name that shall ease all our hearts — such as [4] thou — puppy'! "

He had wanted to call him, quite simply, " thou dog "; but at the last minute a fear of Jacob made him soften the epithet.

It was Dan who spoke next. He was seven-and-twenty, the same age as Leah's Simeon. He wore a tight-fitting embroidered smock; had no moustaches, but a pointed beard, and his prominent eyes lay close together at the root of a crooked nose. " It may be," said he, " that I am called snake and otter, forsooth, because I am said to be somewhat malicious. But what is that compared with him who lieth here? He is a monster in the guise of a lovely youth. Cursed be that lying shape, which maketh the folk to ogle and gape and bewitcheth our father utterly! I would I knew the charm which could force him to reveal his true form! "

Then Gaddiel took his turn, a sturdy fellow, a year older than Asher, with an expression of rude honesty. He wore a sugar-loaf cap and had a military air, due to the baldric round his short coat, and the breast-plates

he had sewn upon it. His red and sinewy arms, with their stubby and equally sinewy hands, stuck out from the short sleeves of his coat. " Let me advise thee, Asher," he said, " to take heed to thy lamp, that thou lettest no oil drip down, to awaken the sleeper with its smart. For if he awake, he shall feel my fist straightway in his jaw, and it will swell till he seem to have a lump of flour in it, and so remain till nine days from tomorrow, as sure as my name is Gad. For I am hot with rage and sick to death at sight of him and of the coat beneath which he sleepeth, the price of his shameless betrayal of our father. I am no coward; but something, I know not what, rumbleth in my belly and admonisheth me out of my entrails. Here we stand, we brethren, and there lieth he — the rascal, the coxcomb, the puppy, the turner of heads — and he hath the coat. Are we to bow down before him? I keep hearing those words ' bow down' as though some cursed insect kept buzzing them in mine ear. Therefore it is that my hand itcheth to be at his ear; that would be the right treatment for him and would satisfy the hatred in my belly."

The straightforward Gad had uttered much profounder things than any that Asher — despite all the latter's need to consolidate opinion and achieve unity through the spoken word — had even tried to reach. For Asher's one thought was to call out affection and produce solidarity by expressing only what was simple and easy to grasp. Gad took more trouble. He struggled to get at the things that tormented and frightened them all, things which lay far beneath the simple emotions of envy and rage. He wrestled to find words for obscure memories, anxieties, apprehensions; for some shadowy train of as-

sociations which should combine the essence of manifold conceptions — such as first-born, deception, exchange, world-dominion, brother-vassalage — and which, while not properly recognizable as either past or future, as legend or as prediction, yet perversely evoked the words " bow down," " they shall bow before thee." The others felt greatly, even inexplicably challenged by the power of Gad's words. Especially the long, lean, stoop-shouldered Naphtali, who was already shifting from one foot to the other, so greatly had Gad's words made him tingle in all his limbs with eagerness to be off. He had the instinct of a carrier-pigeon, and his calves had for long been fairly twitching and his body shaken. His imagination was completely controlled by the conceptions of space and separation. He regarded space as his most familiar enemy, and himself as the appointed means of its conquest. In other words, he felt it his mission to even out those differences in men's knowledge which were effected by distance. When anything happened in the place where he was, he immediately connected it in his mind with some distant spot where nothing of it was yet known. And to be in such a state of so to say vegetable unconsciousness was intolerable in Naphtali's eyes; it made him quiver with the urgency of striding out with his legs and of loosening his tongue to set things right; in order wherever possible to equalize the sum of man's information by spreading it from where it existed to regions still disgracefully ignorant. The place in point at present was that where the rest of the brethren were; straightway, and before any of the others, he thought of it. They were in ignorance, they knew nought, thanks to the deplorable working of space and distance, but they

must learn speedily. In his mind Naphtali was already running.

" Listen and hearken, brethren, children and friends," he began, in his quick, soft voice. " We are standing here and see with our eyes what has happened, we are on the spot. But at this very moment in the vale of Shechem the red-eyed brothers are sitting about the fire, chatting of this and that and the other, of anything save the fact that Jacob hath exalted Joseph's head, to their own undoing. For they know it not, and however loud their shame crieth aloud, theirs and ours, they hear it not. But shall we then content ourselves with the advantage we have, saying: * They are distant and thus foolish, for to be distant is to be foolish,' and let it go at that? No, for we must tell them, that it may be there as it is here and that they may not go on living as though it were not. Send me, send me! I will speed to them across country and give them word that shall lighten their darkness and make them to shriek aloud. But to thee, hastening back again, will I announce how they shrieked."

The others were of the same mind. The red-eyed brethren must hear the truth. Indeed it almost touched them more closely than it did the present four. Naphtali knew the road. They would tell their father that he had gone on pressing business. He scarcely slept for impatience and saddled his ass before dawn; when Joseph awaked under his world-mantle he was already far off, and knowledge well on its way to the distant brethren. Nine days later, exactly on the day of the full moon, they all returned to Hebron, together with the messenger — Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun — and peered dourly about them. Naphtali said that die

twins — Simeon and Levi, so called because they were only a year apart — had roared like bulls on hearing the news.

OF REUBEN'S ALARM

JOSEPH did have enough sense and understanding not to appear at once before his brothers in the coat, though he had the greatest desire to do so. A faint doubt whether they really did love him so much more than themselves that they would have no other feeling than pure joy at his elevation made him lay aside the garment for the time and greet them in his everyday clothes.

" Greetings, dear sons of Leah, brothers and strong men," he addressed them. "Welcome to our father's house. A few of you at least I will kiss."

And he went among them and kissed three or four on the shoulder, they standing like images and not touching him at all, save Reuben, now a man of twenty-nine years. Without any particular change of feature he lifted one heavy hand when he felt Joseph's kiss on his shoulder, and stroked the lad's hair lightly, almost furtively. He was tall and heavy and wore a skin apron, with leather straps wound round his powerful legs. His face was red, clean-shaven, fleshy, and muscular; it had a pugnacious expression, yet the rather blunt profile suggested both dignity and self-consciousness. His low brow was darkened by a mop of curly black hair. Jehudah, the next elder son, but three years younger than Reuben, was quite as tall, but walked with a stoop and showed traces of suffering about his nostrils and lips. He wore a cloak, in which he wrapped his hands, and a close-fitting cap from which a shock of red-brown hair streamed out like

a mane. Red-brown too was the heavy, pointed beard and the narrow, drooping moustaches that covered the thick red lips. These last spoke of sensuality, but the nose, finely shaped and delicately arched, which drooped over them, suggested some gift of the spirit; while the eyes, large and prominent and heavy-lidded, like a stag's, had a melancholy cast. Like several of his brothers and half-brothers, Judah was already a married man. Reuben, for instance, had wooed a daughter of the soil and with her raised up several children to Abram's god, among them the lads Hanoch and Pallu, whom Jacob sometimes trotted on his knees. Simeon had married a maid of Shechem, named Bunah, carried off as booty when they had sacked the town; Levi a worshipper of Yahu, who passed for a grandchild of Eber; Naphtali a young female whose origin Jacob somewhat arbitrarily derived from Nahor, brother of the Chaldaean; and Dan quite simply a Moabite woman. It would not have been possible to compass marriages entirely irreproachable from the religious point of view; and in Judah's case Jacob had perforce to be satisfied with any which might bring the youth some tranquillizing and steadying influence, for his sex life had from the first been marked by disorder and suffering. His relations with the love-goddess kept him strained and unsatisfied, he writhed beneath her lash and was her unsubmissive slave — hence the deep conflict in his soul and the lack of unity in his character. His intercourse with the consecrate and the whores in the temples of Ishtar brought him into contact with the follies and abominations of the worship of Baal and the shamelessness of Canaan; and nobody, not even Jacob himself, could find that more repugnant than did

Judah, he being of a religious temperament, seeking a pure and reasoned worship and from the bottom of his heart abominating Sheol and the follies and mysteries with which the folk defiled themselves. Moreover he felt he had good reason to think well of himself; for since the stumbling of Reuben and the night when the twins had plundered Shechem, there was something to be said for the view that Judah, the fourth son, was next in line for the blessing and the bearer of the promise. Of course, these things were not said among the brethren, no claims being put forward save in the form of their common ill-will against Rachel's son.

Through one of his shepherds, named Hirah, from the village of Adullam, Judah had got to know a Canaanite man called Shuah, and Shuah's daughter found favour in his eyes. He married her, with Jacob's consent. Up to now she had borne him two sons, whom he brought up in the fear of God. But just as Ishmael had resembled Hagar, so these sons were like their mother and not like their father. At least Judah thought and said so, saying that they were an evil generation, children of Canaan, of the bad breed of Baal, Sheol, and Melech, though it was possible that the trouble was not all of Shuah's daughter's making. She was now pregnant with a third child, and Judah already looked forward with misgivings to its appearance. In short, the shadow of melancholy lay in Judah's eyes, but that did not make him better-natured nor lead him to stroke Joseph's hair, as Reuben had done. He said:

" Well, writing-man, is it seemly of thee to come thus before thy elders, in an ordinary smock full of ink-spots, they having been long away and now are returned home?

Carest thou so little to please us, when thou art so ready to curry favour among common folk with fine garments? We hear thou hast fine and dazzling raiment in thy chest, worthy of a prince's son. Wouldst thou insult us by being so niggardly with it at our home-coming? "

Next spoke Simeon and Levi, the twins, leaning upon their heavy cudgels; their eyes were hot, their tattooed breasts glistened with oil, their whole bodies were marked with scars. They burst out together into a short bellowing laugh. Said one: "Since when do wantons walk about unveiled? " And the other: " How long since have the temple whores ceased to cover their eyes? " He spoke unmindful of Judah, who started at the words.

" Oh, thou meanest my picture robe? " questioned Joseph. " Hath our brother Naphtali told thee on the way how your father Jacob hath had his heart moved toward me? But in thy goodness forgive my lack " — and he made the most charming obeisance before them all, with his arms crossed. " It is hard," said he, " to hit upon the right thing in doing and in leaving undone, and whatever he doth a man falleth into sin. I thought, in my folly: shall I spread myself before my elders? No, for I should come before them in humility, so that they take no umbrage at my arrogance, but love me instead. And lo, I have done foolishly, for I hear that I should have made myself fine in your honour. But believe me, on the evening of the roast meal, when you have washen yourselves and put on feast-day garments, I will sit on Jacob's right hand in my *ketonet* and you shall see our father's son in all his glory. Shall it be a promise? "

Again the savage twins gave a roar of laughter. And the others bored deep into his eyes trying to distinguish

between simplicity and impudence in what he had said, and not succeeding.

"A golden promise![9]' said Zebulun. He was the youngest, and tried to look like a Phoenician. His beard was trimmed to a round shape and he had a mop of short curls. His upper garment was patterned in gay colours and ran over one shoulder and under the other, showing the undershirt. His mind was set on the sea, so that he had liefer not been a shepherd. " A delicious promise, like a sacrificial cake of fine meal made with honey — a promise which I should like to thrust back down thy throat that thou mightst choke upon it! "

" Come, come, Zebulun, these are but coarse jests," Joseph replied, casting down his eyes and smiling as though embarrassed. " Hast thou heard them from the galley-slaves at Gaza and Ascalon? "

" He hath called my brother Zebulun a drunken galley-slave," said Issachar, twenty-one years old, tall and heavy-limbed, nicknamed " the bony ass." " Reuben, thou hast heard, and thou must take it up, if not with thy fist, as I could wish, yet with such words as shall make him remember."

" Thy words are inexact, Issachar," Reuben replied, in the high, effeminate voice which men of his powerful build may sometimes have. " He hath not called him that, but merely asked if he heard the words from such a one. It was pert enough as it was."

" I understood him to say that he would like to choke me with the sacrificial cake," put in Joseph, "which would have been blasphemous to boot, as well as very unfriendly. But if he did not say that or mean it, then of course I will take back what I said too."

" And now," concluded Reuben, " let us go our ways, that our coming together may not end in tauntings and misunderstanding."

They separated, the ten and the one. But Reuben followed Joseph and called him by name. He stood before him, just they two alone, Reuben on his leather-bound legs like heavy columns, and Joseph gazing up with polite attention into the hard-fleshed face, which expressed both embarrassment and dignity, since he was conscious both of his strength and of his proneness to err. His eyes, with their inflamed lids, were close to Joseph's; they lost themselves in Joseph's face or rather they stopped at it and returned into themselves. He kept kneading his brother's shoulder with his powerful right hand, as he was wont to do when he talked with anyone.

" Thou keepest the robe, young one? " asked he, moving his lips, but scarcely opening his mouth.

" Yes, Reuben, my lord, I will keep it," answered Joseph, " for Israel hath given it me, when he was merry from play."

" Did he defeat thy men? " Reuben asked. " Thou playest shrewdly and discreetly, for thou art practised by Eliezer in all sorts of mental exercise, which can stand thee in good stead in a game. Doth he often win? "

" Now and again," Joseph said, showing his teeth.

"When thou wilt?"

" It doth not depend on me alone," replied the other evasively.

" Yes, yes, so is it," thought Reuben to himself, and his gaze grew even more brooding. " That is the deceitfulness of the blessing-bearer, and his way of deceiving. He must hide his light under a bushel, that it light him not

to his harm, and the others must boast of more light than they have in order to keep up with him." He looked at his half-brother. " Rachel's child," he thought, " what charm he hath! The people are right to smile upon him. He is precisely tall enough and casteth up his lovely eyes at me and mocketh within himself, of that I am certain, as I stand here before him like a tower, disproportioned, tall and unwieldy, with this loutish body of mine, the veins of it fairly bursting with strength, so that I forgot myself like a young bull with Bilhah, not even looking to see if we were alone. Then with innocent malice Joseph goeth and telleth Jacob and I am undone. For he is wise as the serpent and gentle as the dove, and thus one should be. Malicious in his innocence and innocent in his malice, so that innocence becometh a danger and malice a sign of grace, and these are the unmistakable marks of the blessing, and one could do nought against it, even if one would, and one would not at all, for there is God. With a single blow I could stretch him out upon the earth so that he rose not again. The strength that overcame Bilhah were enough for that, and the thief of my first-born right should feel it as a man, even as Bilhah felt it as a woman. But what would that avail me? Abel would lie slain, and I should be he whom I understand not, that is Cain. For how can one act against his conviction and open-eyed strike down the pleasing one, because one is oneself unpleasing? I will deal not against mine own conviction, I will be fair and just, as is more conformable to my soul. I shall betray it in nothing. I am Reuben, my veins full of strength, Leah's first-born, Jacob's eldest son, and head of the twelve, I will make no lovesick faces at him, nor humble myself before his

charms. It was silly of me even to have stroked his hair, silly and weak. I will lay no hand upon him, one way or the other. I stand before him like a tower, clumsy if you like, but in dignity."

The muscles of Reuben's face were drawn as he asked: " Thou hast wheedled the coat out of him, hast thou not? "

" He promised it me of late," answered Joseph, " and when I reminded him of the promise, he gave it to me out of the coffer and said: ' Keep it, keep it.' "

" Ah, so thou hast reminded him and begged him for it. He gave it thee against his will, tempted by thine. Knowest thou that it is against God to misuse the power that is given thee so that he willeth unjustly and doth what he regretteth? "

" What power have I over Jacob? "

" Thou liest in asking. For thou hast over him Rachel's power."

" Then have I not stolen it."

" Nor earned it."

" The Lord saith: ' I favour whom I favour.' "

" Thou'rt impudent," Reuben said, with drawn brows, shaking him slowly to and fro as he held him by the shoulder. " It is said of me that I am unstable as water and that sin is not far from me. But what is far from me is impenitent frivolity like unto thine. Thou boasteth of thy God and fleerest at the heart that lieth in thine hand. Dost thou know that thou hast brought the old man into anguish and stress by beguiling him of the coat? "

" Into what sort of stress, big Reuben mine? "

" I know already thou liest, since thou askest. Hast thou then such joy in being able to do this? In stress over

thee, who art his dearest without desert, according to the wish of his heart that is so proud and yet so soft. He was blessed before Esau, his twin; yet hath he not suffered enough, in that Rachel died a furlong from Ephron, and in the matter of Dinah his child, and even through me — which I mention myself, seeing that thou wast about to remind me? "

" Not so, big Reuben. For I had not in mind that day when thou didst sport with Bilhah so that thou wast to the father in his wrath like to a hippopotamus."

" Hold thy tongue! How canst thou mention it, when I took it out of thy mouth and said it before thee? Always thou thinkest of new sorts of lies, saying thou thinkest not thereupon when thou expressly spakest of it. Is it that which thou learnest from the tablets of stone and connest when thou and Eliezer study the wisdom of the temple? Thy lips move, I know not how, having been carved in this wise by the Creator, and thy teeth glisten between them. But the words that come forth are nought but insolence. Have a care, have a care, my young one," he said, and held him so that Joseph rocked to and fro on heels and toes. " Have I not saved thee ten times out of the hands of the brethren and from the wrath of those who trod Shechem under their feet for the sake of the ravished one — ten times and more, when they would have given thee a good pummelling for telling tales to the father about ' cutting pieces from the living flesh' and more of the same sort? And for that thou wouldst go and beguile our father of the coat, while we are pasturing far away, and wouldst in thy folly defy the wrath of nine brothers if not ten? Tell me who thou art, and how much is thine arrogance, that thou makest thyself different

from us all and walkest as one set apart? Fearest thou not that thy conceit will draw down about thee the dark clouds out of which the lightning striketh? Hast thou no gratitude at all for those who mean kindly by thee, that thou causest them anguish? Thou'rt as one who climbeth high in rotting branches and laugheth at those who stand beneath and call to him in fear lest the branch break and he fall and his bowels gush out."

" Put me down upon the ground, Reuben, and hearken to what I say. For I am grateful that thou speakest a word for me against the brethren's ill-will. And I am grateful too that thou holdest me thus and shakest me about, both together. But now set me upon my feet that I may speak. I cannot collect my thoughts being so shaken about. But now, standing here upon my feet, I will collect them, and sure am I that thou wilt in thy justice grant me right. I have not got the coat by stealth or stealing. For he promised it to me by the well, and ever since I have known of his purpose to give it to me, to keep. But as I saw him, our gentle-hearted father, somewhat at odds with his own will, I held to what he had said and easily got him to give it to me — give, I say, and not present, for mine it was before he gave it me."

" How so thine? "

" Thou askest? I will answer. For who was it from whom Jacob first lifted the veil and made a promise concerning it at that hour? "

" It was Leah."

"Yes, actually, it was. But in deeper truth it was Rachel. Leah was only arrayed in it, but Rachel was the owner of the robe, and she kept it to her death, a furlong from Ephron. But since she died, where is she now? "

[44] Where the earth is her portion."

" Yes, actually again. But in very truth it is otherwise. Knowest thou not that it is in the power of death to change the sex, and that Rachel still liveth for Jacob though in another form? "

Reuben started back.

" I and my mother are one," Joseph said. " Knowest thou not that Mami's garment is likewise her son's and that they wear it by turns, one in the other's place? Name her and thou namest me. Name what belonged to her and thou namest what is mine. Well then, whose is the veil? "

He had stood there quite simply and modestly as he spoke, his eyes cast down. But when he had done he suddenly directed his wide-open gaze upwards upon his brother's face. Not as though he wanted to force his view aggressively upon the other, but rather as though he were silently offering his soul to be looked into; as though he were receiving the astonished and blinking stare of Leah's red-eyed son deep into the unfathomableness of his own gaze.

The tower shook. Big Reuben shuddered. What did the lad mean, what was he trying to express, what was the origin of it all? Reuben had taunted him with his arrogance — and now he was sorry, for he had had his answer. He had asked in his wrath who the lad thought that he was — ah, would that he had not done so! For now he had heard, heard so riddlingly that it made him shiver all the way down his back, long as it was. Was it chance that had shaped the words in the boy's mouth? Had he meant to play upon the divine and make use of it to justify his own duplicity, or . . . *or* — and this *or* gave rise in the very marrow of Reuben's being to the

same horror of which Brother Gaddiel had complained as they stood at Joseph's bedside. Only it was stronger in Reuben, a profounder shock, and it was accompanied by a sort of admiration, a gentle, even tender amazement and terror.

We must try to understand Reuben. He was not the man to be unique in misconstruing the significance of the question as to who one was, in whose footsteps one walked, to what past one's present had reference, in order to give it reality. Joseph had given evidence — in so monstrously presumptuous a way as to make Reuben shudder. But the magic of the word, whereby the uppermost was turned undermost, an unforced and flexible and perfectly genuine use of language to work enchantment, brought before Reuben's eyes in brilliant clarity the footsteps in which his younger brother walked. He did not go so far at this moment to think of Joseph as a veiled god-goddess; that we must not suppose. But yet his love was not very far from becoming belief.

" Child, child," said he, in that piping voice out of his powerful body, " spare thine own soul, spare thy father, spare the light thou walkest in! Put it under a bushel, that it may not light thee unto thine .undoing." He took three backward steps, with drooping head, then turned and walked away.

But at the evening meal Joseph wore the coat. The brothers sat there like graven images. Jacob was full of fears.

THE SHEAVES

WHEN these things had happened, and after many days, it came about that they were cutting the wheat in the vale

of Shechem; it was the time of the harvest and of joyous and sweating labour up till the day of the first fruits, when they made offering of leavened bread of the new wheaten flour, seven weeks after the spring full moon. For the late rains had been plenteous, but the hatches of the sky were early closed, the waters ran off, and the land dried. Marduk-Bel, the sun, the triumphant, drunk with his victory over the dripping leviathan, ruled flaming in the heavens and sent up golden spears into the blue. Even at the turn between the second and the third months so great was the ardour of his sovereignty that there might have been fears for the sowing but that a wind sprang up, the welcome approach of which was first scented by Zebulun, sixth son of Leah, who said:

" My nose is pleasantly assailed by this wind, for it bringeth moisture from afar and beareth on its wings the refreshing dew. Lo, now, as I always say, what great good cometh from the sea! Better it were to dwell by the edge of the green vast and close to Sidon, rather than to tend the sheep, which pleaseth me but little. For upon the wave and on the shapen plank one can reach folk who wear tails, and a lighted horn upon their foreheads. Or to such as have ears so great as to cover the whole body, and others whose forms are covered with grass. A man from the port of Chazati told me of all this."

Naphtali agreed with him. It would be good to exchange news with those grass-grown folk; for most likely neither they nor the ear-lapped nor the tailed creatures had the least notion what went on in the world. But the others dissented and would hear nothing of the sea, even though it brought the moisture-bearing wind. Those were subterranean regions, full of monsters of the prime;

Zebulun might just as well express admiration for the desert. Simeon and Levi expressed themselves with peculiar force, in this sense; they were rude but religious, and at bottom they did not much care for the shepherd's life, preferring something more exciting, though they stuck to this one for the sake of the succession.

The harvesting, beginning with the reaping of the barley, was a welcome change for them all; they sweated blithely in their hopes of profit, as one does at this season; even their relations with Joseph sensibly improved, as he worked by their side cutting and binding — until the latter by his irresponsible chatter ruined everything again and reduced them to extremes. All which I shall relate in due course. As for Jacob, these seasonal joys touched him but little, though all the district yielded to them with gusto, his own sons swinking in the midst of the sweating peasantry. Rather he had a dampening effect upon the gaiety, even without appearing on the field, which he seldom did. This time he came once, by way of exception and at the request of Joseph, who had his own reasons for making it. But on the whole Jacob troubled little about the sowing and mowing, carrying on his bit of farming as it were without looking at it and only out of prudence, not inclination. Nay, he felt not only indifference but even disinclination to the whole sphere, the religious hostility of the moon shepherd toward the duty which the sunburnt farmer paid the earth. The harvest time was even, in a certain sense, an embarrassment to him, in the sense that it made him draw profit from the cult of fertility which the children of the country paid from spring to spring to the sun-gods

and love-women of their temples — a cult abhorrent to his soul. He was rather ashamed of drawing profit from it, and closed his lips tightly when he heard the thanksgiving hymns of the workers bringing home their sheaves.

After the barley harvest he ordered the wheat to be cut for the provisioning of his own people; and as every pair of arms was needed, Eliezer having also taken on a few hired hands for the harvest weeks, Joseph's studies with the latter were interrupted, and he too, in his own exalted person, laboured from early morn to dewy eve in the fields. He attacked the bearded grain with the sickle, gathering the stalks together with his right hand; he bound the sheaves with straw and helped the brethren and the hands to load them on carts or hang them on asses to be brought to the threshing-floor. We must recognize that he did all this gladly and willingly, not looking upon it as an imposition, and in simple modesty; but it is also true that his attitude toward the work was in flat contradiction to certain revelations of his inward life, which he permitted himself precisely at this very time. In any case it would have been easy for him to get Jacob's permission not to appear on the field, yet he never thought of doing so. Partly because he liked the work, but even more because it brought him into contact with the brethren, and he felt pride and pleasure in working among them, helping them, hearing them call him by name; all that was literally true. Labour upon a common task improved relations between him and them, it uplifted his heart, it made him happy. However inconsistent all this may seem, it was the truth; the seeming contradictions cannot do away with the fact that he loved

his brothers; that, however senseless and even deluded it may seem, he counted on their love and expected some advantage from it — for the unhappy lad little imagined how much he asked.

The field work tired him very much, and he often took short naps; was asleep, indeed, at the midday hour which found all the sons of Jacob, save Benjamin, gathered to rest and eat, beneath a brown awning stretched over crooked poles. They had broken bread and talked, squatting on their heels. Each of them wore for all clothing a leather apron; their bodies were burnt by the ardour of the sun, which blazed down between fleecy clouds upon the half-harvested field. Here and there, the sickle had made breaches in the golden host, leaving patches of stubble dotted with leaning sheaves and bounded by low walls of rubble which served to divide Jacob's land from that of the peasants. At a little distance stood the hill which served his people for a threshing-floor; laden asses were on their way thither and men were on top, using pitchforks to separate the stalks and toss them down before the oxen.

Joseph then, likewise in his working apron, his skin glowing from the sun, was asleep in a squatting posture, with his head on his arm. When he lay down, he had in all simplicity begged Issachar, the bony ass, who sat next to him, to lend him one of his knees to prop up his head. But Issachar had inquired whether he would not also like him to scratch his head and to keep off the flies; and then curtly bade him to be his own pillow. Joseph had laughed and taken it in good part, resigning himself to sleep without the desired prop. He found it elsewhere, as we shall see. But for the moment nobody was paying

him any attention, only Reuben glanced now and again at the sleeper's face, as it lay turned toward him. It was not in repose; the forehead was drawn, the lips twitched, and the partly open mouth moved as though to speak.

Meanwhile the brethren had been discussing the pros and cons of a new sort of implement which had come into use of late, the threshing-table. It was drawn by oxen and had pointed stones on the under side, which tore the ears. It was undeniable that it saved time. But some of them said that the winnowing afterwards was harder work than if the grain had been thoroughly trodden out by means of oxen. Also they spoke of a threshing-cart used by many of the peasants; it ran on rollers and was fitted with sharp iron plates. At that point Joseph roused and sat up.

" I have had a dream," he said, looking round upon the brethren and smiling as though in surprise.

They turned away their heads and went on talking.

" I have had a dream,' he repeated, and rubbed his hands across his brows as though still dazed, smiling pleasantly as he gazed into space; " such a vivid and wonderful dream! "

" What is that to us? " retorted Dan, suddenly turning his prominent eyes upon Joseph. " Better is it to sleep without dreams, if thou needs must sleep, for dreams, so they say, are not refreshing."

" Would you like to hear my dream? " asked Joseph.

Nobody answered. One of them — it was Jehudah — went on with their discussion in a tone which was itself a proper reply to such a question.

" It is needful," he said, in a clear, detached voice, " to keep the iron blades very sharp, as otherwise they

do not cut but crush and the grain cometh not fully out of the ear. But consider if we can rely upon the labourers, especially the hired hands, to sharpen them regularly. And then, if the little wheels, on the other hand, are very sharp, they cut the grain and so cometh it that the meal . . ."

Joseph listened awhile to the talk passing over his head. But finally he interrupted and said:

" Forgive me, brothers, but I feel drawn to tell you this dream which I have had. It was not a long dream, but so real and marvellous that I desire not to keep it to myself, but from my heart I yearn to put it before each of your eyes, that ye may laugh for joy and slap your thighs."

" Hearken," said Judah, and shook his head. " What aileth thee that thou troublest us with matters that concern us not? For what do we care about thine inward workings or the ferment of thy dreams or what riseth from thy belly to thy head after eating? It is not seemly to speak of it, and it concerneth us not at all; therefore be quiet! "

" But it doth concern you," Joseph eagerly cried. " It concerneth you all, for you all come into it and so do I; and my dream is so full of meaning and marvel that you might well sit with your heads in your hands and think of nought else for three days long."

" Shall he tell us it then, in few words, without more ado, so that we may know it? " Asher asked. People with a sweet tooth are often very inquisitive — and indeed they were all curious and liked well to hear stories told, and the fact and fable, the legend, dream, song, and story of primitive time*

" Very good, then," Joseph said with satisfaction, " if you like, I will tell you my vision, which is worth hearing on account of its meaning alone. For the dreamer shall not interpret his dream, but another shall do it for him. If any of you dream and ask me, I will tell him the meaning; it costeth me nought, for the Lord giveth it to me for the asking. But with mine own it is different."

" Dost thou call that a few words? " asked Gad.

" Listen, then," Joseph began. But at the last moment Reuben would have prevented him. He had been watching the owner of the veil all this time, and his mind misgave him.

" Joseph," said he, " I know not thy dream, for I lay not with thee in thy sleep, there thou wast alone. **But** meseemeth it were better each one should be alone with his own dreams and thou shouldst keep thy dream to thyself, that we may all go to work."

" We were at work," Joseph snatched up his words, " for upon the field saw I us all together, us sons of Jacob, and we were harvesting the grain."

" Marvellous," cried Naphtali. " That is a dream like to an unreal vision, forsooth, and thy dreams are remote from us, and very fantastic and high-coloured indeed! "

" But it was not our own field," went on Joseph, " it was the field of another, very strange to us. But we spoke not of it. We laboured together without speech and bound the sheaves after cutting the stalks."

" That is a great dream before the Lord," said Zebulun. " A vision incomparable. For of course, thou dolt, we should have bound first and cut afterwards. Must we hear it all, even to the end? "

Some of the brethren had already got up, shrugging their shoulders and making ready to leave.

" Yea, hear it up till the end/' cried Joseph, lifting his hands. " For now cometh the marvel: each of us was binding a sheaf and we were twelve, for Benjamin too was with us in the field and bound his little sheaf with you in a circle."

" Do not talk rubbish," ordered Gad. " Why ' with you ' in a circle, when thou meanest' with us'? "

" Not so, Gaddiel, for my meaning is far otherwise. For ye made up the circle, the eleven of you, and were binding, but I stood in the centre of the circle and bound my sheaf."

He paused and looked into their faces. They had all lifted their brows and tipped back their necks so that the Adam's apple stood out as their heads swayed slightly. Misgiving, amazement, mockery, and warning were expressed in all their attitudes. They were waiting.

" Hearken now how it fell out and how wonderful was my dream," said Joseph again. "When we had bound our sheaves, each one his own, we left them and went away, not speaking and as though we had nothing more to do there. But we had gone only twenty paces or so together when lo, Reuben turned round to look and motioned backward with his hand to the place where we had been. Yea, Reuben, it was thou. We all stood and looked, shading our eyes. And behold, my sheaf arose there in the middle and also stood upright, and your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf. And mine stood upright."

There was a long silence.

" Is that all? " asked Gad, breaking the silence, in a low, curt voice.

" Yea, for after that I awaked," replied Joseph, rather crestfallen. His dream had disappointed him in the telling, though in the dreaming it had been strange and gratifying and even a little frightening, especially the part about Reuben pointing silently behind them. However, the narration had sounded meagre, even foolish; in Joseph's opinion it could not have impressed any of his hearers, and his view was confirmed by Gad's words: " Is that all? " He was ashamed of himself.

Silence had fallen again, broken by Gad with an oath, so suppressed that only the first syllables were anything but a whisper.

Joseph lifted his head, he took heart. It would seem that his dream, even as he had told it, was not without any effect upon his hearers. " Is that all? " had been crushing, but the oath was full of encouragement. It meant all sorts of things, it meant no little, it meant: " What the devil! " and that sort of thing. He looked into their faces. They were all pale, and vertical folds stood between their brows — altogether they made a singular impression indeed, as when one gnaws his under lip, or his nostrils go in and out like gills, as many of theirs did. Their breath came fast and uneven, so that it sounded like an irregular, tenfold snorting. And all this went on under the awning where they sat, and if regarded as the effect of his narrative might well have made young Joseph feel disturbed.

And so it did, to a certain extent, but in a way that made the scene seem to him like a continuation of his dream, having, for all its actuality, the same extraordinary character of uncanny joy and joyful uncanniness. True, the effect upon the brethren was not very happy, but it was obviously much stronger than Joseph had

dared to hope; so that he was evenly balanced between the sinking feeling he had at sight of them and gratification that his tale had after all not missed fire.

He felt no different when — after the lip-biting and the snorting had gone on for some while — Jehudah burst out in a hoarse, throaty voice:

" A more disgusting piece of nonsense have I never heard in all the days of my life! " For such words could only be an expression, not very happy indeed, of Jehudah's amaze.

Then came another pause, filled with pallid silence and gnawing of lips.

Then: "Thou brat! Thou jackanapes! Thou poison toad! Thou stinking fart," roared Simeon and Levi both at once. They could not even speak in turn and make a sort of couplet as they usually did, but all mixed up together, with crimson faces and veins standing out on their foreheads. Actually they displayed the phenomenon reported of them at the time of the plundering of Shechem; for the hair on their chests rose up and bristled like porcupine quills as they roared with one voice:

" Thou peacock, thou swaggering puppy, thou blackguardly fool! What care we what thou hast dreamed and what seen behind thine eyelids, thou shameless, thou thorn in our flesh and stone of stumbling to our feet, thou stench in our nostrils — that we should interpret it unto thee? ' Bow down, bow down ' — ah, the falsehood and vanity of what thou dreamest and forcest us honest men to hear! So our sheaves stand in a circle and flop down before thee, but thine standeth upright? It turneth the stomach as nothing I have before heard in this world. **Thou foul,** thou filthy sink of abominations, so thou

wouldst play the master and lord with us by filching **the** *ketonet* behind the backs of thy elders! Thou trickster and thief of the birthright! But we will teach thee **all** about standing and bowing down, and will show thee thy masters, and thou wilt name to us thy name and wilt perceive thine own shameless lies! "

Thus bellowed the twins. And when they had done roaring, all the ten left the shadow of the awning and went out on the field, still red and pale, still gnawing their lips. But Reuben, as he went out, said to Joseph: "There hast thou it, my lad." Joseph still sat awhile, pondering, upset and cast down because the brethren did not believe in his dream. For this was the thing he had grasped of all they had said, that they did not believe him — had not the twins several times used words like "lies" and "vanity"? He asked himself, sadly, what he could do to prove to them that he had not said a word too much, but only quite honestly related what he had dreamed in their very presence. If they only believed him, he thought, their violent humour would abate; for surely he had shown brotherly good feeling in telling them what God had revealed to him in a dream, that they might likewise rejoice and with him discuss the significance of the matter? It was impossible that they should take umbrage at his confidence in them and the bond between them, which had been the whole ground of his revealing God's mind concerning him. True, the dream displayed him exalted over them; but that they, to whom he had always, in one sense, looked up, could find that fact intolerable would have been such a disappointment to him that he simply could not have thought of it. At all events, he perceived that the harmony between them was

destroyed for the day; he did not go back to the field, but went home and found his little brother. To him he confided that he had told the brethren an altogether modest dream, comparatively speaking, the content being such and such. But that the brethren had not believed it and the twins had been furious — although by comparison with the eagle dream, of which he had not mentioned a single syllable, this one was modesty itself.

Turturra was glad that nothing had been said of that monstrous dream, and for his part displayed such delight over the dream of the sheaves that it entirely made up to Joseph for the fact that it had missed fire with the elder brethren. The little one jumped and laughed at the thought of his own small sheaf bowing down with the rest — it so precisely corresponded to his feelings.

THE COUNCIL

MEANWHILE the ten stood on the meadow in the light of the setting sun and took council together in anger and in fear, leaning on their tools. At first they had silently acquiesced in the interpretation given by Simeon and Levi to the dream — namely, that the little liar had made up the whole thing himself. Indeed, they preferred this interpretation, for it fortified their own inward position. It had been Judah who had wanted to explo/e all the possibilities; and he it was who pointed out that Joseph might actually have so dreamed as he reported himself to have done and not drawn a long bow at all. After that they all explicitly reckoned with the possibility and thereupon subdivided it into two: namely, that the dream, if actually so dreamed, had indeed come from God —

this they naturally regarded as the greatest conceivable catastrophe; or, contrariwise, that it had nothing to do with God, but had originated entirely in the insufferable vanity of Joseph, which, overweeningly nourished by the gift of the *ketonet*, had given rise to these visions. Reuben's contribution to the discussion was that if the dream came from God, then there was nothing for it but to pray — to God, of course, not to Joseph. But if, on the other hand, it had been born of conceit, then they could afford to shrug their shoulders over it and leave the dreamer to his folly. In the end he reverted to the probability that the lad had childishly made up the dream and deserved a beating for the same.

Big Reuben, in short, proposed that Joseph be beaten for telling lies. At the same time, he recommended that they all shrug their shoulders — which proves that he was not very serious about the thrashing, for you cannot thrash with any conviction while shoulder-shrugging. And from this one might deduce that Reuben wished to believe in the second interpretation in order to discount the first and distract the minds of the brethren from thinking of it. Reuben, in short, was afraid that belief in the theory that God had sent the dream would not at all incline the brethren to humility and self-restraint, but rather to conduct infinitely more drastic than mere thrashing. They were not at all prepared, he felt, to view the matter objectively and let their attitude be governed according as Joseph had dreamed out of sheer conceit or had really had a revelation of God's plans for him. For their words seemed to show that in the latter case they did not find his conduct one whit the less worthy of vituperation. If the dream really came from God and was a

token of great preferment, then of course there was nothing to say against God — as little as there was to say against Jacob for his honourable weakness. With them the whole point was Joseph. If God had actually preferred him over them and made their sheaves flop down before his, it was because God too had been made a fool of, even as Jacob, and by the same means: namely, the double-dealing by which he supplanted them in the father's affections. God was great, He was holy and irresponsible — but Joseph was a viper. It is clear — and Reuben saw it too — that their notion of Joseph's relation to God perfectly agreed with his own view; they considered it the same as his relation to their father. Indeed, it had to be so, for proper hate is only generated on a basis of some common belief.

Reuben was afraid of this train of thought. Therefore he did not try to defend Joseph by persuading the brethren that God sent him the dream. Rather he wanted to convince them that the lad had humbugged them and ought to suffer for it — while shrugging their shoulders. But he was, in reality, as little capable as the others of shrugging his shoulders. For even more, perhaps, than they, Reuben knew in the pit of his stomach the sinking sensation to which the downright Gad had first referred and of which now not only the four sons of the maids but all the ten were painfully aware. It was a horror springing from mythical and prophetic associations wrapped about such ideas as bartered birthrights, world-domination, and fraternal submission; Reuben suffered in his soul more even than the others on the score of them; except that they did not put him in a fury of rage against the lad who was the source of his oppression, but

only gave rise to unnamable emotions toward the innocent babble of the chosen one, as well as an overpowering sense of surrender in the face of destiny.

"It would have been the last straw if he had said: 'bow down," Gaddiel said through his clenched teeth.

"He said 'made obeisance,'" remarked the bony Issachar, who loved a quiet life and for its sake was willing to make sacrifices. If he dissociated himself at all from the brethren on this occasion it was because of this pacific leaning of his.

"I know," answered Gad. "But he may only have said that to play a trick, and anyhow, it is just as disgusting either way."

"Not quite," Dan answered; he was a stickler by nature and never failed to stickle conformably to his nature. "To make obeisance is not quite so much as to bow down. We have to admit that it is really less."

"Why do we?" yelled Simeon and Levi, determined to bear witness to their savage stupidity, let the occasion be foul or fair.

Dan and some of the others, including Reuben, insisted that to make obeisance was rather less than to bow down. The former might happen not out of inner conviction but as an empty and formal gesture. One made obeisance only on occasion, whereas bowing down was a constant attitude of the heart which honestly took cognizance of facts as they were; and thus, as Reuben explained, one might make obeisance out of caution and shrewdness, without really bowing down, or, on the other hand, might actually bow down and yet be too proud to make the gesture of obeisance. Jehudah disagreed. He did not think that the position could be sustained, for

that they were dealing with a dream, in which making obeisance was only the picture representation of the attitude for which Reuben would reserve the words " bow down." At this point young Zebulun interpolated that they were now doing the very thing to which Joseph had shamelessly invited them and which all of them had refused to consider: namely, they were blithely engaged in interpreting his shameful dream. The comment was so exasperating that it broke up the meeting, amid shouts from Simeon and Levi that it was all stuff and nonsense and that one neither bowed down nor made obeisance before such insults, but only took steps to get rid of the author of them, as had been their course at Shechem. Thus the council came to an end without other result than unappeased bitterness.

SUN, MOON, AND STARS

A N D Joseph? He had no notion, of course, of the torment which his dream was causing to the brethren, but thought of nothing else than that they had not believed him and of how he could carry conviction — conviction in two directions, both as to the actuality and the truth of his dream. How should he best bring this about? Insistently he asked himself the question, and later was surprised that he had not known the answer, but had to be given it or rather that it had given itself to him. That is to say, he had another dream, or rather he had the same dream, only in a form so much more splendid that the confirmation was more impressive than if he had dreamed exactly the same dream the second time. He was sleeping under the open starry sky, on the threshing-floor, **where**

he and some of the brothers and hands often spent the night at harvest time, to guard the grain which had not yet been threshed and put into the pits. Very likely — though this is in no sense an explanation of the source of dreams — the character of his had been influenced by the starry heavens spanned above him, also by the companionship in sleep of those whom he wished to convince. Still another element was introduced by the content of his day, the fact that he had spent hours receiving instruction upon last things from old Eliezer under the tree of wisdom: upon world-judgment and blessing-time, the final triumph of God over all the powers to which the peoples had so long sent up the smoke of incense; upon the triumph of the Saviour over the pagan kings, the planetary powers and gods of the zodiac, whom He was to subdue and cast down, shut up in the underworld, and mount above them to a universal and glorious world-dominion. Of all this Joseph dreamed; but in such confusion that he childishly substituted his own person for that of the eschatological god-hero, and beheld or rather perceived himself, the boy Joseph, as the actual sovereign and ruler of the whole world as it revolved through the zodiac. He perceived, I say, rather than beheld this, for it would be impossible to reduce such a dream to an ordered narrative, and in repeating it he had to put it into the simplest and shortest words in order to express the feelings it gave him rather than to narrate it as a series of events. All which did not help to make it more acceptable to the hearer.

He began to be concerned over the form and manner of his communication, directly he roused from his dream and sat up in joyful possession of such striking con-

firmation of the earlier vision. His concern had to do with the question whether the brethren would give him a chance to tell them another dream — it seemed unlikely. Even the first time it had been a toss-up whether they would not refuse their attention or simply get up and leave the tent before he was done. A second opportunity appeared to him the more unlikely in that they had not seemed to derive unmixed pleasure from the first.

It behoved him to find some means to enforce them; and even as he lay upon the threshing-floor Joseph conceived how this might be done. In the morning he went to his father, as he usually did, since Jacob desired to see him at the beginning of each day, to look into his son's eyes, assure himself of his well-being, and give him his blessing for the, day.

Joseph said: "A right good morning to thee, my father and lord! Lo, here is a new day born of the night and methinketh it will be a hot one. One followeth another like to a string of pearls, and life is joyous to this child of thine, especially at this season, when we bring in the harvest. It is lovely upon the meadow, whether we toil or whether we rest; and men grow to understanding of each other in common tasks." ,

" What thou sayest is pleasant unto mine ears," Jacob replied. " So it goeth well with you all on the field and the threshing-floor and you come together in the Lord, the brethren and thou? "

" Excellently well," answered the lad. " Aside from small differences of opinion such as each day of necessity bringeth forth, and the division of the world dis-

playeth them, everything is in the best of order. For honest words, even though they may be rude, help to clear up error, and then harmony ruleth once more. I wish that our father might but witness it. For thou art never there, and often do we regret it together."

" I do not love the field work."

" It is natural. And yet what a pity that the workers get no sight of the master and no feeling that his eye is upon them, especially the hired hands, upon whom is no reliance. My brother Jehudah complained to me only lately that they do not sharpen the little wheels on the threshing-cart, so that they crush the grain instead of cutting it. But thus it is when the master's eye lacketh."

" I must admit the justice of thy reproach."

" Reproach! May God preserve my tongue from such! It is but a request, proffered by thy offspring in the name of the eleven. And nobody suggesteth that thou shouldst share our labours, the service of the soil, the work of Baal. But only our midday rest, when the sun is high in the heaven and we break bread in the shade and talk among ourselves, we sons of the one and the four, and one or another may relate some jest or dream that he hath had. Often we nudge each other with our elbows and say how fine it would be to see our father's head in the midst of the circle."

" Ah, well, I will come, for once in a way."

" Hurrah! Come then today and rejoice the hearts of thy sons. The work neareth its end, there is no time to lose. So it shall be today, then? I will say nought to the red-eyed ones, nor blab it out to the sons of the maids, for it shall come to them as a surprise. But thy child will

hug to himself in secret the knowledge to whom they owe it and who hath so cunningly and loyally schemed to bring it about."

Such, then, was Joseph's device. It so came about that midday of that very day found Jacob sitting under the awning on the field, after he had inspected the grain-pits and the threshing-floor and tested with his thumb the sharpness of the little wheels. The ten were amazed. For the last few days the dreamer had not shared their noon-tide rest; now he was here again, with his head in his father's lap. Naturally, he ought to be here, if the father was; but what was it that had brought the old man, so suddenly? They sat stiff and silent, all decently covered out of respect to Jacob's views. The latter was surprised to find none of the hearty good feeling which according to Joseph's account reigned at the harvesting. Perhaps its absence was due to respect for the father and master. Even Joseph had not much to say. He was afraid, even though he lay in his father's lap and had the protection and the hearing for his tale which that implied. He was, indeed, troubled by his dream and the results which might flow from it. He could say in a sentence all there was to say, there would be nothing left. If Gad were to ask: "Is that all?" he would be a beaten man. Of course, the briefness of his tale had the advantage that it would all be out at once, before anyone could stop him. But the large lines and scant ornament might be the very things which would defeat his purpose.

He almost let slip his chance, in the end, for they were all so bored that they were tempted to break up early. Even the signs of departure were not enough to conquer his misgivings, and perhaps nothing at all would have

happened if Jacob had not helped him out by saying genially:

" I hear you tell each other stories at the rest hour — recite and so on — did I not? " They stared in bewilderment.

" Yes, yes," Joseph cried, starting up, " funny stories and dreams. Sometimes we are full of them. Do we know anything new? " he asked brazenly, looking round the circle.

They kept on staring at him and saying nothing.

" But I do," said he, and sat up on Jacob's lap with an absorbed look. " There is a dream, which I dreamed last night on the threshing-floor; father and brethren, ye should hear and be amazed. I dreamed," he went on — and then stopped. There was a curious writhing of the limbs, a spasmodic lifting of the neck and shoulders, a twisting of the arms. His head drooped, the smile upon his lips seemed to deprecate and extenuate the sudden whiteness of his eyes. " I dreamed," he repeated, in a sort of gasp, " and I saw in my dream, this I saw: I saw the sun, the moon, and the eleven *kokabim* waiting upon me. They came and bowed down before me."

Nobody stirred. Jacob, the father, kept his eyes severely cast down. It was very still; but in the stillness came an evil, mysterious, and yet distinct sound. It was the gnashing of the brethren's teeth. Most of them kept their lips closed, but Simeon and Levi showed their teeth as they gnashed. Jacob heard the gnashing. It is hard to say whether Joseph grasped its significance. He was smiling quietly and dreamily to himself, with his head on one side. It was out, let them do what they chose about it. Sun, moon, and stars, eleven in number, had attended

him. Let them look to it. Jacob looked timidly round the circle. It was as he expected: ten pairs of eyes were fixed wildly and importunately upon him. He summoned up his powers. And sitting at the boy's back he addressed him, as harshly as he could:

"Jehosiph! What sort of dream is this thou hast dreamed, and how couldst thou dream so unsavoury a thing and tell it unto us? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren come and worship thee? Thy mother is dead and therewith beginneth the crackbrainedness, but is far from ending it. Shame upon thee! By all human reckoning, this stuff thou hast served up to us is so preposterous that it might just as well have been nothing but *aulas-aulalakaula* and done just as much good. I am grieved in my soul that thou, with full seventeen years, and despite all the enlightenment of the written word and reason which thou hast enjoyed by my permission through instruction from my servant Eliezer, hast made no greater progress in the understanding of the divine than to allow thyself to dream that which dishonoureth thee and to play the buffoon before thy father and brethren. Let this be the punishment meted out to thee. I would punish thee more severely and perhaps pull thy hair till thou didst cry out for pain, were not thy prattle too childish for riper minds to take note of it or the man settled in years be tempted to repay thee with great harshness. Fare thee well, sons of Leah! And greetings after the meal, sons of Zilpah and Bilhah! "

Saying which he stood up, behind Joseph, and went hence. The reproof had cost him much to utter; he only hoped that it had satisfied the brethren. If any real anger had spoken in it, that could be only on the score that the

lad had not told the dream to him alone, instead of being so mad as to make the brethren witness of the telling. Had he done it of set purpose to cause the father embarrassment, Jacob thought, he could not have found a better device. That he would certainly tell him when they were alone, since he could not have done it now; probably he understood how shrewdly the lad had used the brothers as protection against himself, and himself as protection against the brothers. For he even suppressed a smile in his beard, as he went homewards, over the cleverness of this double-dealing. He certainly felt the irritation he had expressed on the score of the boy's soul, as well as the anxiety over his tendency to dreams and prophetic spasms; but both anger and anxiety were swallowed up in the yearning, half-credulous satisfaction which filled him when he thought of Joseph's presumptuous dreams. Quite absurdly, he prayed God that the dream might have come from Him — which was utter nonsense, seeing how highly unlikely it was that He had had anything to do with it. And tears of sheer tenderness came into his eyes at the thought that his son's innocent prattle might represent, though vaguely and uncomprehendingly, actual premonitions of future greatness. Ah, poor weak father-heart! He might well have been angry to hear that he and the brethren would come to bow down before the good-for-nothing — that was perplexing for him to hear, for did he not adore him?

As for the brethren, hardly was Jacob gone than they flung as one man into the open, but after a few paces out into the meadow stood still together and took stormy council. Big Reuben spoke, he told them what was to be done. Away! That was the thing. Unanimous departure

from the paternal hearth, voluntary banishment. That, Reuben said, would be dignified and impressive behaviour and the only possible answer to such detestable treatment. Away from Joseph, was what he had in mind, in order that no disaster might befall the lad. Of course he did not express his feelings, but put his advice entirely in the light of a reproach and a protest.

That very evening they came before Jacob and told him they were going. A place where such dreams were told, without other risk than at worst of getting one's hair pulled, was no place for them; they had nothing to lose by leaving it. They had helped mightily with the harvesting, now they would go to Shechem: not only the six, but also the four, in fact all ten. For the meadows of Shechem were fat and fertile, and there, in unchanged if also in unrewarded loyalty, they would pasture their father's flocks, and the camp at Hebron should know them no more, now that it was become a place of such high dreaming. They made obeisance and bowed down, they said (suiting the action to the words), in taking reverent leave of their father and lord. They needed not to fear that their going would give him pain, since it was well known that Jacob would give ten for one.

Jacob bowed his head. Did he begin to fear lest the ascendancy of the emotions which, basing on an exalted model, he permitted himself, was being taken amiss in the high place of its origin?

5

THE JOURNEY TO THE BROTHERS

THE CHALLENGE

WE have been told how Jacob bowed his head when he heard the embittered brethren announce their departure from his hearth. From then on he lifted it but seldom. It was now the season of parching heat; at no other time in the year did the sun's rays so cruelly scorch the land, for the moment of its waning was at hand. This was the solstice, the season in which the true wife had presented Joseph to Jacob, in the month of Tammuz. Yet even so Jacob's spirit was wont to suffer beneath the blackened desolation of this quarter of the circle; that he suffered now might be explained in the same way. But no. The true ground of his depression was the unanimous departure of his sons. I should be saying too much if I asserted that this had given Jacob great pain. In his heart he truly did " give ten for one "; yet it was quite another matter to reckon with the objective fact, to realize that the brothers' notice to quit was decisive; and that he, Jacob, would be left with two sons instead of twelve, a tree lopped of its branches. It was a blow to his dignity, first of all; but also it put him in an embarrassing posi-

tion before his God, and he inquired of himself how much these actions of his went counter to the plans of the Lord of the Promise, and how great was the account* ing he had invited upon his own head. For He that ruled future things, had He not taken care that not all matters should go after Jacob's heart and he be fruitful in Rachel alone? Yes, He had made him fruitful against his own will, and even those unwanted sons from the unloved wife were themselves the fruit of the blessing and bearers of destinies unknown. Jacob was well aware that his elevation of Joseph was a piece of arbitrary self-indulgence, which might easily come to clash with the vast designs of God and so reveal itself as culpable presumption. Indeed, it seemed already to have done so; for though Joseph's folly may have been the immediate occasion of the catastrophe, and though Jacob had suffered in chiding him, yet the father well knew who it was who must pay for this folly, before God and man. In contending with Joseph he contended with himself. The boy had been only the medium of whatever mischief had been done; the real culprit was Jacob's own loving heart. It had not availed to hide it from himself; for God knew it, and one hid not himself before God. For the truth was, therein lay the inheritance of Abram, it meant no more than that one did not give false evidence in matters known to God.

Such were the mental struggles, in the time after the grain harvest, which slowly shaped Jacob's decisions. He had conceived evil in his heart; now that heart must conquer its weakness by seeing to it that the spoilt darling who had been the medium of the harm should

also be the medium of the healing. He would treat the lad with a little severity, would lay a responsibility upon him by way of doing penance himself.

Seeing him at a distance he summoned him rather peremptorily:

"Joseph!"

" Here am I , " answered the boy, and was beside him at once. He was glad to be called, for since the departure of the brothers his father had spoken to him but little. Besides, that last meeting with the brethren had left him, even in his folly, with a feeling of discomfortable anxiety.

" Hearken," said Jacob. Some obscure motive made him feign absent-mindedness; he blinked repeatedly and drew his beard through his hand. " Tell me if I am right in thinking that thy elder brothers are grazing the sheep together in the vale of Shechem? "

" Yes, of a surety," responded Joseph; " for it seemeth to me too, if my memory erreth not, they desired to go together to Shechem to tend thy flocks, on account of the fat meadows there and because this valley will not hold all of thine."

" So it is," confirmed Jacob, " and it is for this reason that I called thee. For I hear nought of the sons of Leah, and of the sons of the maids all knowledge is hidden from me. It is not known to me how it standeth in the meadows of Shechem; whether Yitzchak's blessing was upon the summer lambing or whether my herds are afflicted with swelling and with liver fluke. For my children thy brothers, I know nought of them nor hear whether they exercise our pasture rights in peace, in that

district where, as I mind me, serious things once came to pass. It giveth me to think; and in such thoughts I resolved to send thee to them to greet them from me."

" Here am I , " cried Joseph again. He flashed his white teeth at his father, hopped up and down, and stamped with his heels, on fire to be off.

" When I consider," went on Jacob, " that thou enterest into the eighteenth year of thy age, methinks it is time to put thy manhood to some sterner test than thou hast known. And therefore I am resolved to stir thee up to this mission; that thou leavest me for thy brothers, for some short space; to inquire of them concerning all that of which I am ignorant, and to return to me, with God's help, after ten or nine days and tell me what thou hast learned."

" Verily, here am I , " cried Joseph again, enraptured with the idea. " My father's words are golden and silver. I will make a journey across the land, I will visit the brethren and look after things in the vale of Shechem, and all that will be the greatest pleasure. Could I have wished for my heart's desire, it would not have been other than this."

Jacob said: " Thou dost not go to look after things. Thy brethren are men enough to do that themselves and need not a child. Moreover, that is not the sense in which I send thee. Rather shalt thou bow before them with all seemliness and the forms of courtesy and speak thus: ' I am come some days' journey to greet you and ask after your well-being, from my own desire as well as at my father's bidding, for our wishes in this matter are one, "

" Give me Parosh to ride; he is long-legged and hard, very strong-boned, and like to my brother Issachar."

" It speaketh for thy manliness," answered Jacob after a pause, " that thou rejoicest over thy mission and regardest it not as strange to go away from me for a number of days, so that the moon shall change from a sickle to a half-round before I see thee again. But say to thy brethren: ' The father willed it.' "

" Shall I have Parosh? "

" I am indeed minded not to deal with thee softly, but according to thy age. Yet the ass Parosh I will not give thee, for he is balky, and his intelligence doth not keep pace with his fire. A much better choice is white Hulda, a friendly and careful beast, also smart to look at; when thou journeyest abroad thou shalt ride her. But that thou mayst know that I expect somewhat of thee, and that the brothers may know it too, it is my command that thou makest the journey alone, from here to the meadows of Shechem. For I will give thee no servant along with thee nor let Eliezer ride at thy side. Thou shalt travel independently and shalt tell the brethren: ' Alone I come, upon a white ass, to visit you, according to our father's will.' Then may it be that thou needest not to ride back alone, but that the brethren may journey with thee, some or all. At least such is my second purpose in this order."

"That I will contrive," promised Joseph; " I make myself bail to bring them back to thee; indeed, I will be guarantee therefor and say to thee I come not again unless to bring them to thee."

Thus Joseph pranced about his father, prattling away heedlessly and giving praise to Yah that he was to travel by himself and see the world. He ran off to Benjamin and to Eliezer the old man to tell them all. Jacob, looking after him, nodded his head. For he perceived that if

one could speak of a challenge, it was directed toward himself and nobody else. But was he not doing rightly and acting as his inward responsibility for Joseph bade him act? He would not see the lad for several days; it seemed to him sufficient penance; and* he refused to speculate as to what the upper spheres would have considered due severity. He reckoned with a failure of Joseph's mission; that is, he realized that the latter might return without the brethren. That they might return without him was so frightful a thought that his conscious mind did not even deal with the possibility. But since things always turn out otherwise than as one had thought, we might forestall destiny by our fears and apprehensions as with an exorcism; and therefore fate paralyses our imagination, that it may deal its crushing blows unhampered by our preventive spells.

The needful preparations for Joseph's journey put Jacob in mind of his own past and of that fateful day when Rebecca got him ready and he left, after the transfer of the blessing which she had conceived and carried through. And his soul was full of the solemn emotions of recurrence. Certainly the comparison was far-fetched enough. For his was by no means the heroic part which Rebecca had played when she deliberately sacrificed her own heart, assumed responsibility for the rectifying deceit, and then, fully conscious that she would probably never see him again, sent away the beloved son into a strange land. The theme admitted of some variations. True, Joseph too was leaving home on account of his outraged brethren's wrath; yet he was not flying from the wrath; Jacob was sending him as it were into Esau's arms. It was the scene by Jabbok ford which Jacob had

in mind and whose recurrence he was so eager to bring about: the outward humiliation, the outward reconciliation which was inwardly so full of reservations; the smoothing over of obvious discords, the achievement of apparent harmony. How different from all that was Rebecca's resolute assumption of the guilt! Jacob's aim in sending Joseph was the impossible one of putting things back where they were; but since it was already plain that that could not be done, the result would simply be a resumption of the game, in which the pieces were Jacob's weakness, Joseph's blind conceit, and the brothers' deadly grudge, and which would have led, in all probability, to the same result.

But it held so far good, that the favourite was being sent a journey on account of fraternal discord; and Jacob conformed to the pattern by fixing the time of Joseph's departure for the earliest dawn, before sunrise, it having been so in his own case. But when the parting took place, Jacob — or rather Rebecca, for he was playing the mother's role — held the traveller in long embrace, murmuring blessings against his cheek; took an amulet from his own neck and hung it round the boy's, pressed him to his heart again and again, and all in all behaved as though Joseph were to be gone for years or for ever, seventeen days or more distant Naharain-wards, into the unknown, whereas instead, amply supplied with provisions, he was setting out, to his own great joy, on safe roads and to travel no farther than to Shechem. Which shows that a man can behave out of all proportion, as measured by his own knowledge; while from the point of view of the still unknown destiny his conduct may turn out to have been only too suitable. There may even

lie some consolation therein, when we learn the real state of the case. Thus men should never take leave of each other lightly; for then, should the worst happen, they can say to themselves: "At least I did press him to my heart! "

Father and son took leave in the dawning, standing at the stirrup of white Hulda, who was laden down with good things and adorned with glass beads and bright worsted flowers. The leave-taking, of course, was only the last of the many counsels, admonitions, warnings which had gone before. Jacob had instructed the boy in his route and the well-known stages on it, just in his mother's way; had warned him of the dangers of overheating and sudden cold; given him the names of folk and brethren in the faith in the various villages at which the traveller might spend the night; and sternly forbade him, when he touched at the city of Urusalim and saw at Baal's temple the dwellings of those consecrate to Ashera, who lived and moved and had their being in her, to permit himself the smallest speech with them. Above all he enjoined him to behave with particular courtesy toward the brethren. It could do no harm, he remarked, were Joseph to fling himself down seven times before them, addressing them frequently as lords, when they would in all likelihood resolve to dip their hand at once in the bowl with him and not to go from his side for the rest of their lives.

Much of all this Rebecca-Jacob repeated afresh in the grey morning, before he allowed the youth to fling his leg over his ass, chirrup to it, and ride off northwards. Jacob even went a piece alongside the lively Hulda, as she curvetted in the high spirits of the dawn. But he could

not keep it up long, and stopped with an absurdly heavy heart. One last gleam of Joseph's teeth as the lad looked laughing back and waved his hand; then his son's figure was hidden by a turn in the road. Joseph had ridden away, he saw him no more.

JOSEPH JOURNEYS TOWARD SHECHEM

THE boy, no longer under the father's eye, but pleasantly absorbed in his own well-being, sitting far back on the crupper of his beast, with his slim brown legs stretched out and his body leaning gallantly backwards, trotted in the tender light of the morning sun through hilly country, on the road to Bethlahma. He felt entirely in harmony with the whole situation as he saw it, viewed with amused and indulgent forbearance the long-drawn-out character of Jacob's farewell, and felt not a whit weighed down by the consciousness that at this first separation he had snapped his fingers at the parental concern.

Jacob, certainly, had expended himself in instruction and advice, forgetting neither precept nor warning. One thing only had he neglected; by reason of a singular and not quite innocent lapse of memory he had refrained from cautioning the boy on a certain matter, upon a certain subject, or object; nor did it again occur to his mind's eye until so horribly made present to his material sight. It was the *ketonet;* he had not told Joseph to leave it at home and Joseph had slyly and silently taken advantage of the lapse. He had it with him. He was so on fire to show himself to the great world in the garment that he had literally trembled lest the father at the last minute might think to forbid it. It is quite possible that he

would in this case have lied to the old man, saying that the sacred embroidery lay in the chest, whereas in reality it was packed among his luggage. The milk-white Hulda was a charming beast, a three-year-old, wise and sweet-tempered, if also inclined to the harmless and engaging tricks which will sometimes betray the individuality of the dumb brute. She had eloquent velvet ears and a droll fuzzy forelock hanging down to the great soft, playful eyes, the corners of which were too prone to gather flies. From Hulda's back various supplies and requisites for the journey were hung on both sides: the goatskin full of sour thin milk to slake the thirst; and many-coloured baskets and earthen pots with oatmeal and fruit cakes, parched corn, salt olives, cucumbers, roast onions, and fresh cheeses. All this and more, designed for the refreshment of the traveller himself and for presents to his brothers, the father carefully inspected; only one thing he failed to examine, an object which since time immemorial had formed the most indispensable luggage on a journey: a circular piece of leather, sewn round the edge with metal rings, which served the traveller as table-cloth and as table too. It was a Bedouin invention, particularly in use by desert folk; they ran a string through the rings and hung it up as a bag for the journey. Joseph had done this too; and with thievish joy he had thrust the *ketonet* into this leather bag.

Since he had inherited it, he reasoned, since it was his own, why not show himself in it on his travels? The neighbourhood folk on road and field recognized him and joyfully called him by name. But after some hours' travel no one would know him; it would be well to show them,

and not alone by the wealth of his provisioning, that a fine gentleman was riding by. And thus, the more so that the sun was rising too, he soon drew out the splendid garment and put it on in his own way, to protect his head; so that the myrtle garland which he wore rested not upon his hair, but upon the veil that framed his face.

On this first day he did not reach the shrine, to honour which had been another reason for wearing the *ketonet.* Jacob had admonished him with tears, also his own desire urged him, to stop there for sacrifice and prayer. It was only a furlong from Bethlahma, where he spent the night with a man of Jacob's acquaintance, a carpenter, who believed in God. Early on the second morning, after parting from his host, his wife, and their friends, he reached the spot. Hulda waited under the crutched mulberry tree while Joseph, arrayed in the bridal finery, performed his prayers and poured his libations at the stone which had been erected by the way — the memorial for God, who, seeing it, might be reminded of what He had once done at this place.

The stillness of morning lay upon the vineyards and the rocky plots of ground; there was as yet no movement upon the Urusalim road. A little wind played carelessly in the shining foliage of the tree. The landscape was still; and silently the shrine where Jacob once had laid the child of Laban to rest received the oblations and prayers of her son. He put water by the stone, and raisin bread; kissed the ground, beneath which a life so ready and willing had gone down; and stood up again, to murmur formulas of veneration with lifted hands, and the eyes and lips which he had from the departed. Nothing answered from the depths. The past kept silence, folded

in forgetfulness, unable to feel. Such of it as **had** survived and was here present was himself, who wore her bridal gown and turned her very eyes toward heaven. Why could the maternal spirit, residing still in his own flesh and blood, not have warned him against his fate? Alas, it could not speak, being held in bonds by childish folly and self-indulgence.

Joseph went on his way in great good cheer, upon made roads and along mountain paths. It was the smoothest journey in the world, its pleasantness unmarred by any mishap or unforeseen incident. Not that the earth exactly sprang to meet him. Rather it spread itself charmingly before his eyes and bade him welcome through the eyes and mouths of people withersoever he came. He was strange to all, but his type is extraordinarily popular in these regions, and not alone by virtue of the veil did his appearance meet with favour and applause from all who saw him, especially the women. They sat suckling their babes, by the garish sunlit village walls, made of loose baked loam and dung; and the comfort afforded them by the suckling was heightened by the sight of the charming and well-favoured youth who rode past.

"Health to thee, thou sight for sore eyne! " they called to him. " Blessed be she who bore thee, heart's darling! "

" And to you all health," responded Joseph, flashing his teeth. " May your sons have dominion over many! "

" Thousand thanks," they called after him. " May Ashtar favour thee. Thou art like to one of her gazelles." For they all swore by Ashera and thought of **nought** but her service.

Many, again thanks to the veil, but also on the ground of his lavish provisioning, actually took him for a god and were inclined to worship him. Still this was only in the countryside, not in the walled towns such as Beth Shemesh, Kirjath Ajin, Kerem Baalat, or the like, by whose ponds and city gates he chatted with the people, a crowd of whom often gathered round him. He astonished and delighted them by his urban culture, speaking of the magic numbers of God, of the wonders of the pendulum, and of the peoples of the globe. He told them too, in order to flatter them, of the harlot of Uruk, who civilized the man of the forest; and in all that he said he displayed such a charming sense of form and language that they thought amongst themselves: he might well be the *mazkir* of a city prince and a great king's admonisher!

He dazzled them by the knowledge of tongues which he had gleaned with old Eliezer's help; speaking Hittite at the city gate with a man from Hatti, Mittannian with one from the north, and a few words of Egyptian with a cattle-dealer from the delta. It was not much that he knew; but a clever man speaks better with ten words than a fool with a hundred, and he knew how to create, if not in his interlocutor, at least in the crowd, the impression of wonderful polyglot facility. For a woman who had had a horrible dream he interpreted her dream for her «at the fountain. She dreamed that her little son, a three-year-old boy, had suddenly grown larger than herself and wore a beard. That meant, he told her, rolling the whites of his eyes into view, that her son would soon leave her and she would indeed see him again, but only after many years, as a grown man, with a

beard. . . . As the woman was very poor and would quite possibly be forced to sell her son into slavery, the interpretation had a certain probability in itself, and all the folk marvelled at so much beauty and wisdom embodied in the young traveller.

He always had many invitations and might have been a guest for days at a time. But he did not pause longer than human courtesy required, following as well as might be his father's directions for the journey. Of the three nights which separated his four days of travel, he spent the second in a house as the guest of a silversmith, named Abisai, who had once visited Jacob and who, while not exclusively adhering to the God of Abraham, yet paid Him homage and excused the fact that he made idols of the moon metal by saying that after all he had to live. That Joseph granted him as a man of the world, and slept under his roof. The third of the brief spans of darkness he passed in the open, in a fig grove where he made his bed; for he had rested in the heat of the day and thus reached his third station so late that he hesitated to enter the town. The same thing happened the last night, as he neared his goal. For he had slept again under trees in the daytime, overcome by the power of the sun, and taken the road again only toward evening. Thus the second night watch had come on as he reached the narrow valley of Shechem. And from this moment on, in the measure that his journey had been easy and pleasant, by so much did it now seem altogether bewitched and bedevilled. He entered the valley and by the light of the moon that swam, a slender bark in the skies, beheld the walled town with citadel and temple lying on the slope of Garizim; and thereafter nothing went right,

but everything wrong and wry to the extreme; Joseph, indeed, was tempted to connect the change in his fortunes with the person of the man who met him in the night before Shechem and made himself his companion for the last stage of his journey, leading up to the greatest change of all.

THE MAN ON THE FIELD

WE are told that " he was wandering in the field." But what is the meaning of that? Had his father expected too much of him, and did young Joseph order his affairs so badly that he went astray and wandered lost? By no means. Wandering is not necessarily going astray, and if one seeks what is not there, he does not need to stray in order not to find it. Joseph had as a boy spent several years in the vale of Shechem; the neighbourhood was not strange to him, even though his familiarity with it had the quality of dreams, and likewise it was night, with an ineffectual moon. He did not stray, he sought; and since he did not find, his seeking became a straying in space. In the darkness and stillness, leading his beast by the bridle, he wandered about among rolling stretches of meadow and plough-land, above which the mountain brooded darkly in the starlight, and he thought: " Where may the brothers be? " He came upon sheepfolds, of course, where the sheep slept standing; but whether these were Jacob's sheep was unknown, and there were no human creatures, the stillness being intense.

Then he heard a voice and perceived that he was addressed by a man whose approaching step he had not heard, but who nevertheless had overtaken him and was

now by his side. If he had come toward Joseph the **lad** would have spoken; as it was, the stranger got in first, and said:

" Whom seekest thou? "

He did not ask: " What seekest thou here? " but simply: " Whom seekest thou? " and it may be that just this way of asking conditioned Joseph's rather childish and thoughtless answer. The lad was tired and confused, and his joy at meeting a human being in this accursed night walk was so great that he made the man, just because he was a man, the object of a simple and uncalled-for confidence. He said:

" I am seeking for my brethren. Tell me, dear man, I pray thee, where they graze."

The dear man took no offence at the simplicity of this request. He seemed to be in a position to disregard it and forbore to say to Joseph that his request was somewhat vague. He answered:

" They are not here, nor yet even in this neighbourhood."

Joseph looked at him in bewilderment as they went. He saw him quite clearly. This was not yet a man in the full meaning of the word, being only a few years older than Joseph; but taller, really tall; wearing a sleeveless linen tunic drawn loosely through a girdle, thus freeing the knees, and a little mantle flung back over the shoulder. His head, resting upon a somewhat thick neck, seemed small by comparison; his brown hair made an oblique wave that partly covered the forehead down to the eyebrows. His nose was large, straight, and firmly modelled, the space between it and the small red mouth very narrow, but the depression beneath so soft yet so

pronounced that the chin jutted out like a full round fruit. He turned his head rather affectedly on his shoulder and looked across it at Joseph. His eyes were not unlovely, but half-shut, with weary, half-dazed expression, as of one politely forbearing to yawn. His arms were round, but white and rather weak. He wore sandals and carried a stick which he had obviously cut for a staff.

" Not here, then," repeated the boy. " How can that be? They said so definitely that they were all going together to Shechem when they left home. Dost thou know them, then? "

" A little," answered his companion. " As much as is needful. Oh no, very familiar with them I am not, indeed no. Why dost thou seek them? "

" Because my father sent me to them, to greet them and to see whether things go well with them."

" Indeed! Then thou art a messenger. Even as I. I often make journeys on foot with my staff. But also I am a guide."

" A guide? "

" Yes, truly. I guide travellers and open the ways for them; that is my business and therefore I spoke to thee as I saw that thou wast seeking as thou wentest."

" Thou seemest to know that my brethren are not here. But dost thou know where they are? "

"I think so."

"Then tell me."

" Art thou then so eager to see them? "

" Certainly I am eager for my goal, and that is my brethren, to whom my father hath sent me."

" Well, then, I will name it to thee, thy goal. When I came by this place the last time on my ways, a few days

ago, I heard thy brethren say:[4] Up, we will go to Dothan with a part of the sheep, for a change.' "

"To Dothan?"

"Why not to Dothan? It occurred to them and they did it. There is sweet pasturage in the valley of Dothan, and the people of the settlement on their hill are good for trade, they buy sinews, milk, and wool. Why art thou surprised? "

" Surprised I am not, for there is no matter for it. But it is an evil star. I was so certain I should find the brethren here."

" Thou art not much used to having things go against thy will? Thou seemest a mother's boy to me."

" I have no mother," replied Joseph in some annoyance.

" Nor I , " said the stranger. " Perhaps a father's boy? "

" No matter for that," responded Joseph. " Rather advise me, what shall I do now? "

'' Very simple. Thou goest to Dothan."

'' But it is night and we are tired, Hulda and I. To Dothan, for so much I know already, is more than a furlong from here. With easy going it is a day's journey."

'' Or a night's. Since thou sleepest under the trees by day, thou must take the night to reach thy goal."

'' How dost thou know that I slept under the trees? "

'' Asking thy pardon, I saw. I came past on my staff where thou layest, and left thee behind. Then found I thee here."

"1 do not know the way to Dothan, especially by night," Joseph complained. "The father hath not described it to me."

" Rejoice then," said the other, " that I found thee. I am a guide and will lead thee, if thou wilt. I will open to thee the road to Dothan without price, since I must go thither myself; I will take thee the shortest way if thou wilt. We can take turns riding on thy ass. A pretty beast," said he, and looked at Hulda with his half-open eyes, whose gaze expressed a negligence and contempt out of harmony with his words. " Pretty as thyself. But its pasterns are too weak."

" Hulda," Joseph said, " is next to Parosh the best ass in Israel's stables. No one thinketh that her pasterns are weak."

The stranger made a wry face. " Thou wouldst do better," he said, " not to contradict me. It is foolish in more than one way, first because thou art in my care that thou mayest find thy brothers, and second because I am older than thou. These two reasons will be clear to thee. When I say thy ass hath frail pasterns, then they are frail; there is no occasion for thee to defend them as though thou hadst made the ass, when thou canst only step before him and name him. And while we are talking about names, I should also like to beg thee not to call the good Jacob Israel in my hearing. It is unfitting and annoyeth me. Give him his proper name and leave these high-flown titles alone."

Pleasant the man was not. He continued to speak across his own shoulder with a weary politeness which seemed every minute about to pass into an incomprehensible irritation. This inclination to ill temper seemed to contradict his ready offer to help a complete stranger; indeed, it took away half the effect, since he appeared to be helpful against his own will. Perhaps he only

wanted a lift to Dothan. For he mounted the ass as they set out, and Joseph walked alongside, chafing under the man's ill-will over the name of Israel. He said:

" It is his title of honour which he got at Jabbok ford after his victory."

"I find it absurd," the other retorted, "that thou talkest of victory, where there can be no talk of anything of the sort! A proper victory, from which one cometh off halting all the rest of one's life, carrying off, indeed, a name, but not that of him with whom he wrestled! Moreover," he said suddenly, making his eyeballs roll round in a circle in the most extraordinary way, " pay no heed to me, but call thy father Israel if it please thee. It hath its justification, and my opposition was mere caprice. Likewise I note that I am sitting upon thy ass," he added, making his eyeballs perform the circuit once again. " I f thou preferrest I will get off so that thou canst mount."

A singular man. He appeared to regret his former unfriendliness; yet even the repentance seemed no deeper or more spontaneous than his readiness to help. Joseph on the other hand was friendly by nature, and held with the principle that one best meets strangeness with increase of friendliness. He answered:

" Since thou guidest me and openest out of kindness the way to my brethren, thou hast a right to my animal. Sit still, I pray thee, and we shall change anon. Thou hast walked the whole day, whereas I could ride."

" Many thanks," said the youth. " Thy words are indeed no more than becoming, but still I thank thee kindly. I have been temporarily robbed of certain facilities for travel," he added, and shrugged his shoulders.

" Do missions and messages make thee pleasure? " he next inquired.

" I rejoiced when the father called me," answered Joseph. " Who then sendeth thee? "

" Thou mayest understand that many messengers go to and fro between the great lords east and south through this land," responded the other. " Who actually sendeth thee, that thou dost not know at all; the commission goes through many mouths and it helps thee little to follow it to its source; in any case thou must take to the road. At present I have a letter to deliver in Dothan," said he, " which I carry here in my girdle. But I can see in the future that I must also play the guard."

" The guard? "

" Yes, I am liable, for instance, to be commanded to watch over a well or some shrine or other, of which there is question. Messenger, guide, guard — all these I must play as they come, according to the taskmaster's will. Whether it give one pleasure and whether one actually feel made for the task is another matter, which I put aside. Likewise will I not inquire whether one has understanding for the ideas which give rise to these missions. No, I prefer to leave such questions open; only saying, as between ourselves, that there is much incomprehensible urgency about the matter. Dost thou love mankind? "

He put the question abruptly; yet it did not come to Joseph as a surprise, since the stranger's whole bearing displayed an arrogant displeasure with the human species, and a disinclination to go about his business among men. Joseph answered:

*' We usually smile at each other, mankind and I . "

"Yes, because thou art known to be beautiful and well-favoured," said his guide. " Wherefore they smile at thee and thou smilest back, in order to strengthen them in their folly. Thou wouldst do better to show them a gloomy mien and say: ' What would you with your smiling? These hairs will fall out, alas, and these now white teeth as well; these eyes are only a jelly of blood and water; they will dissolve away and this whole hollow charm of the flesh will shrivel and shamefully decay.' It would be decent for thee to sober them, by the remembrance of what they know already, though they let themselves be beguiled by the servile smile of the present moment. Such creatures as thou are nought but a fleeting and dissembling gloss upon the horror of all flesh beneath the surface. I do not say that even this skin and husk is the most appetizing in the world, with its steaming pores and sweat-glands; but scratch it ever so little and the salt scarlet brew comes out, while the deeper one goes, the worse it gets; it is sheer guts and stink. The beautiful and well-favoured should be beautiful and well-favoured through and through, solid and fine-grained and not filled up with dirt and jelly."

" Then," said Joseph, " you must stick to graven and carven images, for instance to the beautiful god which the women hide in the shrubbery and seek lamenting that they may bury him in the pit. He is beautiful through and through, of solid olive-wood, not gory and steaming. But they wish him to look as though he were not solid, but bleeding from the tusk of the boar; they paint upon him red wounds and deceive themselves so that they may weep over his dear life lost. So it is: either life is deception, or beauty. Thou canst not find both united in truth."

" Fie," said the guide, puckering his round chin and looking down over his shoulder with half-closed eyes at his companion.

" No," he added after a pause, " say what thou wilt, it is an ugly breed, that drinketh unrighteousness like water and has long since merited another flood, this time without an ark."

" Thou art most likely just, in the matter of the unrighteousness," Joseph responded. " But consider that everything cometh in pairs in the world, part and counterpart, to the end that one may distinguish between them; and if the one were not next the other, then they both were not. Without life were no death, without riches no poverty, and if we made an end of stupidity, who could speak of cleverness? But thus is it with purity and impurity, so much is clear. The unclean beast speaketh to the clean one: ' Give thanks to me, for if I were not, then how shouldst thou know that thou art pure, and who would call thee so? ' And the evil man to the just: ' Fall at my feet, for without me where were thine advantage? '"

" Thou hast said it," answered the stranger. " For it is just that which I mistrust from my soul, this dual world; I do not understand the necessity for a breed whose purity can be spoken of only comparatively and in retrospect. Yet one hath always to be mindful of him, there are always plans regarding him, goodness knows how far-reaching, and this and that to be brought about respecting his puny little future — just as now, for instance, I must see that thou comest to thy right goal, thou bag of wind! It maketh me to weep with boredom."

" The vexatious creature, why then does he show me

the way, if it is such a burden to him? " Joseph thought. " It is stupid to play the agreeable and then to sulk. It is clear he has only been thinking of the ride. He might get off too; we were going to take turns. He talks just like a man," he thought, and smiled to himself over the way people have of criticizing their own kind and excepting themselves, so that the man sits in judgement over mankind as though he were not one of them. Then he **said:**

" Yea, thou talkest of humanity and sittest in judgement, saying of what bad stuff it is composed. But there was a time when even to the children of God themselves man seemed not so evil, since they went in unto his daughters, and giants and mighty men were conceived."

The guide turned his head in his affected way toward the shoulder farther from Joseph.

" Thou knowest all the little stories, I see," he answered with a titter. " For thy years thou'rt informed in events, that I must say. For my part, be it said, I consider the tale to be idle gossip. But if it be true, then let me tell thee why it was that the children of light so behaved to the daughters of Cain. They did so from excess of contempt, yes, verily. Knowest thou why destruction came upon the daughters of Cain? They went with uncovered shame and mated like cattle. Their whoredom so mocked all bounds that man as it were could not look at it without being tempted — I know not if thou understandest that. They went to all extremes, they threw their garments on the ground and went forth without them. If they had not known shame, it might **have** answered and the sight of them would not have got

into the bones of the children of light. But they well knew shame, they were, on religious grounds, very chaste indeed, and their lust consisted precisely therein, that they would tread shame underfoot — can such a thing be borne? The man had intercourse with mother and daughter and brother's wife openly and on the streets, and they had altogether one thought in mind: the frightful enjoyment of wounded shame. Must that not seize upon the members of the children of light? They were tempted by their scorn — canst thou not understand that? The last shred of respect was gone from them for this breed, who were set under their noses, as though there were not enough already in the world, and whom they should have respected on grounds of higher necessity. They found that man simply existed for unchastity, and their contempt took the form of lasciviousness. If thou canst not understand all that, thou art but a calf."

" I can understand it if I try," replied Joseph. " But how dost thou come to know it? "

" Ask thy old Eliezer, too, whence cometh what he teacheth thee. I know as much of the events too, perhaps even more, moving to and fro in the world as I do, as messenger, guide, and guard; I come to hear the most various things. I can assure thee that the flood only came at last because it appeared that the contempt of the children of light for mankind had taken the form of desire. That turned the scale; otherwise it would perhaps never have happened. I need only add that the children of light were of fixed purpose to bring on the flood. But unfortunately there was the ark, and man came in again by the back door."

" Let us be glad of that," said Joseph. " Otherwise we should not be here chatting on the way to Dothan and *taking turns* to ride according to our agreement."

"Thou art right," replied the other, and again rolled his eyes round. " I forget everything chattering. Of course I must lead thee and guard thee that thou comest to thy brethren. But who is more important, the watcher or the watched? Not without some bitterness must I answer: the watched is more important, for for him is the watcher there, and not the other way about. Therefore I will now dismount and thou shalt ride, and I walk beside thee in the dust."

" I can stand that too," said Joseph, as he mounted. " It is after all pure chance that thou canst ride even a part of the time and not go all the way in the dust."

So they went on under the stars by the pale moonlight, northwards from Shechem toward Dothan through broad and narrow valleys, over steep hills, clothed in forests of cedar and acacia, past sleeping villages. Joseph too slept by the hour as he sat on the ass, and the guide walked in the dust. But awaking out of such slumber — it was already dawn — he missed a little basket of pressed fruit and another of roast onions from the ass's load and noted reluctantly that the folds of his guide's girdle were correspondingly fuller. The man stole! It was a painful discovery and showed how little ground he had had to except himself when he criticized the race of mankind. Joseph said never a word; indeed, he himself in their conversation had defended the evil for the sake of its opposite. Moreover, the man was a guide and thus dedicate to Nabu, the lord of the westernmost point in the cycle, leading down into the underworldly half of

the world — a servant, that is, of the god of thieves. One might assume that he had performed a pious and symbolic act when he stole from his sleeping charge. For all these reasons Joseph said nought of his discovery, but reverenced the dishonesty of the man, in the guise of religious duty. Yet it was painful to learn that the guide had stolen, out and out. The fact might be a fresh explanation of his willingness to play the guide; in any case it impressed Joseph unfavourably and cast him down.

But something much worse than the theft happened soon enough. The sun had come up behind field and wood and Dothan's green hill was already in sight; it lay diagonally on their right in the morning sunshine, with the village on its top. Joseph, sitting on the ass while the thief held the bridle, was looking thither; there was a jerk and a fall, and it had happened. Hulda had gone into a hole with her forefoot, had fallen, and could not get up again. She had broken her pastern. They both examined it.

" Broken," said the guide, shortly. " What a fix! Have I not said to thee the pasterns were weak? "

"Thou shouldst not rejoice even if thou art right; the words should not come in thy mouth. Thou wast leading her and wast not careful, so that she stepped into the hole."

" I was not careful and thou complainest of me? But so it is with human beings; they must have someone to blame when things go wrong, even though it was prophesied beforehand."

" It is also the way of mankind to have wilfully foreseen misfortune and to make a petty triumph of it. Be

glad that I complain of thee only for heedlessness, I might have accused thee of other things as well. If thou hadst not advised me to ride by night, then we should not have overtired Hulda and a wise beast like her would never have stumbled."

" Dost thou think the pastern will be made good again by thy lamentings? "

" No," Joseph said. " That I do not. But that brings me back to the question: what shall I do? I cannot after all leave my beast lying here with all the load of provisions which I was to present to the brethren in Jacob's name. There remaineth much though I have eaten some and more has been got rid of in other ways. Shall Hulda die helpless here and the beasts of the fields eat my goods? I am near to weep from vexation."

" And who knows again what to do but I? " responded the stranger. " Did I not say that I can play the watchman, when need is? Go then, for I will sit here and watch thy beast, and the provisions, and frighten off birds and other thieves. Whether I am born for such a task is another matter which we need not talk of here. Enough, I will sit and guard thy ass until thou hast gone to the brethren and come back with them or a couple of servants to fetch the goods and look after the beast to see if it is to be cured or killed."

" Thanks," said Joseph, " so let us do. I can see thou art just like a man; thou hast thy good sides and of the others we will not speak. I will make all haste and return again with help."

" I will await thee. Thou canst not go wrong: round the hill and then back into the valley behind it five hundred paces through scrub and clover — there wilt thou

find thy brethren, near a well where there is no water. If thou needest aught from thy ass bethink thee now. Not a head-cloth to shield thee from the sun? "

" Thou'rt right," cried Joseph. " The mischance hath robbed me of my head. That will I not leave here," said he, and drew the *ketonet* out of the beringed leather bag, " nor in thy care either, whatever good side thou showest. For I will take it with me afoot into the vale of Dothan, that I may arrive in splendour even if not on white Hulda as Jacob would have wished. I will put it on at once and before thine eyes — so — and so — and thus, and thus. How dost thou like it? Am I not a gay shepherd-bird in my coat of many colours? Mami's veil, how doth it become her son? "

OF LAMECH AND HIS HURT

MEANWHILE Leah's sons and those of the maids sat, **all** ten, behind the hill at the bottom of the valley round a burnt-out fire where they had cooked their morning mess; they stared into the ashes. They had all risen betimes from their striped tents set up at some distance in the shrubbery; had risen singly, but all very early, some even before dawn; for their sleep had relished them little. They had got, in fact, but little refreshment from it since they had left Hebron; indeed, they had exchanged the pastures of Shechem for the vale of Dothan out of no other than the desolate hope that it might refresh them better elsewhere.

They had gone grumbling to the well, stumbling with stiff joints over the matted and twisted roots of gorse. **It** was **a well** of fresh water near the place where the

flocks were scattered over the field; for the well close at hand was dry at this time of year. They had drunk, washed themselves, and prayed, looked after the lambs, and then assembled at the eating-place in the shade of a group of red-trunked, branching pines. The view from here took in the level country dotted with single trees and shrubbery, the hill with the village of Dothan on top, the distant flocks of sheep, and the low mountains in the background. The sun was already well up. The air was full of scents of sun-warmed grass, of fennel, thyme, and other field odours beloved of sheep.

The sons of Jacob sat in a circle upon their haunches, in their midst the dying brushwood fire with the pot atop. They had long since finished eating and sat there idle and red-eyed, their bodies sated, but their souls gnawed by a hunger and dry thirst to which they could not have given a name, but which spoiled their sleep and made their food like ashes to them. A thorn was in their flesh, in the flesh of each one. It could not be pulled out, it festered, tortured, and consumed. They felt slack, and most of them had headache. When they tried to clench their fists they could not. These men who once, to do vengeance for Dinah, had bathed Shechem in blood, asked themselves if they were the men for like deeds today; and they answered no, they were no longer those men. The gnawing worm of their grievance, the festering thorn, the hunger in their inwards unnerved and unmanned them. Simeon and Levi, that savage pair, suffered especially from their shameful state. One of them poked dully with his crook in the dying embers. The other, Simeon, swaying his body to and fro, began a half-muttered singsong, in which some of the rest joined one

after another. It was an ancient ditty, a fragment of some half-forgotten ballad or epic, from times far remote:

And Lamech the hero took unto him two wives,
The name of the one was Adah and the name of the other was Zillah.
Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech!
For I have slain a man to my wounding
And a young man to my hurt.
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seven and seventyfold.

That was all they knew, it was without beginning or ending. So they stopped there; yet hung on the sound, as it died away, seeing in their mind's eye Lamech the hero, how he came up armed and glowing with pride from his deed and told his women, as they bowed before him, how that he had washen his heart clean. They saw the young man laid low and lying in the blood-stained grass, the almost guiltless sin-offering for Lamech's frantically sensitive honour. The plain word "man" was softened to the tenderer " young man " in the next line, and in the sacredness of his suffering and death might well have roused emotions of pity at least in the hearts of Adah and Zillah, being women. Even so, they could only have enhanced their adoration of Lamech's implacable and incorruptible virility and unquenchable thirst for revenge, these being the ringing theme of the ancient saga.

" Lamech he was called," said Leah's Levi, thrusting his charred stick into the fire till it broke. " Does it please you all? I ask that because it pleaseth me well and even

very well. That was a man, a blade, a lion-heart, a fellow of the ancient mould; there are no more of his like. He lives only in a song, which we sing to refresh ourselves with thoughts of the past. With his heart washed clean he might come before his wives; and if he visited his strength upon them, one after the other, then they knew what manner of man they received, and trembled with desire. Dost thou come so before Shuah's daughter, Judah, or thou, Dan, before the Moabitess? Tell me what has become of the breed since then, that it begets only the prudent and pious, but no true men? "

Reuben answered him: —

" I will tell thee what taketh man's revenge out of his hand and bringeth it about that we are grown unlike to Lamech, the hero. It is twofold: Babel's law and the jealousy of God, both of which say: ' Vengeance is mine.' For revenge must be taken from the man, otherwise it breeds furiously on, rank as the swamp, and the world is full of blood. For what was Lamech's end? Thou dost not know, for the song telleth it not. But the youth whom he slew had a son or a brother, who struck Lamech down, **that** the earth received his blood likewise. Then one out of Lamech's loins slew Lamech's murderer out of revenge, and thus it went on, until neither of Lamech's seed nor of the seed of the slain youth was there any left, **but** the earth might close its maw, for it was sated. But it is not good so, it is a weedy growth of revenge and groweth by no rule. Hence it was, when Cain slew Abel, God set His mark upon him, that he belonged to Him and spoke: ' Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be **taken** on him sevenfold.' But Babel decreed that man

should humble himself to judgement for blood-guilt and not revel in revenge."

Thereto Gad, son of Zilpah, in all his directness:

" Yea, so speakest thou, Reuben, with thy thin voice which cometh out of thy mighty body, and however often one heareth it one is surprised. Had I thy limbs I would not speak like thee and defend the revolution of time and its changes, which unman heroes and breed no more lion-hearts in the world. Where is the pride of thy body, that thou speakest with thin voice and wilt put thy vengeance into God's hands or submit it to judgement? Shamest not thou thyself before Lamech, who spoke: ' This is a thing between three, between me, and him who offended me, and the earth? ' Cain said to Abel: ' Will God console me when Noemah our sweet sister taketh thy gifts and smileth upon thee; or will the judgement decide to whom she belongeth, thee or me? I am the first-born, and so is she mine. Thou art her twin, so is she thine. That God decideth not, nor the judgement of Nimrod. Let us go out upon the field that we may decide it!' And they decided it together; and as I sit here, named Gaddiel, whom Zilpah bore upon Leah's lap, I am for Cain."

" And I, for my part," said Jehudah, " would no more be the young lion as I am called of the people if I were not for Cain and still more for Lamech. He thought well of himself, on my word, and thought not meanly of his pride. ' Seven times? ' quoth he. ' Bah! I am Lamech. Seven and seventy times will I be avenged, and there lieth he, the lout, for the sake of my hurt!' "

" What sort of hurt may that have been? " asked

Issachar, the bony ass, "and wherein may the pitiful youth have fallen under the mighty Lamech's displeasure, that he left it neither to God nor to Nimrod to avenge, but took vengeance abundantly with his own hand? "

"That no man now knoweth," responded his half-brother Naphtali, Bilhah's son. "The nature of the youth's insolence is unknown and what it was which Lamech washed off in his blood, that is lost to the world's memory. Still I have it from hearsay that men in our time swallow shame much more loathsome than that which Lamech suffered. They swallow it, the craven creatures, so we hear, and go away elsewhither, and sit them down; and in their belly the shame fermenteth and consumeth, that they care neither to eat nor to sleep; and if Lamech whom they admire should see them he would give them a kick behind, for they are worth no more."

He spoke with glib and spitefully fluent tongue, and his face was distorted. The twins groaned and tried to clench their fists but could not. Zebulun said:

" There were Adah and Zillah the wives of Lamech; and Adah is to blame, as I shall show you. For she bore Jabal, the father of such as dwell in tents and of such as have cattle, the ancestor of Abram, of Yitzchak and Jacob our gentle father. Therefrom have we our trouble and our destruction, and are no more men, as thou sayst, brother Levi, but cautious and pious, and as though castrate with the sickle, which may God forbid. Yes, were we huntsmen or even seafarers, all would be changed. But with Jabal, Adah's son, came love of tents into the world, the shepherd nature and Abram's dreams of God, and all that hath weakened us so that we tremble to do

our worthy father a hurt, and big Reuben sayeth: ' Vengeance belongeth unto God.' But can one rely by means of abominable dreams upon God and upon His justice when He is a party in the strife and Himself instils arrogance into the good-for-nothing youth? For what can we do against the dreams? " he cried out, his voice cracking in his anguish, " if they are from God and it is ordained that we should bow? "

" But something we might do against the dreamer of the dreams! " shrieked Gad, likewise with heaving chest; and Asher added: " So that the dreams were without a master and no longer knew how to come true! "

" That," replied Reuben, " would likewise have meant setting oneself against God. For it were all one, to set oneself against the dreamer or against God, provided the dreams were from Him." He spoke in the past tense, saying not " would mean " but " would have meant," in token that the question was solved.

It was Dan who spoke after him. He said:

" Hearken, brethren, and give heed to my words, for Dan is called snake and otter, and on account of a certain subtlety he availeth as judge. It is surely true and Reuben is right. If we punish the dreamer, so that the dreams become masterless and powerless, we thereby expose ourselves to the wrath of the self-willed and invoke upon us the vengeance of the unjust. There is no gainsaying it. But so," saith Dan, " we must run the risk, for there is nought imaginable that could be worse or even as bad as the fulfilling of the dream. For in any case self-will will have lost, let it rage and storm as it will, and the dreams shall seek their dreamer in vain. We must act, for only the accomplished deed instructed

Hath not Jacob too suffered this and that for his deceitfulness and found Laban's service no matter for laughter on account of Esau's bitter tears? Yet he hath endured, for he carried off the main advantage, that is the blessing; it was put aside and in safety, and no God, whoever he was, could have done ought against him however much he would. One must endure tears and revenge for the sake of the good, for what is put aside and in safety, that cometh not again. . . ."

Here his speech, which had begun so subtly, began to wander. But Reuben answered; and it was strange to see that man, strong like a tree in strength, turn pale and white:

" Thou has spoken, Dan, and mayst now be silent. For we have gone thence and departed from the father's hearth. And our annoyance is afar from us and in safety, and in safety we sit at Dothan, five days distant, and all that is an accomplished deed."

And then, after all these speeches, they let their heads droop low, almost between their knees, which stood up high as they squatted on their haunches; and there they crouched round the ashes of their fire, like ten sheaves of misery.

JOSEPH IS THROWN INTO THE PIT

Now it happened that Asher, Zilpah's son, with curiosity unquenched even by affliction, peered out over his knees so that his eyes roved across the plain. And afar off in the morning light he saw something glitter like a flash of silver, which disappeared and came again, sometimes in a single flash, sometimes two or more close together.

Asher jogged his brother Gad as they sat next each other, pointed out the will-o'-the-wisp, and asked him what it meant. They shaded their eyes to look and gestured their surprise; the others saw and heard, and those who sat with their backs to the plain turned round to gaze, following the direction of Asher's eyes; until at last all the brothers had lifted their heads and peered out together at a shimmering figure which was moving toward them.

"One cometh, all shining," Judah spoke. But after they had waited awhile for the figure to come nearer, Dan answered:

" It is not a man, it is a boy."

And with one accord their sunburnt faces all went ashen as Reuben's had done a little time before, and their hearts beat with a wild and rapid rhythm, like drums, so that a hollow concerted drumming arose in the breathless stillness.

Joseph came on across the plain, directly toward them, in his coat of many colours, and his garland resting on his veiled head.

They did not believe it. They sat with their thumbs in their cheeks, fingers before their mouths, elbows on their knees, and stared out over their fists with starting eyes at the approaching illusion. They hoped they were dreaming, yet feared to find it so. Some of them, even, in a confusion of fear and hope, refused to believe their eyes when the oncoming figure smiled and spoke, and there was no more doubt.

"Yea, verily, and greetings to you all," he said in his very voice, and came close up to them. " It is indeed 1.1 am come for our father's sake on Hulda, the she-ass,

to look after things with you and to — " he stopped, disconcerted. They sat without word or stir and stared, a sinister group, like men bewitched. But as they so sat — although there was no sunrise and no sunset which might have painted their faces, yet these grew red as the writhen trunks of the trees at their backs, red as the desert, dark red as the star in the sky, and their eyes looked as though blood would spurt out. He stepped back. There arose and swelled a thunderous roar, that bull's roar of the twins, which made one's inwards to quake; and with a long-drawn shriek as from tortured gullets, a furiously exultant yell of rage and hate and sudden release, they all ten sprang up as one man and flung themselves savagely upon him.

They fell upon him as the pack of hungry wolves falls upon the prey; their blood-blinded lust knew no pause or consideration, it was as though they would tear him into fourteen pieces at least. Rending, tearing apart, tearing off — upon that they were bent, to their very marrow. " Down, down, down! " they panted with one voice; it was the *ketonet* they meant, the picture-robe, the veil. It must come off, and that was not so easy, for it was wound about him and fastened at head and shoulder; and they were too many for the deed. They got in each other's way; one thrust another away from the victim as he flew and fell and bounded among them. The blows meant for him showered upon themselves — though he indeed received a plenty as well. His nose bled almost at once, and one eye was closed with a great blue weal.

But the confusion served Reuben's ends, as he towered among them shrieking: " Down, down," with the rest.

He used the immemorial tactics of those who wish to control a savage mob and keep a grip upon the course of events: he took part with apparent zeal in the fray, in order to prevent the worst from coming to pass. He dealt out blows while feigning to receive them, all the while cuffing and pushing those nearest Joseph, protecting him as best he might when they were about to strike him and tear off his robe. He aimed particularly at Levi, on account of the crook in his hands, blundering against it as often as he could. But despite all Reuben's manoeuvres, Joseph was served worse than the petted youth could ever have dreamed possible. He reeled half-dazed, with his head drawn down between his shoulders, and his elbows spread against the hail-storm of brutality, descending out of a blue sky, which horribly seemed not to care where it struck, but beat down upon him, cutting into very little pieces his trust, his whole notion of the world, his conviction that everybody must love him more than themselves, as though it were a law of nature.

" Brothers," he stammered, with the blood streaming down his chin from his nose and his bruised lips, " what are you — "A rude blow, which Reuben failed to fend off, knocked the words from his mouth. Another, landing in the pit of the stomach, between the ribs, made him collapse and disappear beneath the pack. I cannot deny, rather I must emphatically say, that this uprising of the sons of Jacob, however much justice they had on their side, was a most shameful relapse into savagery. They sank below the level of the human and availed themselves of their teeth, being otherwise busy with their hands, to tear his mother's garment from the body of the bleeding, reeling lad. They were not dumb at the work,

they said other things besides "Down, down, down! " They were like labourers pulling and heaving and with monotonous cries subduing themselves to the common task; bringing up broken words out of the depths of their hate to feed their rage and stave off thought. " Bow down, bow down, thou sayest? " " Look after things, wilt thou, thou thorn in the flesh, thou lingering sickness! There for thy dreams! " And their unhappy victim?

To him the most horrible and incredible thing of all was what happened to the *ketonet.* That was worse, crueller, even, than all this howling horror about him. Desperately he tried to protect the garment and keep the remnants and ruins of it still upon him. Several times he cried out: " My coat! My coat! " and even after he stood naked, still begged them like a girl to spare it. Yes, he was naked, for the violence of the brothers' onslaught not only carried off the veil, but shift, loincloth, and myrtle wreath lay in tatters beside it on the moss; while blows rained down upon his naked flesh and he sought as best he could to ward them off with his arms. " Bow down, bow down! Take that for thy dreams! " Big Reuben did what he could to keep them off by behaving as though the others prevented him from coming at the victim and dealing his blows. " Thou thorn in the flesh, thou lingering sickness! " he cried out with the rest. But also he cried out something else, which occurred to him on the spur of the moment; cried it loud and repeatedly, in order that they might all hear it and be guided in their blind rage: "Bind him, bind him! Tie his hands and feet! " It was a new suggestion, invented in haste to a good end: namely, to set a definite goal to this otherwise incalculable business and introduce a breathing-

space, in the which big Reuben, as he feverishly prayed, might avert the worst. They would not strike Joseph while they were busy binding him; and when he lay bound, that would be a temporary gratification, a stage at which they might stand off and consider what next. Such was Reuben's hasty calculation. And thus with desperate zeal he proposed his expedient, as though he were indicating the one and only useful and reasonable plan and as though anyone was a fool who did not hearken to it. "There — that for thy dreams!" he shrieked. "Bind him — bind him! You fools! What a senseless revenge! Instead of hitting me, bind him. Is there no rope? " he cried once more with all his strength.

Yes, Gaddiel for one wore a length round his waist; and he took it off. As their heads were empty, there was room in them for Reuben's words. They bound the naked lad, bound his arms and legs with one long piece of cord, trussed him up properly while he moaned and groaned; and Reuben assisted zealously at the work. When it was done, he stepped back and wiped off his sweat with a gasp, as if he had worked harder than any.

The others stood there, their lust for battle slaked **for** the present; panting, inactive, dazed. Before them lay Rachel's son, in grievous state. He lay on his bound arms, with the back of his head buried in the grass, his knees drawn up stiffly, his ribs going in and out, all bludgeoned. Moss and dirt clung to his body, it was slobbered with the foam of his brothers' fury, and across it ran in winding streams the red juice which gushes out of beauty when its surface is marred. His undamaged eye now gazed terror-struck at his murderers, now closed spasmodically in a reflex action against fresh violence.

The evil-doers stood getting their wind; they exaggerated their breathlessness in order to cover the lack of counsel, of which, as reason returned, they were slowly aware. They, like Reuben, wiped off their sweat with the backs of their hands; they puffed out their lips and made faces expressive of justified revenge, as who should say: " Whatever we have done, can any reproach us for it? " They said the same in words. They panted out words justifying themselves in each other's eyes or before any court in the world: " Cuckoo! Thorn in the flesh! But we have shown him, we have cast him out! " " Could one credit it? Cometh here — here before us, in his coat — before our eyes — to look after things — but we've looked after them— so he'll not forget it! " — and all the while there was stirring within them a horror and shuddering, which all their words were meant to quiet. And if the horror and shuddering were looked at nearly, it would turn out to be — the thought of Jacob.

Great God, what had they done with the father's lamb — to what state had they brought the youthful heir of the departed Rachel? How would the master of words behave when he knew or learned it, how would they stand before him and what would happen to them? Reuben thought of Bilhah. Simeon and Levi thought of Shechem and of Jacob's wrath and how he had come down upon them when they returned from their heroic deeds. Naphtali, Naphtali especially, found it a present consolation that Jacob was five days away and entirely unsuspecting. Yes, for the first time Naphtali realized as a blessing the power of space, which separates and spares. But they all realized that the blessing could not be preserved. Jacob must presently hear all. When Joseph came again

before his eyes, the storm of emotion, the rolling thunder of his words, the flashing lightning of his curses — the brethren could not escape nor yet endure them. Grown men as they were, they were frightened like children, possessed with the fear of the curse in itself, and in all its meaning and consequence. Cursed they would be, one and all, because they had raised their hand against the lamb; and now the young hypocrite would definitely be exalted above them as the chosen heir. They would actually have themselves to thank for the fulfilment of those shameful dreams; precisely that which God willed would have been brought about by this accomplished fact. They perceived that big Reuben had made fools of them with his advice. Here they stood, and there lay the thief of the blessing; pretty well punished indeed, and bound — but was that really an accomplished fact? It would be different if Joseph never did come before his father's eyes again; if something final and conclusive happened to him. The calamity and the lamentation would be even greater, of course — too great to think on. But — somehow or other — it would pass. Stopping half-way, even so they were guilty. If they went on, they needed not to be. All this went through their heads as they stood — through Reuben's too. He could not help recognizing the situation. He had brought the brawl to a halt with a shrewdness which came from his heart. But his reason told him that too much had happened for it to stop there. That more had to happen, and yet on no account and at no price must happen — this it was which made him giddy. Big Reuben's sinewy features had never before worn that baffled, sullen look.

Each moment he feared they would voice the inevi-

table — and he had no answer. Then they voiced it, and he heard. One of them said it — no matter who, since they must all be thinking the same thing: "He must away."

"Away," nodded Reuben with grim confirmation. "Thou sayest it. But thou sayest not where."

"Away altogether," answered the voice. "He must go down to the pit and be no more. Long time he ought not to have been; now certainly he must be no more."

"I agree," responded Reuben with bitter scorn. "And then come we before Jacob, his father, without him. 'Where is the boy?' he will ask. 'He is no more we answer. But if he ask: 'Why is he no more,' then we answer: 'We have killed him.'"

They were silent.

"No," said Dan, "not so. Brothers, hear me, I am called serpent and otter, and a certain subtlety is not to be denied me. Thus will we do. We will put him in the pit, down in the dry well here, half choked, in which is no water. There lieth he in safety and put away, and will see what his dreams bring him to. But before Jacob we must lie and speak with assurance: 'We have not seen him and know not whether he still is or is not. If not, then in any case a ravening beast hath devoured him, oh woe, alas!' We must add 'Oh woe' for the sake of the lie."

"Be quiet," said Naphtali, "he lieth close at hand and heareth us."

"No matter," answered Dan. "He will tell no one. That he heareth it is one reason more that he may not go from here; even before that he could not, but now everything goeth together. We can speak as we like before him, for he is already as good as dead."

A cry came from Joseph, he wailed out of his breast stretched taut under his bonds on which the tender red nipples stood out. He wept.

" Can you hear it and not pity? " Reuben asked.

" Of what avail is that, Reuben? " answered him Judah, " and what talkest thou of pity, though the rest of us may feel it as well as thou? Doth his weeping in this hour blot it out that he hath been a shameless toad all his days and stank to heaven and hath supplanted us with the father with most shameless guile? Doth pity avail against necessity and is it a good reason why he should go from hence and tell all? What good to talk of pity, even if it be felt? Hath he not already heard how we shall lie before Jacob? That is enough to end his life, that he hath heard it; and whether with or without pity Dan spoke the truth: he is as good as dead."

" Thou art right," said Reuben then. " Let us throw him in the pit."

Again Joseph wailed piteously.

" But he still weepeth," one of them reminded them,

" Must he then not even weep? " cried Reuben. " Let him go weeping into the pit; what more can you ask? "

I would fain pass over what was said next, for it would shock our modern taste and however delicately put would place the brothers or some of them in an exceedingly bad light. The truth is that Simeon and Levi, as well as the downright Gad, offered to make an end of the lad without more ado. The twins wanted to do it with their staves, hitting out with the full strength of their arms, as Cain had done, until he was no more. But Gad asked to be given the job of cutting his throat quickly with the knife, as Jacob had once done with the kid whose skin he needed for the forged blessing. That these suggestions

were made is undeniable; but I am not anxious that the reader be finally disgusted with the sons of Jacob, therefore I will not put their thoughts into precise words. They uttered them because those things had to be said; because, so to speak, they lay in the nature of the business. Besides, it was only natural that those best suited to the role were they who expressed their readiness and so conformed to their myth on earth: namely, the savage twins and the stout Gad.

But Reuben opposed. It is known that he opposed, and would not have it happen to Joseph as it had to Abel or to the kid. " To that I will not agree," he said, protesting in his character as Leah's eldest, which despite fall and curse entitled him to a voice. The boy was as good as dead, they had said so themselves. He was only sobbing a little still, it would suffice to throw him into the pit. Let them look at him and say whether that was still Joseph the dreamer. He was already unrecognizable from the punishment, in which he, Reuben, had taken part, and would have done more had he not been struck from all sides. But what had happened had been just a happening, it was not an act, not a deed, you could not call if so. It had come about, indeed, through them, but they had not done it, it had simply happened to them. Now, however, they were deliberately proposing, of set purpose, to commit a crime and raise their hands against the boy; they were about to spill their father's blood, whereas up to now it had only flowed. And that was a world-wide difference, it was all the difference between an act and an occurrence; and if they did not see that, then they were short in their understanding. Were they, he asked, appointed judges of life and death, to judge in their own

matter and then carry out the blood-decree as well? No, there should be no shedding of blood, he would not stand for it. What remained to them to do, after what had occurred, was to put the boy into the pit and leave the rest to happen.

Thus big Reuben, but nobody believed that he was deceiving himself or that he was so stoutly convinced of the hard and fast difference between happening and doing. Or that he did not see that putting Joseph in the pit would be the same as killing him. After a while Jehudah asked him what it would avail to kill the boy and conceal his blood; the question told Reuben nothing new. For all along we have looked into Reuben's heart and seen that his great desire was to gain time. He could not have said for what; simply time to feed the hope that he might save Joseph out of the brethren's hands and somehow bring him back to his father. It was his fear of Jacob which actuated him, as well as his crabbed and shamefaced love of the culprit; they drove him to conceal his thoughts and meditate treason against the clan — for it can be called nothing else. Moreover, Reuben the unstable had manifold sins to atone for in Jacob's eyes, on account of Bilhah. What if he brought Joseph safe home? Would not then the ancient wrong be more than made good, the curse lifted and his first-born-ship be restored? I do not assume to understand all Reuben's thoughts and actions, nor would I minimize the motives of his deeds. But need it belittle them to guess that in his secret heart he hoped both to save and to vanquish Rachel's son?

In any case his words met with scarcely any opposition from the brothers. They were willing to refrain and

to let events decide. Probably they would haVe preferred that the " happenings " should have continued and led in one blind thrust to the goal they sought. But to continue deliberately and to shed blood, to " act" now that a pause for reflection had intervened — nobody wanted to do that, not even the twins, however savage, nor yet Gaddiel, no matter how stoutly he spoke. They were all glad, indeed, that their offer about bludgeons and knives had not been taken up, but that Reuben's authority should prevail again: first the tying-up, now the pit.

" Into the pit," was the word. They seized the cord which bound Joseph, caught hold here and there, and dragged the poor wretch across the field toward the pit at the edge of the pasture-land. Some dragged in front, some tugged at the sides, the rest ran behind. Reuben did not run, but moved with a long stride at the tail of the convoy; when a stone lay in the way, a gnarled root or stump or a prickly shrub, he lifted the poor soul that he might not suffer needless pain.

So it was off with Joseph to the pit, with a heigh and a ho, for as they went, a fury of merriment seized upon the brethren, the animal spirits of men working in unison. They laughed and joked and shouted nonsense to each other; as that this was a sheaf which had been well bound and now should bow itself into the pit, into the well, into the depths. In all this they were venting the relief they felt at not being impelled to follow the pattern represented by Abel and the kid. Besides, it drowned the sound of Joseph's prayers and lamentations: " Brothers! Have pity! " he mumbled with his bruised mouth. "What is it you do? Stop, stop! Woe, alas, what will befall me? "

His moans helped him not at all; on they went at a trot, through bush and grass, a long way across country to a mossy slope. Here some steep, broken steps led down to a walled-in bottom, paved with cracked flags. The air was cool, and oak scrub and fig trees grew out of the ruined walls. They dragged Joseph down the steps, he struggling desperately in their arms and against his bonds, for he shuddered at the thought of the well that was there and of the hole of the well, but even more at the broken, mossy well-stone that lay on the flags and was meant to lie over the top. But let him struggle and weep as he might, his unclosed eye directed in horror into the blackness of the well, they hoisted him to the brink with a heave and a ho and tipped him in, to fall who knew how far!

It was far enough, though not an abyss, not a bottomless pit. Such wells often reach a hundred feet and more down, but this one had been long out of use and choked with earth and broken stone — perhaps on account of old quarrels about the place. It was no more than five or six fathoms deep if that. Certainly too much to climb out of with bound limbs. But he fell with as much care for life and limb as he could, braking here and there with feet and elbows round the wall, and moderating his fall to a slipping which landed him fairly sound among the rubbish at the bottom, to the discomfiture of all sorts of beetles, wood-lice, and other crawling things. While he was collecting himself, the brethren did the rest, shouting as they lifted the stone at the top and heaved it into place. It was heavy — not one man's work to roll it on top of the pit; so they all laid hold and shared in the task. For the ancient stone, all green with moss and

full five foot round, was sprung into two halves; and when they had rolled each into place the two did not meet, but yawned; and through the uneven gap some light fell into the hole. Joseph looked up at it with his one eye as he lay huddled anyhow, naked and exposed, in the depths.

JOSEPH CRIES OUT OF THE PIT

THEIR task being done, the brothers sat down on the steps of the well-chamber to rest; some drew bread and cheese out of their girdles and ate. Levi, religious in all his savagery, gave them to remember indeed that one should not eat at the shedding of blood, but they answered him that what they had done was to avoid bloodshed. Upon which, Levi ate too.

They ruminated as they chewed. For the moment their thoughts were occupied with sensations which, though of little importance, yet altogether possessed them: their hands and arms, that is, bore the memory of the contact with Joseph's bare skin, as they dragged him to his doom. No matter how ungentle the contact had been, now that it was all over, it gave them a retrospective feeling of tenderness which was very strong, however little they understood what it meant. Nobody gave expression to it by so much as a syllable; and what they said concerned only the fact that Joseph was now safely out of the way, together with his dreams, and that they were greatly lightened thereby.

" Now he is no more," said they. That was that; now they could sleep; they could sleep in peace, they repeated, the more emphatically the more uncertain they

felt about it. It might be true with regard to the dreamer who was gone and could tell the father nothing. But the thought failed to soothe, for it reminded them of the father waiting in vain for Joseph's home-coming — eternally in vain. Such a picture, however much security it contained, noways invited to slumber. For all the ten, including the savage twins, it was a picture full of horror. Their childish fear of Jacob and of the tenderness and power of his soul was clear and lively. True, Joseph would never be able to accuse them. But they had bought their security by means of an offence against their father's emotions, which it terrified them to realize. What they had done to Joseph had its cause in jealousy; but we all know what feeling it is that suffers this distortion. It seems little convincing, looking at the slick brutality of the twins, to ascribe any such feeling to them; and precisely on this ground it is that I do not make any positive statements. There are cases where only half-words will serve.

So they mused and blinked as they chewed, feeling on hands and arms the memory of the softness of Joseph's flesh. Their reflections were not light, and they were further weighted by the weeping and begging that rose faintly out of the pit. After the fall he had so far gathered himself together as to realize the need of crying out, and he implored them from below:

" Brothers, where are you? Ah, go not away, leave me not alone in the pit. It is so earthy and so horrible. Brothers, have pity and save me still out of the night of this pit where I perish. I am your brother Joseph. Brothers, hide not your ears from my sighs and cryings, for you do falsely to me. Reuben, where art thou? Reu-

ben, I cry thy name from below in the pit. You have all misunderstood, you have misunderstood, dear brothers, so help me still and save my life. I came to you on our father's account five days' journey on Hulda the white ass, to bring you presents, ears of corn and fruit cakes. Ah, how it hath all gone wrong! The man is to blame that it went wrong, the man who led me. Brothers in Jacob, hearken and understand me, I came not to you to see how things were, for I am but a child. I came to bow before you with decorum and the forms of courtesy and to ask after your welfare, that you should return home to our father. Brothers! the dreams . . . was I so unmannerly as to relate my dreams? Believe me, I have only told quite modest dreams by comparison with what I could have, but not this was it I wanted to say. Oh, oh, my bones, my sinews right and left, and all my limbs! I thirst, brothers, the child thirsteth, for he hath lost much blood, and all through a mistake. Are ye yet there? Am I already quite forsaken? Reuben, let me hear thy voice. Tell them that I will say nothing if they will but spare my life. Brothers, I know you think you must leave me in the pit; otherwise I would tell. But by the God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, by the heads of your mothers and by Rachel's head, my little mother's, I swear that I will not tell for ever and ever, if you let me out of the pit but this one time."

" He would tell, of a certainty, if not today, then tomorrow," muttered Judah between his teeth; and there was none who did not share this view, Reuben not excepted, however much it might conflict with his wavering hopes and plans. But so much the more must he keep

these secret and assert the contrary; therefore he hollowed his hands about his mouth and called:

" If thou art not quiet we will throw down stones upon thee that shall kill thee entirely, for we will hear no more of thee, thou art sped."

When Joseph heard this and recognized Reuben's voice, he was terrified and ceased to speak and they might sit undisturbed and taste their fear of Jacob. Of course, if they had meant to prolong their self-imposed exile and live in lasting discord with their father, then they need not have troubled themselves over the agony of waiting and long despair which was hovering over Jacob's head. But the truth was exactly the opposite. The casting away of Joseph could serve one only purpose: that of removing the obstacle between them and the father's heart. Upon that they were childishly bent. The trouble was that they had been driven to extremes in order to win this soft but mighty heart for their own. This was the point of view under which they at all times saw the affair. Not punishment of Joseph's presumption, they were of one mind in thinking, nor yet revenge, nor even, in the first instance, the obliteration of the dreams, was their main concern. What they thought of was how to smooth their path to their father's heart. This now was done, and they would return — without Joseph, as they had set out. Where was he? He had been sent after them. And thus sent, to those who by their departure had demonstrated that they could not stand him, their return without him would look very suspicious. Certainly Jacob would have an awful right to question them. They might shrug their shoulders in reply. Were they their brother's

keepers? Of course not; but the answer would not satisfy Jacob's piercing, mistrustful gaze which he would direct upon them relentlessly, while they continued to be witnesses of his tortured expectancy and of the prolonged despair which in the nature of things must be its only issue. It was a penance before which they quailed. On the other hand, were they to stop away until all hope had died and waiting had given way to the knowledge* that Joseph would never return? That would last long, for the stout-hearted can bear long suspense, and besides in the meantime the question might easily answer itself and become a curse for them all. No, it was clear that they must once and for all establish the fact that Joseph would not come back; that alone could clear their skirts. Their minds were all busy with these thoughts, but snake-and-otter Dan brought to them speech. He combined his own earlier idea of telling the old man that a wild beast had killed Joseph with Gad's reminder of the kid which Jacob had killed to obtain the blessing; and he said:

" Hear me, brothers, for I have power to judge and I know what we should do. For we shall take a beast of the flock and cut its throat and let the blood run out. But in the blood of the beast we shall dip the accursed thing, the coat of many colours, Rachel's bridal garment that lieth all in rags. Bring we it before Jacob and say to him: ' This have we found on the ground, torn and covered with blood. Is it not thy son's garment?' Then may he draw his conclusion from the state of the garment, and it will be as when a shepherd showeth to the master the remains of the sheep that a lion hath slain; thus is he cleansed and needeth not to swear himself free from guilt."

" Hush," muttered Judah, shuddering. " For he can hear what you say under the stone and can understand what we shall do."

"What harm in that?" Dan retorted. "Shall I whisper and mutter for his sake? It hath nought to do with his life; it is our affair, but no longer his. Thou forgettest that he is as good as dead and done for. When he hath understood that and also this that I now say with my natural voice, then everything is settled. Never have we been able to speak freely and without caution when he was amongst us, for we well knew that he would tell the father and then we had to pay. But now at last we have him amongst us as our brother, whom we trust and he may hear everything we say — it maketh me to feel that I should like to throw a kiss to him there in the pit. But what think you all of my idea? "

They were about to speak; but Joseph lifted up his voice once more, imploring them from the pit not to do it.

" Brothers," he cried, " do not that with the beast and the robe, treat not the father so, for he will not survive it. Ah, I beg you not for myself, for body and soul are broken in me and I lie in the grave. But spare our father and bring him not the bloody garment — it would kill him. Ah, hadst thou heard how he warned me in anxiousness about the lion, when he found me alone by night, and now it will be that a lion hath eaten me. Had you seen the care with which he prepared me for the journey and I indifferently endured his concern! Woe is me, it is most likely unwise that I speak to you of his love of me, but what shall I do, dear brothers, and how counsel myself that I do not vex you? Why after all is my life in-

volved with his, that I cannot adjure you to spare his without begging for my own? Ah, dear brothers, hear my weeping and do no violence to his suffering by showing him the bloody robe, for his gentle soul will bear it not and he will be stricken to the earth."

" Nay," Reuben said, " that is more than I can stand, it is unbearable." He stood up. "Let us move farther away, if you like; one cannot talk with him wailing, nor think for his crying out of the depths. Come to the huts." He said it angrily, they might think he had gone pale with rage. But actually his pallor was due to his having agreed in his heart with what the boy had said. He, too, realized that Jacob, at sight of the robe, would literally be struck to the earth. But more than that, Joseph's words had impressed it upon Reuben that the lad, in his hour of need, was mindful of their father and pleaded with the brethren on his behalf and for himself only for the father's sake. But was he perhaps pretending as of old? No, no, this time it was different. This was another Joseph who cried out from beneath the stone from the one whom he once had shaken by the shoulder to awaken him from vanity and folly. What the shaking had not achieved the fall into the pit had done: Joseph was aroused, he pleaded for the father-heart, he mocked no more, but felt distress and remorse. The discovery strengthened big Reuben's vacillating purpose, while at the same time it made him more acutely sensitive of its helpless and hopeless character.

Thence his pallor, as he got up and suggested to them all to go with him away from the place where Joseph was buried. They followed him, they went from thence, to gather up the rags of the veil on the spot of the beat-

ing, to bring them to the tents and there to take counsel over Dan's idea. So Joseph was left alone,

IN THE PIT

His soul was anguished to remain alone in the grave; for some time he wailed after the brothers and implored them not to leave him. Yet he scarcely knew what he cried out; his actual thoughts were not with these mechanical and superficial prayers and lamentations but far below them, while lower down again were others yet more real, like their undertones and ground-basses, so that the whole was like a moving music, perpendicularly composed, which his spirit was occupied in conducting on all three levels. This preoccupation was what caused him to commit the blunder of telling the brethren that he had only told them comparatively modest dreams, considering those others which he had also dreamed. No one in his right senses could even for a moment think that the remark was calculated to soften their hearts; but an absent and preoccupied mind might have done so, and thus was it with Joseph.

Much had gone on within him, even since that astonishing and horrible moment when the brethren fell upon him like wolves and he had looked into their faces distorted by fury and hate, out of the eye which they had not closed at once with their fists. Their faces had been very near to him while they with nails and teeth tore the picture-robe from his body — frightfully near; and the hatred which he had read therein had been the greatest torture and the main cause of the horror he felt at the onslaught. Certainly he had quaked with fear and wept

for pain under their blows; but fear and pain were quite permeated with the pity he felt for the torturing hatred which he read in the mask-like faces, dripping with sweat, that rose and fell and were thrust into his own. But pity for a pain the source of which we must recognize to be ourselves comes close to being remorse. Reuben's intuition had been quite right: this time Joseph had been so rudely shaken that his eyes were opened and he saw what he had done — and that he had done it. While he was flung hither and thither among their raging fists, while his robe was torn off, while he lay bound, and during his penitential journey to the well-house, amid all his daze of horror his thoughts had never once stood still. They had not paused upon the frightful present, but sped back over a past in which all this, hidden to his blissful self-conceit though partly and presumptuously known to it, had been preparing itself the while.

My God, the brothers! To what had he brought them? For he did understand that he had brought them to this: through manifold and great mistakes which he had committed in the assumption that everybody loved him more than themselves — this assumption which he believed and yet did not actually quite believe, but according to which he had always acted and which had brought him — as he now clearly and distinctly recognized — to the pit. In the brothers' distorted and sweating masks he had read clearly with his one eye that the premise had gone beyond human power and over a long period had strained their souls and given them great suffering, until now at last the final issue had been reached in this end, so frightful for him and doubtless for them too.

Alas, poor brothers! What must they have borne be-

fore in desperation they laid hold on the father's lamb and actually threw it into the pit! Into what a state had they thereby brought themselves — to say nothing of his own, which was hopeless, as he shudderingly confessed himself. It was not credible that he would hold his tongue if he were restored to his father. He could never make them believe it, he could not believe it. And so they must leave him in the grave, to perish there; there was nothing else for it. This he saw; yet wonderful to say, horror at his own impending fate left him room in his soul for pity for his murderers. We know this to be true. Joseph was quite aware, he admitted it to himself openly and honourably as he sat at the bottom of the well, that the unashamed presumption which had been the guiding principle of his life had been a game in which he himself had not seriously believed nor could have done; that, for one thing, he ought never to have told his brothers his dreams. It had been impossibly and incredibly tactless. He even realized that he had actually known this all the time— and yet he had done it. Why? That he did not know. Apparently, that he might be destroyed. But at the bottom of his heart Joseph did not believe it. Privately he was convinced that God looked further than the pit, that He had far-reaching things in mind as usual and had His eye upon some distant purpose, in the service of which he, Joseph, had been made to drive the brethren to the uttermost. They were being sacrificed to the future, and he suffered for them, however badly things went with himself. They would send their father the robe, unhappy men, after they had dipped it in the blood of the kid in lieu of his own; and Jacob would be struck to the earth. At the thought Joseph was moved

to start up, to protect his father from the sight — with the only result of course that he felt shooting pains through and through him, sank back in his bonds against the stones of the well, and began once more to weep.

He had an agony of leisure in which to weep, to feel anguish, remorse, and pity; and despairing of his life, yet in his inmost being to believe in the wise and healing future purposes of God. For, frightful as it is to think of it, he was to remain three days in the pit, three days and nights in his bonds, naked and exposed, in dirt and earth mould, among crawling worms, without bite or sup, without consolation or any reasonable hope of ever reaching the light again. I, who tell it, must take care that I paint it as it was, that I make clear what it meant for Jacob's little son, who had never imagined that fate could be so harsh: how dismally the hours passed, till his scrap of daylight died in the crack between the stones and a pitying star sent down its diamond ray into the grave; how the pale dawn twice came, abode, and went again; how he constantly peered up in the twilight at the round walls of his house to see whether there were footholds in the broken wall, or crevices made by pushing roots — but his bonds, and the stone well-cover, each by itself and certainly together, quenched every hope in the bud; how he twisted himself about in the cords to find an easier posture, which quickly became even worse than the other; how thirst and hunger tortured him and the emptiness of his stomach gave him burning sensations in his back; how like the sheep he soiled himself with his own filth and therein nestled and shivered till his teeth chattered. I am greatly concerned to give a lively and exact picture of this all-embracing

unpleasantness; at the same time I must be careful to cling to reality and not let my imagination get the upper hand and lose itself in empty emotion. Reality is sober — precisely in its character as reality. At grips with the actual and undeniable, driven to an understanding with it, reality insists upon our suiting ourselves to the circumstances and adapting us without loss of time. We are easily persuaded to call a situation unbearable. Our easily aroused humanity protests indignantly, and that probably does the sufferer good; but it becomes a little absurd in the face of the *really* intolerable. The sympathetic friend's relation to this reality, which is of course not his own, is an unreal and sentimental one. He commits an error of the imagination, for the sufferer, thanks to his suffering, is in a different category. What do we really mean by the unbearable, when there is nothing to be done but bear it so long as we are in our senses?

But young Joseph had not been entirely and clearly in his senses for a long time; not since the moment when the brethren had turned into wolves before his eyes. The storm which then broke over him had numbed him very much, effecting those palliations which the unbearable needs in order to be borne. The beatings he had received had dulled his feeling, as had that unbelievable conveyance into the well. His situation was certainly desperate, but at least it had put a period to those frightful shocks and produced a sort of equilibrium. However objectionable his present state, it had the advantage of security. Buried in the womb of the earth he needed not to fear further violence and had time to pursue his labouring thoughts — for these at times almost made him forget his physical sufferings and dangers. And his security

(if we may use the word with reference to almost certain death — but why not, since death is at all times certain and yet we feel secure), his feeling of security then, inclined him to sleep. His exhaustion was so great that it outweighed all else. He fell asleep and through long stretches of time knew little or nothing of himself. When he roused, his astonishment at the refreshment which the sleep had brought (for food and sleep can for a while replace each other) mingled with a fresh sense of horror that he was still in the pit and still in misery. Even in sleep he did not entirely lose the sense of misery; but its worst rigours did, as it were, manage to relax a little. The bonds were hard, the cramped position still endured; but even they began to relax, on the second and third days the cords had given way a little and yielded to the needs of the poor tortured limbs. I say all this, once more, to confront our sympathy with the solid reality of facts. But on the other hand, if I add that Joseph was of course growing weaker all the time, it will serve to keep our pity from quite dying out, even though I must add that his very weakness was an amelioration to his sufferings. From this point of view one might almost say that the longer his stay in the pit lasted, the more tolerable it was; so that by the end he was scarcely aware of his own misery.

But his thoughts worked on and on, the body almost forgotten. It was as though, in the piece of music which we have imagined them to represent, those undertones and basses at the bottom came out stronger and stronger, thanks to that dreamy weakness of his, until at last they almost drowned out the overtones. So long as the brethren were near, the fear of death had been apparent, as

expressed in his urgent entreaties and wailings. But now they were gone and the cries had died away, why was it that Joseph did not shout in hopes of a chance rescue? Because he quite forgot to, absorbed as he was in far other trains of thought, having to do with his abrupt downfall, with the past and its errors, perhaps ordained by God, but not on that account less heavy and grievous.

The garment which the brothers had torn off his body — partly with their teeth, shocking to say — played a prominent role in his reflections. That he ought not to have spread himself in it before them, nor made his ownership visible to their eyes; above all things that he ought not to have appeared before them in it here and now came over him so forcibly that he could have beat himself on the head but for his bonds. He did so in spirit; but even so he had to confess to himself the futility and curious hypocrisy of the gesture; for now he saw that he had always understood the whole thing and yet had so behaved. With amazement he contemplated the riddle of self-destructive arrogance presented to him by his own extraordinary behaviour. His wits could not cope with the riddle successfully — nor can anyone's. Perhaps because so much of the incalculable is implicit therein, so much that is contrary to reason and even perhaps holy. How he had trembled lest Jacob discover the *ketonet* in the bag — trembled, that is, before his own salvation! He had deceived his father, taken advantage of the old man's failing memory, and packed the *ketonet;* but not because he had disagreed with the father as to the effect which the sight of the veil would have upon the brothers. He had understood perfectly and had packed it none the less. How could he have done so?

Again, since he had not forgotten to take care for his own destruction, why had Jacob forgotten to prevent it? Another puzzle. Joseph's desire to smuggle the coat could not have been stronger than the father's loving concern that he should leave it at home. Why had not love and anxiety been strong enough to remind the old man and so to foil Joseph's plan? Joseph had succeeded in beguiling away the rich garment from Jacob's tent; it was partly the effect of the game, partly because Jacob wanted the child to have the robe, quite as much as the latter desired it. The consequences followed promptly. Together they had brought the lamb to the pit, and now Jacob would be struck to earth.

But after that he might well bethink him of the mistakes of the past, common to them all — just as Joseph was now doing. The boy was honest with himself: he admitted that he had forsworn himself when he said he would say nothing to Jacob if the brothers released him. The promise had been born of fear; Joseph knew that if the old state of things were restored — which with some part of his being he ardently desired — he must unavoidably tell all, and the brethren would suffer the consequences. Restoration was out of the question; but even if it were not, he was in a way at one with the brethren in not wishing for it. He could almost have returned the kiss which Dan had wanted to throw to him in the pit, so much did he feel that for the first time he was really among them as their brother and might hear all that they said; might even hear that about the blood of the kid which should pass for his blood; it did not matter, since he was as good as dead and buried already.

A strong impression had been made upon Joseph by

what Dan had said: that every word they uttered was like a nail in his coffin, and that it was good to utter them, since each one bound him more firmly to the lower world and made of him more and more a ghost before whom one shudders. Joseph saw in such words the reversal and negation of the role which he had played so far in life, that of needing to heed nobody because all the world loved him more than they did themselves. For it was come to this, that no one heeded him at all! The thought conditioned those undertones and basses of his composition, and the weaker he became, the more did they sonorously predominate over the overtones.

But they had begun to play even earlier; at the moment when the undreamed-of became reality; when his provocative conduct had called down punishment and he was tossed to and fro like a toy amongst the brethren and they had torn the picture-robe with their nails and teeth. From that moment on, then, they had been vocal; in the midst of that hail of horrifying blows his ear had in good part hearkened to them. It would be wrong to suppose that under such deadly serious circumstances Joseph had stopped playing and dreaming — if one may still speak of his activity as playing and dreaming, in this connection. He was a true son of Jacob, the man of thoughts and dreams and mystical lore, who always understood what happened to him, who in all earthly events looked up to the stars and always linked his life to God's. Granted that Joseph's way of dignifying his life by attaching it to the higher law and reality was not the same as Jacob's, less spiritual, more shrewdly calculating; yet he seriously held that a life and activity without the hall-mark of higher reality, which does not base upon

the traditionally sacred and support itself thereupon, nor is able to mirror itself in anything heavenly and recognize itself therein, is no life or activity at all. He was convinced that nothing in the lower world would know how to happen or be thought of without its starry prototype and counterpart; and the great certainty guiding his life was belief in the unity of the dual, in the fact of the revolving sphere, the exchangeability'of above and below, one turning into the other, and gods becoming men and men gods. Not for nothing was he the pupil of old Eliezer, who knew how to say " I " in such an ample way that Joseph's eyes grew dim with musing as he beheld him. The transparency of being, the characteristic recurrence of the prototype — this fundamental creed was in his flesh and blood too, and all spiritual dignity and significance seemed to him bound up with awareness of it. That was as it should be. What was after all not quite as it should be, but seemed more like a degenerate deviation from the significant and admirable type, was Joseph's inclination to draw advantage from the general prepossession in his favour and consciously to impose himself upon those about him.

From the first moment on he was aware of all this. Incredible as it may seem, in the thick of the turmoil, in the acutest moment of fear and danger of death, he had kept his mental eye open to realities. Not that fear and danger grew less thereby; but he actually experienced a sort of joy as well; the pleasure of enlightenment, almost like the relief which laughter brings, had illuminated the dark terror in his soul.

" My coat! " he had cried out in the anguish of his concern; " tear it not, I pray you." Yes, they had rent

it in pieces and torn it off him, that was his mother's robe and that belonged also to her son, so that they wore it by turns and became one, and god and goddess by its means. Mercilessly had the brethren unveiled him. As love unveils the bride in the bedchamber, thus had their fury done to him, and they had known him naked, so that his frame quivered with the deathly shame. In his mind thoughts of unveiling and of death dwelt close together — how could he then have helped holding the rags of the garment round him in his fright, begging them to tear it not? Yet no more could he have helped being filled with the joy of understanding, coming to him through association of thought, through the conviction of repetition and realization. No danger of the flesh and the soul could prevent the concentration of his spirit upon the wealth of allusion by which the event proclaimed itself as higher reality, as a transparency of the ancient pattern, as the uppermost turning undermost; in short, as written in the stars. And his concentration was very natural, as the allusions all had to do with being and selfhood, with the vista of his ego which he had opened to Reuben a little time ago to the latter's amaze and which now was growing brighter and brighter. He had wept and wailed when big Reuben had given his voice that they should throw him into the pit; yet at the same time his reason had laughed as at a joke, the word used was so laden with allusions: " *Bor* " the brothers had said. And the monosyllable was capable of various interpretations. It meant not only well, but prison; not only prison, but the underworld, the kingdom of the dead; so that prison and the underworld were one and the same thought, one being only a word for the other. Again, the well, in its property

as entrance to the underworld, likewise the round stone which covered it, signified death; for the stone covered the round opening as the shadow covers the dark moon. In Joseph's mind the primeval prototype of the death of the planet peeped through the present event: the dead moon, which is invisible for three days until its new birth, means the death of the gods of light, who must for a time descend to the underworld. When the horror happened and the brothers hoisted him onto the edge of the well and on the margin of the pit, so that he must descend below the daylight with all the caution he could muster — then his quick mind had clearly understood the allegory of the star which one evening is a woman and in the morning a man and which sinks into the well of the abyss as evening star.

It was the abyss into which the true son descends, he who is one with the mother and wears the robe by turns with her. It was the nether-earthly sheepfold, Etura, the kingdom of the dead, where the son becomes the lord, the shepherd, the sacrifice, the mangled god. Mangled? They had torn only his lips and his skin here and there, but the robe they had torn off and rent with nails and teeth, those red murderers and conspirators, his brothers, and they would dip it in the blood of a kid, which should pass for his blood, and they would bring it before the father. God demanded from the father the sacrifice of the son, for the soft-hearted one, who shuddering had confessed that he " could not do it.[9]' Poor man, he would have to do it, and it was like God that He paid little heed to what man thinks he can do.

Here Joseph wept in his transparent misery, presided over by his understanding. He wept over poor Jacob,

who would have to summon his endurance, and over the brethren's confidence in his death. He wept for weakness and giddiness from the exhalations of the well; but the more lamentable his situation became in the course of the seventy-two hours which he spent here below, the more clearly the undertones of his thoughts came out, the more deceptively his present mirrored itself in its heavenly prototype; so that by the end he no longer distinguished the heavenly from the earthly at all and in the dreamy self-satisfaction of death saw only the unity of the double. We may with justice regard that as a device of nature to tide him over the unbearable. For the natural hope, to which life clings up to the last, needs a reasonable justification; and Joseph found it in this identification. Indeed it extended beyond his life, his hope that he would finally not perish but somehow be saved out of the pit. For, literally speaking, he gave himself up for dead. There was the brethren's confidence, there was the bloody robe, which Jacob should receive. The pit was deep; and return to his former life was inconceivable — a thought as monstrous as that the evening star might return out of the abyss wherein it was sunk, and the shadow be withdrawn from the dark moon, that it should again be full. But the conception of the death of the planet, the darkening and setting of the sun, whose habitation becomes the lower world, included likewise the idea of reappearance, new light, resurrection. And therein Joseph's natural hope that he might live justified itself by faith. It was not a hope that he might return out of the grave into his former life; yet by its means the grave was defeated. Joseph cherished it not only for itself and for its own sake but for the poor old man at

home, whom he had brought down into the pit together with himself and who would be stricken to the earth. It would probably be after the son's death that Jacob would receive the bloody robe. But if only the father could have faith beyond death according to the ancient hope, then, thought Joseph in the grave, the blood of the beast would be taken as once it had been, for the blood of the son.

6

THE STONE BEFORE THE GRAVE

THE ISHMAELITES

MEN came from Gilead, from the East and beyond the river; rocking along on their camels, four or five, with a few extra pack-animals laden with wares; and with slaves and camel-boys bringing their number up to eight or ten. They were travelling merchants, at home neither here nor in the place whence they came; strange men, very brown of face and hands, with felt circlets round their head-cloths, wrapped in burnous with diagonal stripes; they had sharp eyes, showing the whites as they rolled them observantly round. One of their number, who rode at the head of the train, was of dignified age; a thick-lipped boy in a white cotton garment led his animal on a long rein, while the master sat in the high saddle, his head consideringly on one side, with his hands, wrapped in his mantle, resting on the saddle-bow. It was clear that he was the head of the party. The others were his nephew, son-in-law, and sons.

What manner of men were these? That can be told in general, and also with some precision. They lived in the south of the Edom-Seir country, at the edge of the

Arabian desert, on the Egyptian side. Their domain, which was a passage and crossing into the land of mud, was called Mizraim, another name for Egypt. But it was also called Muzri; in another dialect Mosar, or even Midian, after the son of Abram and Keturah. It was a colony of the people of Ma'in, farther south, near the land of incense, who traded between Arabia and the kingdom of beasts and of the dead; also western Canaan and the country of the two rivers. They had storehouses at Muzri, went to and fro with wares between the peoples, and convoyed all the state and royal caravans between one country and another.

In other words, our travellers were Ma'onites from Ma'in, or Minaeans, called Midianites. But since one scarcely distinguished between Medan and Midian, Abraham's sons by his desert concubine Keturah, they might be called Medanim as well as Midianites — it made no difference to them. Even if you gave them the generic name of all desert folk, taking not Keturah but Hagar the Egyptian as their foremother and simply called them Ishmaelites, they had no objection either. It was of no importance to them what people called them and who they were; the main point for them was that they existed and could trade to and fro on the trade routes. Indeed there was some reason to call the old man and his companions Ishmaelites; for as men of Muzri they were half Egyptian, as had been the fiery and beautiful youth named Ishmael. You might, loosely speaking, say that they were descended from him.

This was no royal or state caravan coming on from the East — by no means. They were private travellers, bound on their own business, and without ostentation.

They had been marketing their wares on the hither side of the Jordan, at the fairs which were held on feast-days. They sold Egyptian linens, coarse and fine, also pretty glass trifles of various kinds, taking in exchange, with a good profit to themselves, all sorts of sweetmeats, balsams, incense, and gums. And if on this side of the river they managed to acquire some of the native products, such as honey and mustard, a camel-load of pistachios and almonds, they would be well content. As for their route, they were as yet undecided: whether to follow the road running north and south which ran along the crest of the mountain and would take them by way of Urusalim and Hebron to Gaza by the sea, or whether they would do better first to keep to the north and east and then by way of the Megiddo plain reach the coast and follow along it to their country, which was a passage and a crossing into the land of Egypt.

It was past midday when they entered the valley, the old man in the lead, the others behind him in a row. They intended to see whether the people of Dothan were holding a fair where they could do business. They let their animals pace along on low ground which fell away into a mossy slope. And their quick eyes spied below them the ruined steps and the masonry among the thickets. The old man, crooking his neck, saw it first; he pointed it out to the others, made them stop, and sent down the youth in the cap to spy out the place; for travellers such as these are explorers and inquisitive by nature and must see all there is to see.

The boy was not gone long; he simply jumped down and sprang up again and announced with his thick lips that a covered well was below.

" If it be covered and hidden," said the old man shrewdly," then it will be worth looking into. The people of the land hereabouts are jealous and stingy; I think it is possible that the well hath water of unusual coolness and freshness — we can use it and take our vessels full; I see nobody who could hinder us; moreover, why are we called Ishmaelites if we may not take what we can in defiance of their jealousy? Take a skin and some bottles and let us go down."

They did as he bade them, for he was their leader. They made their animals lie down, untied the vessels, and climbed down into the well-chamber: uncle, nephew, son-in-law, and sons, with some of the slaves. They soon saw that the well had no bucket and no windlass. But that was no matter, they would let down a leather bottle and fill it with the jealously guarded water. The old man sat down on a fallen quarrystone, settled his clothing, and motioned with his dark-skinned hand that they should roll away the stone from the hole. The stone was broken in two.

" This well," the old man said, " is covered indeed, and hidden, but also it is in a very bad state. The children of the land seem jealous, but likewise heedless. Meanwhile I will cherish no doubts of the goodness of the water; that would be premature. Good, one-half of the stone is rolled aside. Seize me now the other with your young arms and lay it down beside its moss-grown sister on the flags. So! Doth now the round of the water within laugh in its purity and is the mirror clear? "

They stood close to the well, on the low ledge that ran round it, and bent over the depths.

"The well is dry," said the son-in-law, still looking

without turning his head toward the old man. As he said it they all pricked up their ears. A wailing rose out of the depths.

" It cannot be that the wailing cometh out of this hole," said the old man. " I trust not my ears. Let us be still and silent and hearken if perchance we may hear it again."

It wailed once more.

" Now am I forced to trust my ears," the elder said; he stood up and mounted the step, shoving those aside with his arms who were in his way, and in his turn looked into the depths.

The others waited courteously for his verdict; but his sight was already dim and he saw nought.

" Dost thou see anything, Mibsam, my son-in-law? " he asked.

The son-in-law permitted himself to answer: " I see a white thing on the ground, that moveth and seemeth like a being, and a living thing."

Kedar and Kedma, the sons, confirmed his words.

" It is amazing," said the old man. " I confide in your sharp eyes and will call to see if it will answer. Halloo! " he called down the well in his ancient high-pitched voice. " Who or what is it moaneth in this well? Is thy place native to thee or wouldst thou be elsewhere? "

They listened. There was a little pause. Then they heard faint and far away:

" Mother! Save thy son! "

At once they were all excitement.

"Up! No delay!" the elder cried. "Bring a rope, that we may throw it down and draw the creature up to

daylight, for plainly that abode is not native to him. Here is no mother," he shouted down, " but we are pious people up here who desire to save thee if it is thy wish. See now," he turned to his men, " what one may come upon on a journey! But this is more extraordinary than ought I have met between the two rivers. Was it not shrewdly done, to spy out this hidden and covered well? And was it not I who proposed it? Men of small courage might falter or take to their heels; I can see in your faces that the thought has entered your minds; for it is uncanny to be spoken to thus, out of the depths; and it is very possible that that which speaketh is the genius of the abandoned well or some spirit of the abyss. But we must look at the matter on its practical side and meet the situation with all our energy; for the wailing from below indicateth extreme need. Where is the rope? " He bent and called into the pit: " Canst thou seize a rope which we will throw and tie it round thee that we may draw thee up? "

Again there was a pause before answer came. Faintly it sounded: *' I lie in bonds."

The old man had put his hands to his ears, but the others had to repeat to him what the voice had said.

" You hear," he said then. " In bonds it lieth. It both heighteneth his need and maketh harder our task. One of you must go down into the hole to loose the creature's bonds. Where is the rope? We have it. Mibsam, my son-in-law, I appoint thee to go down. Thou shalt be well attached to the rope and it shall be like an arm which we stretch down into the depths and draw it up again with the bundle in it. So soon as thou hast it fast, thou must call out and with our united powers we shall draw thee and our booty up to us again."

Mibsam declared himself ready, for good or for ill. He was a young man with a short face, a rather long, flat nose, and prominent eyes whose whites gleamed in the darkness of his face. He took the head-cloth from his curly hair, laid off his burnous, and lifted his arms to let himself be wound round with the rope. It was no hempen rope, but a cord of Egyptian papyrus, wonderfully softened, pounded, and smoothed, practically unbreakable. He knew its quality well, for the men carried several bales of it, to sell.

Soon son-in-law was tied and harnessed, ready to swing down. They all took part in winding him up; Epher, the old man's nephew, the sons, and the slaves. Then Mibsam sat down on the edge of the well, let go his hold, and dropped into the empty depths, while those at the rope braced their legs and passed it in little jerks through their hands. It soon slackened; Mibsam was on the ground. They could relax their legs and go to peer into the well. They could just hear his voice speaking to the creature down there, panting as he lifted him to attach the rope. "Haul up," he cried then. They hauled away on the double burden, shouting in unison, while the old man stood by directing them with gestures. Up came the son-in-law above the ruin, bearing in his arms the inhabitant of the well.

Great was the amazement of the merchants when they saw the fettered boy. They lifted eyes and hands to heaven, shook their heads, and clacked with their tongues. They rested their hands on their knees to look at their prize as he sat on the step leaning against the well, with hanging head, in his bonds, spreading abroad a mouldy air. He wore an amulet on a bronze cord round his neck and a ring with a lucky stone on his finger, but

nothing else at all. His wounds were closed over and nearly healed by this time and the bump on his eye so far reduced that he could open it. Now and then he did, though mostly he had kept both eyes shut. Now, however, he feebly lifted the long-lashed lids and looked upwards pathetically but with interest at his rescuers. He even smiled over their astonishment.

" Merciful mother of God! " the old man said. " What have we fished up out of the depths? Is he not like the spirit of the abandoned well, miserable, wretched, and half dead, when the water receded and left him stranded? But let us abide by the common-sense side of the affair and the needs of this creature we have found. For from the practical point of view he seems to me to be a boy of good quality, if not of the best, and fallen into bad luck I know not how. Look well at these eyelashes and the delicate growth of the limbs, however befouled they are and stinking from the pit. Kedar and Kedma, shame upon you for holding your noses, for sometimes he openeth his eyes. Loose him first from his fetters, cut them through. Now bring milk to refresh him. Wilt thy tongue obey thee, my son, to make us know who thou art? "

Joseph might have found words, despite his feebleness. But he had no wish to speak, nor any thought of uncovering the family quarrel to these Ishmaelites — it was no affair of theirs. Therefore he only looked dyingly at the old man and smiled piteously as with his freed hand he made a gesture of negation before his lips. He received milk and drank it out of a pot which a slave held for him, for his arms were lame from the bonds. He drank so greedily that a good part of the milk dribbled out of his mouth again directly he had done, as though he were

a suckling. When the old man, upon this, asked him how long he had been in the pit, he stretched out three fingers in sign that it had been three days, which the Minaeans found very significant and thrilling in view of the three dark days of the moon. When they asked how he got into the pit — in other words, who had thrown him in — he confined his answer to a gesture and motioned with his forehead upwards, so that one could not tell whether men had done so to him or heavenly powers been in play. But when they asked him again who he was, he whispered: " Your servant," and collapsed; so that they were none the wiser.

" Our servant," repeated the elder. " Well, in so far as he is a foundling and without us would not have had breath for his nostrils. I know not what you think, but so much I see, there is a mystery here, for many such there are in the world, as sometimes on journeys one discovereth to one's great amaze. Nought remaineth to us to do but to take this creature with us, for here can we not leave him, nor yet here build huts until he get his strength. I find," he added, " that this lad from the well toucheth my heart in some way, I know not how. For it is not pity alone nor the mystery about him. But about every human being there is an encircling ring, which is not his own flesh, but yet of his flesh, and light or dark as the case may be. Old experienced eyes perceive it better than young heedless ones, who look indeed, but do not see. Now as I look fixedly at this foundling his aura seemeth to me strikingly light and I conceive that he is the sort of find which one doth not throw away."

" I can read tablets and write cuneiform," said Joseph, lifting himself a little. Then he feJl back again.

" You hear? " asked the elder, after he had haa Joseph's words repeated to him. " He can write and is well brought up. Then is he worth finding, as I said, and not made to be left lying. We will take him with us, for, thanks to my inspiration which led me to look into the well, nobody can say us nay or call us robbers because we exercise a finder's right and do not trouble overmuch to ask after those who threw away or heedlessly lost what we have found. If the owners turn up we have a right to a reward and ransom, and it looketh as though we shall make something either way. Come, put this mantle upon him, for he came naked and foul out of the depth as from the body of his mother and is as it were twice born."

The old man pointed to the mantle which son-in-law Mibsam had thrown down; its owner grumbled against handing it over to the boy from the well, that he might pollute it. But grumbling was of no avail; he yielded to the old man's will, and two slaves bore the child in the mantle to the camels, where he was mounted with Kedma, one of the sons, a youth with sevrre and regular features and a lofty carriage of the head, so that he looked down upon all things underneath drooping lids. Round his head, atop the white head-cloth, he wore a black felt ring. At the old man's bidding Kedma took Joseph before him on the saddle, and the train got under way, taking the road to Dothan, for it might be market day there.

OF REUBEN'S PLAN

A L L this time the sons of Jacob were very ill at ease. They were in no wise happier than when the thorn **had**

sat in their flesh and they had stumbled about in the broom hot with their shame. Now the thorn had been pulled out, but the wound was unhealed. It kept on rankling, as though the thorn had been a poisoned one. They had washed out their shame, but it would be too much to say that their sleep tasted better than before. They did not say so, they kept quiet about it.

In fact, in these days they were silent altogether; spoke only when necessary and then grudgingly and between their teeth. They did not meet each other's eyes, but looked anywhere and everywhere, only not in one another's faces when they had to speak. The result was that nobody felt settled about any arrangement, since bargains struck only by word of mouth and not also with the eyes always seem to lack validity. But they did not even care, apparently, whether they were valid or not. Sometimes one or other let fall comments like " All is well, but yet — " or " So far, so good," or even " If that were all," which were but gloomy allusions to the thing which stood in the background of all their thoughts and which, not being settled, but very far from it, made worthless every word they uttered.

However, this would have to come to an end some time and somehow, however long, lingering, and disgusting the process: that slow perishing and dying down in the depths, though nobody could prophesy how long it would take. On the one hand they would have liked to hasten the process, on the other they would gladly have slowed it down, on the chance of some less ugly termination — though they could not imagine what that should be. I have repeatedly warned my readers against taking these sons of Jacob for particularly hardened

ruffians and withdrawing all sympathy from them. Even the most partisan weakness for Joseph (a centuries-old weakness from which I strive to be free) should remember that such a judgement would be very one-sided, and that Joseph himself would not concur in it. For the truth is that they had all of them stumbled unawares into the mess they were in, and would much rather be quit of it. More than once in these dreadful days they wished that they had finished with the business at once, and grumbled at Reuben, who had prevented them. But these dismal regrets were only a consequence of the tight place they were in. They felt put in a corner and checkmated; in a situation such as life will often confront us with, and for which a game of chess furnishes a good analogy.

Big Reuben was by no means alone in the wish to save Rachel's child alive out of the grave. Indeed, hardly one among the brethren but would start up every few hours under the spur of such a wish. But then would come the question: was it possible? Alas, no, it was not; the hasty resolve died down, being defeated by the relentless claims of reason. Suppose they were to rescue the dreamer just in time to save him — what could they do with him? It was a blank wall, there was no way out; he must stop where he was. They had not only thrown him in; in every other way as well they had consigned him to the tomb and taken every precaution against his rising from it. He was logically dead; their part was to do nothing but wait until he was actually so: an unnerving programme and without a time limit. For these poor souls knew nothing of three days. On the contrary; they knew of people who got lost in the desert and spent seven, yes, twice seven days without food or drink before they

were found. It was good to know this, for it gave some room for hope. And it was dreadful to know it, since the hope was a mad and impossible one. Not often have men been in such a tight place; to think only of Joseph's sufferings in these three days would be to give way to prejudice in his favour.

These tormented souls were sitting one afternoon beneath the red-trunked trees, on the spot where they had beaten Joseph and where, a little earlier, they had talked of Lamech, that primitive hero, and blushed in their shame that they were not as he. Only eight of them were there; Naphtali the runner was about somewhere in the neighbourhood seeking to hear new things and report them from place to place; and Reuben had been missing since early morning. He had mumbled something about going up to Dothan to buy spiced wine and breadfruit in exchange for some of their own wares. The others had approved of Reuben's going, on account of what he would bring back; they were unwontedly eager to comfort themselves and blur their understandings with some of the myrrh wine which was made at Dothan.

But the real truth was that Reuben had left them being bent on quite other activity and had only told them about the wine to make them approve his going. Tossing sleepless the night before, big Reuben's resolve had come to maturity: he would deceive the brethren and save the boy. Three days he had held out and left Jacob's lamb to perish in the well. He could endure no more — God grant it was not too late. He would steal away and with his own hand free him whom they had consigned to the grave. He would take him by the hand and lead him back to their father and speak to him: "I am unstable as

water, and sin is not far from me. But lo, here I have flowed to good purpose, for I bring thee thy lamb, which they would have rent. Is my sin thereby blotted out, and am I again the first-born? "

Reuben tossed no longer, but lay open-eyed and motionless the rest of the night and made detailed plans for the rescue and the flight. It would not be too easy: the boy was bound hand and foot and would be very weak. He would not be able to grasp the rope which Reuben would throw to him; a cord would not do, there must be a strong hook on it, to catch the knotted rope, in order to haul up the prize. Perhaps a web of cords would be better, a net to take his fish in. Or even a board among the cords, on which the boy, clumsy in his bonds as he was, could sit and be drawn up over the edge. Reuben went over all the necessary preparations and equipment, including his own clothes, which he would have ready for the naked lad; he chose in his mind the stout ass which he would drive to Dothan with wool and cheeses, and then ride, with the boy before him and in the shelter of darkness, the five days' journey to Hebron, to the father. Big Reuben's heart was full of eager joy, only dampened somewhat by the fear lest Joseph might not survive until dark of the third day. When he took leave of his brethren that morning, he had ado to speak and act with the dour ill-temper which had become their settled mood.

THE SALE

EIGHT of them, then, sat beneath the spreading branches of the pines and gazed gloomily into space in the direction whence the shining had come and that wandering

will-o'-the-wisp that had so dazed their senses and lured them to their present pass. As they looked they saw their brother Naphtali, Bilhah's son, come running among the shrubbery on their right. He came on with great leaps of his long sinewy legs, and they could tell even at this distance that he was bringing them news. They cared but little for it, however.

" Brothers, children, friends," he unfolded, " I bring you news: a train of Ishmaelites is riding from Gilead, their noses directed hitherwards, and must soon be here and pass by three stones' cast from where you sit. They seem friendly heathen, with bales of goods, and trade with them would be possible if we were to call to them."

They hearkened, then turned their heads listlessly away.

" It is so far good," said one. " Good, Naphtali, we thank thee for thy news."

" If that were all," another added, sighing. Then they were quiet, tortured with irritation and feeling no desire for trade.

Yet after a while they became restless, fidgeted to and fro, and stared about them. And when Jehudah — for it was he — lifted up his voice and addressed them, they all started and turned toward him: " Speak, Judah, for we hearken." And Judah spoke:

" Sons of Jacob, I have somewhat to ask you, and it is this: of what profit is it to us that we slay our brother and hide his blood? I answer for you all: no profit whatever. It was utterly weak and contemptible that we threw him in the pit and persuaded ourselves that his blood was spared thereby, that we might eat by the well; for to shed it we were all afraid. But do I blame our fear? Nay, yet

I blame that we lied to ourselves over it and made distinctions like doing and happening, hiding ourselves behind them, yet standing naked and bare, for that they are but wind. We lusted to be like Lamech in the song and slay the young man for our hurt. But our customs are not those of the ancient time and of heroic mould. Somewhat we must yield to the present; and lo, instead of killing the youth we could only let him die. Fie upon us, for the foul bastard we have cherished, begot of the ancient saga and the modern customs! Therefore I say to you, since we did not know how to do like unto Lamech and had to yield somewhat to the conditions as they exist, let us then be honest to conform to them altogether and let us sell our brother to these Ishmaelites."

A stone fell from all their hearts, for Judah had spoken after their thoughts. Now were their eyes entirely open, which indeed had already begun to blink at the light as they considered the news brought by Naphtali. Here was the way, simple and clear, out of their impasse. It was the way of Naphtali's Ishmaelites, coming God knew whence and passing into the immensity, the misty distance whence there was as little return as from the grave. They could not have lifted up the boy, however much they had wished — and suddenly now they could; for he should be delivered to these oncoming ones of the desert, and with them should depart out of sight and knowledge as the falling star and its trail quench in nothingness together. Even Simeon and Levi, seeing that heroic methods were out of fashion, found nothing to object to in the plan.

They all broke out together in eager, low-toned haste, saying: " Yea, yea, yea, yea! Thou sayest it, Judah, thou

hast spoken most excellently. To the Ishmaelites; sell him, sell him, for that is the way out; thus are we freed and our troubles at an end. Bring Joseph here; up, and raise him out of the well, for they are coming, and it is still conceivable that he liveth. A man may live twelve or fourteen days, so experience teacheth. Some to the well straightway, while the others . . ."

But lo, even as they spoke, here came the Ishmaelites. The foremost appeared three stones' throw away, an old man with his hands wrapped in his mantle, and his camel led by a boy. Behind him in single file came the others, riders, pack-camels, and drovers — no very stately train; these traders seemed not to be very rich, two even sat on one camel. They moved like shadows tranquilly across the scene, their eyes directed upon Dothan's hill.

It was too late to fetch Joseph. Too late for the moment. But Jehudah was firmly resolved, and the others as well, not to lose the opportunity, but to clutch it by the forelock and attach the boy to these Ishmaelites that they should take him out of sight and sound and so set the brethren free, for the situation was no longer endurable. The ancestor of these travellers — had he not been sent by Abraham, with Hagar into the desert, because he had " sported " in an underworldly manner with Isaac, the son of the true wife? With Ishmael's sons should Joseph be put off into the desert — the situation had roots; it had been once, and it recurred. New, if you like, a really original contribution, was the idea of the sale. But even so it has for thousands of years been booked too high on the debit side of the brethren's account. To sell a man, to sell one's own brother! But after all it is sentimental to judge without soberly taking into

account the customs of the time and the country, which deprive the sale of almost all its unique and dubious character. A needy man sold his sons — and surely the brethren were in sore need! Fathers sold their daughters in marriage — the eight now sitting here would never have drawn breath or been sitting there at all if Jacob had not bought their mothers from Laban with fourteen years' toil.

It was a bit awkward, after all, that the merchandise was not at hand, but preserved, so to speak, in a pit.in the field. But it could be fetched at the right moment, and the first thing was to accost the strangers and try if they had desire to buy.

Therefore the eight set their hands to their lips *md cried out abroad:

" Halloo, men and strangers, whence come ye and whither go? Stay a little. For here are shade-trees and folk with whom to talk."

The sound travelled across and found hearing from the merchants. They turned their eyes from the hill of Dothan and their heads toward those who called. The leader nodded, gestured, and turned aside to visit these natives, who had got up and greeted the travellers, putting their fingers under their eyes in token that they were glad to see the guests. The brethren touched brow and breast to indicate that here as there all was in readiness to receive them. The boys ran, flourishing their switches, among the camels and making clucking sounds to induce them to kneel and lie down. The riders dismounted, went through the formalities of greeting, and sat down together. The brothers remained where they were, with the

strangers opposite. The old man held the middle place, right and left of him the row of his companions, sons, nephew, and son-in-law. The retinue kept farther back. But between it and the heads of the party, behind the strangers, and in a space directly between the master and one of his sons, sat a figure with a cloak drawn over his head and before his face so that only a gap of forehead showed.

Why were the brothers impelled, during the preliminary exchange of courtesies, to keep looking at the shrouded figure in the second row? The question answers itself. The silence of the isolated figure involuntarily drew all eyes upon it — everyone would have done as the brethren did, for who wraps himself up to the eyes in fine weather as though a dust-spirit were approaching? The brothers were not at their ease, they were distracted. Not on account of that solitary figure — it best knew why it shunned the light, and might keep the knowledge to itself. No, it was because the merchandise they had to sell ought to be fetched, and it would have been well if some of them, two or three, had got up and gone to take it from where it was kept and somewhat freshen it up before offering it for sale, as they had arranged in whispers to do, while the company was approaching. Why did they not go? Probably because it had not been decided who should go. But they might have decided among themselves. Perhaps they feared to seem rude. But they could have made some excuse. Dan, Zebulun, Issachar, for instance — what held them glued to their places, staring distracted at the figure in the space behind the merchant and his son?

Each side gave account of itself, with phrases in which boasting and self-depreciation were equally balanced. Jehudah stated that he and his were simple shepherd folk, scum of the earth, compared with the lords sitting before them, and sons of an exceeding rich man in the south, a real king of the flocks, and prince of God. Some of his countless possessions were pastured in this valley, a small part only, though more than the eye could take in. The rest were at Hebron, and there too the country was too small to hold them. With whom, then, had they, in their unworthiness, to do?

The old man answered to all this that if one were to turn away his eyes from so much splendour and cast them upon himself and his troupe, one would see scarcely anything, first because their eyes had been dazzled, but secondly because there was not much to see. They were, indeed, sons of the great kingdom of Ma'on in the continent of Arabia, and dwelt in the land of Mozar or Midian. Thus they were Midianites, or, if you liked, Medanites, or, more simply still, Ishmaelites. It mattered not how they were called, since they were too worthless to merit a name. They had equipped caravans which more than once had gone to the ends of the earth; they traded to and fro amongst kingdoms, convoying treasures worth a king's ransom: the gold of Ophir and the balsams of Punt. From the kings they asked royal prices, but amongst friends they were cheap. Their camels were laden with sheets of milk-white tragacanth, of exquisite fracture, such as had never been seen in this valley, and frankincense which would tempt the noses of the gods, so that no one once smelling it would smell any other. So much for the insignificance of the guests.

The brothers kissed their finger-tips and sketched a contact between the earth and their foreheads..

"This land of Mosar, or Mainland," Jehudah inquired, " is it very far away indeed, in dim and misty distance? "

" Very far in space and thus also in time, certainly," the old man agreed.

" Seventeen days distant? " asked Jehudah.

" Seven times seventeen," responded the elder. Even at that its remoteness was only approximately indicated. In motion as in rest — for rest, too, belongs to travel — one must patiently leave it to time to overcome space. Some time or other, in the end unexpectedly time would bring that about.

Then one might say, Judah ventured to think, that these regions of their destination lay beyond our ken, God knew how far in immeasurable space?

One might so express oneself, assented the old man, if one had never traversed the distance in question and was not used to league himself with time against space, but rather to take no advantage of time for that end. If one was at home in that distance, one naturally thought about it in less fantastic terms.

He and his, Judah said, were shepherds and not travelling merchants. But if he might say so, the latter were not unique in their understanding of the patient pact with time against space. Shepherds too were travellers, they had to seek new pastures and wells and to rove and wander even as the lord of the road, in this respect being unlike the peasant of the fields, the settled sons of Baal. Their father, the king of the flocks, dwelt, as he had said, five days' journey southwards, and this distance, how-

ever insignificant compared with a stretch of seven times seventeen days, they had often traversed to and fro, so that they knew by heart every boundary stone, well, and tree that was in it, and nothing on the way surprised them. As for travel and the conquest of space: of course they could not compete with merchants from the dim and remote distance; yet even as boys they had come from the land of the rivers in the far East, where once their father had laid the foundation of his riches, and come into this land, and dwelt in the vale of Shechem, where indeed their father had built a well fourteen ells deep and very broad because the children of the city had been jealous over the existing water-supply.

" May they be punished unto the fourth generation! " said the old man. It was lucky that the children of the land had not also seized on the well of the speaker's father and zealously filled it up so that it would have become dry, he added.

Two could play at that game, responded the nine. They had in the end been able to leave the Shechemites with a bitter taste in their mouths!

Were they then, the old man asked, such mighty heroes, so cruel and implacable in their wrath?

Shepherds they were, was the answer; accustomed to bear arms, to battle with bandits and beasts of prey, and not to give ground in disputes over pasture and well. But as for distance, and stout-heartedness on the way, Judah went on, after the old man had paid homage to their virility, their ancestor seemed to have had wandering in the blood. He came from Ur, in the land of the Chaldees and had migrated into these valleys, which he had measured across and across, unable to settle down. If one

reckoned up all his wanderings, the sum would probably come to seven times seventeen days. But once he had sent his oldest servant on a journey with ten camels toward Naharaim, that was Shinar, to woo a bride for his miraculous late-born and rescued son, and the servant had fared so briskly that it was scarce exaggeration to say that the earth had sprung to meet him. And at a well in the field he had found the bride and recognized her because that she gave him water with her own hand and had also given his ten camels to drink. All this travelling and conquest of space had been in their family — not to speak of its father and lord, who already as a doughty youth had left home and gone into Chaldaea, some seventeen days and more. There he had come on a well . . .

" Pardon," said the old man, as he stretched his hand out of his cloak and stopped the speech. " Pardon, my good friend and shepherd, if thy elder servant make some comment on thy words. When I list to thee and hear thee tell of thy tribe and its history, it seemeth to me that in it the well hath played a role as important as all your experience in moving and wandering."

" How so? " asked Judah, and stiffened his back. All the brothers did the same.

" Thus," replied the elder." Thou speakest and every second the word ' well' striketh on mine ear. You change well and pasture. You have the wells of the country by heart. Your father hath built a well very deep and broad. Your grandfather's oldest slave wooed at the well. Your father too as it seems. Mine ears are buzzing with all these wells."

" My lord merchant," answered Judah, standing very stiff and erect, " meaneth to say that my words are mo-

notonous and droning. That is grievous to hear. We brothers are herdsmen, not spinners of tales by the we— not lie-mongers of the market-place, who have learned it and do it after their art, for hire. We speak and tell as we think, without artifice or skill. But indeed I would ask how one could tell of the life of man, for instance the life of shepherds, and not talk of travel and therewith of wells, without which there cannot be any coming and going. . . ."

" Very true," the old man interrupted. " My friend, the son of the king of the flocks, answereth me most aptly. What a part doth not the well play in the life of man, and how many tales and sayings are bound up with them, even in the mind of your ancient servant; whether they hold standing or living water, or are dry and choked with refuse! But indeed mine hearing, which is somewhat dull from age, had not been so receptive for the word were it not for a strange matter we have encountered on our travels, which I reckon amongst the most astonishing within my memory. I trust that of your goodness you will give me advice and enlighten me concerning it."

The brothers started bolt upright once more; their backs were quite hollow, their eyes stared unwinkingly.

" Is there not perchance," asked the old man, " in the country hereabouts where you pasture, a child missing, so that it cannot be found at its home, but hath been stolen or carried away or indeed devoured by a lion or other beast of prey, because it hath not come home for three days? "

" No," answered the brethren. Not that they knew of.

" Then who is this? " said the old man. He reached

behind him and jerked Joseph's mantle from off his head. There he sat, behind and between the men, in a nest of falling folds, his eyes modestly cast down. His face looked rather as it had on the day in the field when he sat in his father's lap and related his shameless dream of the stars. At least it reminded the brethren of that.

Several of them had leaped to their feet on recognizing the figure, but they all sat down again at once.

" Oh, thou meantest him," said Dan, seeing that it was time for him to display his snake- and otter-like gifts, " when thou spakest of the well and of lost people? Nobody else? Well, thou hast made a great find. That is a slave, a nobody's son, a villein of the lowest sort, a dog whom we have had to punish for continual theft, for lying, blasphemy, brawling, impenitence, whoredom, and all heaped-up sins against virtue. For young as he is, he is a standing sink of iniquity. Thou hast found him and taken him out of the pit where we put him for his instruction, the gallows-bird? Lo, thou hast been before us, for his punishment was out at this hour and we were about to grant him his life, if perchance he might have profited from the chastisement."

Thus Bilhah's son in all his subtlety. What he said had the boldness of desperation, for there sat Joseph and could open his mouth if he would. But it seemed that his brothers might still have confidence in him, thanks to his thoughts while in the pit, for in fact Joseph said no word, but sat with mild eyes cast down and behaved like a lamb that before the shearers is dumb.

The old Midianite said " Oh " and " Ah," wagging his head, as his eyes roved to and fro between the culprit and his judges. The wagging gradually became a shak-

ing, for something about the tale rang false, and the old man would gladly have asked his foundling the rights of the matter; but tact forbade. Therefore he said:

" What do I hear, what do I hear? Such a rogue is he, on whom we had pity and helped him out of the pit in his extremity? For this I must say, you carried your discipline to the last notch. When we found him, be was already so weak that he could not swallow the milk we gave him. If you set any store by him, you have delayed full long with your rescue; though of course he may not be worth saving, being, as you say, uncommonly full of misdemeanours, as is shown, indeed, by the harshness of the punishment."

Then Dan bit his lip, for he saw that he had said too much. He had spoken incautiously, even if Joseph's silence could be depended upon; a poke in the ribs from Judah apprised him of the fact. Dan had only thought of explaining to the Ishmaelites why they had treated the boy so cruelly. Judah, however, was thinking of the sale, and the two points of view were hard to reconcile. They were being forced to cry down their merchandise in the ears of the purchaser — it went against all sense, it had never happened to the sons of Jacob, and they were exceedingly ashamed. Apparently in this business of Joseph they got out of one tight place only to fall into another.

Judah undertook to rescue their business honour out of this pass. He said: "Well, well, all honour to the truth: the measure of the punishment may have gone beyond the offence and perhaps is misleading as to the worth of the chattel — but let that pass. We sons of the king of the flocks are somewhat harsh and hasty masters;

stern, mayhap over-stern in anger against moral lapses, a little hard-handed and ruthless in our decisions. The misdeeds of this young scapegrace here, if taken singly, were not too considerable; only the sum and the repetition of them gave us to think and decided us on the sharpness of the punishment. Its very excess showeth how highly we valued the slave and what care we took to preserve his worth. For his skill and understanding are remarkable; and as he now sits there with his sins purged by our severity, he is a valuable possession. All this I say and set down in the interest of truth," Judah concluded.

Dan blushed not a little for his misplaced subtlety, yet rejoiced that Leah's son had been so clever in getting out of the trap.

" H'm, h'm," croaked the old man, looking to and fro between Joseph and his brothers, shaking his head the while. " A clever rogue, indeed, as you say. What is the young dog's name? "

" He hath no name," replied Dan. " What should his name be? He has had no name at all up to now, for we said already that he is a nobody's son, a bastard and wild shoot begot in the swamps; he hath no tribe. We simply whistle or shout to call him, or say: ' Come hither.' "

" H'm, h'm," went the old man again. " So, a bad stock and wild is this culprit of yours. Strange, strange! How surprising is the truth at times! It is against reason and politeness, and yet one wondereth. When we took him out of his prison, this rush-born rascal told us he could read written, and write himself. Was he lying? "

" Not quite that," answered Judah. " We said already that he hath an understanding worthy of mention and is

of no common dexterity. He can keep a list and books about jugs of oil and bales of wool. If he said no more, he kept his tongue clear of false witness."

"May it be at all times avoided," responded the elder. " For truth is god and king, and Neb-ma-re is its name. One must bow before it, no matter what its sound. Can my lords and the lords of the swamp boy read and write? " asked he, with narrowed eyes.

"We consider that a slave's business," answered Judah shortly.

" That it sometimes is," granted the old man. " But also gods write the name of kings on trees, and great is Thoth. Possibly he hath himself sharpened the rushes and instructed him; may the ibis-headed one not set down the jest against me! But true it is: all ranks of men are governed. Only the scribe is not, for he governeth himself and needeth not to drudge. There are countries where this child of the calamus would be set over you and the sweat of your brows. For lo, I can imagine — and my imagination doth not entirely desert me, if I choose to put the case, in jest — that he were the lord and you his slaves. See," he went on, " I a m a merchant, and a skilled one, believe me; for I have grown old in appraising things and the value of them; so that it is not easy to fool me when I have stuff between thumb and forefinger, as to whether it be of worth, and whether the weave is coarse or fine or of medium quality. All that I can tell between my fingers; and my old head too is bent askew with the old habit of testing, so that no one can sell me poor for good. See now, the youth is fine in grain and fibre, if also worn from hard usage. I put my head on one side and rub my fingers and I can tell. I speak not

of his skill, his understanding and dexterity in writing, but of the stuff and the texture — and there I am a judge. Therefore I make bold to jest and say: My reason would not stand still were I to hear that the * Come hither' was the master and you his servants. But ye tell me truly it is the other way round."

" Of a certainty/' replied the brethren, and stiffened their backs again.

The old man was silent.

" Well," he said after a while, and again he narrowed his eyes, " since he is your slave, sell me the boy! "

In this way he put them to the test. Something in the affair was dark to him, and he made the offer suddenly and at random, slyly curious as to its effect.

" Take him as a gift," murmured Judah mechanically. And when the Midianite had shown that his head and heart were receptive to the flourish of speech, the other went on:

"Though it is against fairness that we should have had trouble with the boy and, having purged him from moral offence, should give you to inherit the fruit of our discipline! But since you have a mind to him, then make your offer."

" Do you, on the contrary, make your own price," said the old man. " For not otherwise will I consider it."

And now began the bargaining and the haggling over Joseph, and persisted unabated five hours long, until sunset and late in the day. Thirty silver pieces Judah demanded in the name of the brethren. The Minaean replied that he must be jesting. One might smile at the joke, but nought else would come of it. Was he to pay in moon metal for a mere son of the swamps and nameless

" Come hither," who, on their own evidence, suffered from great moral weakness? (This was the retort upon Dan's over-zealous crying down of the merchandise by justifying the severity of the penance.) The old man made full use of the blunder to cheapen the price. But he too had made a mistake, in rubbing his fingers and boasting of his knowledge of quality, for thus he committed himself to his high valuation of the goods by texture and weave — and that was to the advantage of the sellers. Judah took him at his word and on his honour as a judge of quality, crying up the lad's superior fineness as though he and his had never cherished the smallest ill-will against it, nor on account of it had thrown the object of their competition into the well. In the heat of the bargaining they forgot all shame; yes, Judah did not hesitate to say that a youth so fine that he could be master of them all and they his slaves should not be flung away under thirty pieces of silver! He behaved as though he were quite infatuated with the article of sale, saying that five-and-twenty silver pieces was the very lowest sum, with which he went over and kissed the mute and blinking Joseph on the cheek and exclaimed that not even for fifty shekels could he or would he part with such a treasure of cleverness and charm!

But the old man did not let himself be led away in suchwise; and his position was the stronger, seeing that he was fairly sure that the brothers were bent on being rid of the boy at any price. It was easy to find this out, by feigning to break off the chaffering. Fifteen silver shekels, namely according to the lighter Babylonian weight, were what he had offered; but when the brethren, by urging upon him his own words, had made him go up

to twenty Phoenician shekels, he stopped there and would not be screwed up any further. It was in his power to say that he had found the boy in utter danger of death and to assert a finder's right to ransom money. So that he was showing very high business standards in not subtracting anything from the purchase price but rather in being prepared to pay the good round sum of twenty shekels Phoenician. If that were not worth their while, then he would withdraw the offer and would hear no more talk about this lad of the swamps who could wield the reed.

So the bargain was struck: twenty silver pieces, weighed out according to custom. The brethren slew a lamb of the flock beneath the trees in honour of the guests, let the blood run out, and fanned their fire to roast the flesh, that they might lift their hands and eat together in confirmation, and to celebrate the bargain. Joseph too received a piece from his new master, the Minaean. And as he ate, he saw how the brethren took occasion privily to take the tattered festal garment and stain it all over in the blood of the sacrifice. Before his eyes and unashamed they had done this, confiding in his silence. And he ate of the lamb whose blood was to stand for his own.

The meal and the strengthening were in place, for the chaffering was very far from being finished. The large lines had been laid down when the price was fixed. But now began, so to speak, the retail trading; namely, the laying out of the sum in goods. For we need not think, no matter how often we have heard it, that the brothers, when they sold Joseph, received this price from the Ishmaelites in ringing coin paid out of the bag into their

hands. The old man never dreamed of paying in silver, to say nothing of currency. He had his own reasons. For who carries such a weight of metal about with him on journeys? Moreover, what buyer would not prefer to liquidate his debt in articles of value, since thereby he assumes the part of the seller, and every article thus sold becomes itself an opportunity for profit? One and a half shekels of silver, in silver pieces, the Minaean weighed out to the shepherds on the delicate scale he carried at his girdle. The rest of the sum would be made up by the merchandise in his packs. They unloaded the camels and spread out their wares in the grass: incense and fine-fractured gums from beyond the river and all sorts of other delightful and useful objects: razors and knives of copper and flint, lamps, ointment-spoons, canes with inlaid work, blue glass beads, oil of resin, and sandals — a whole bazaar of notions that lay before the buyers' covetous eyes. Up to the sum of eighteen and a half silver pieces they might pocket what they chose for their own. Each object now began to be haggled over, as though it were an end in itself. The evening came on, long before they got to the end and Joseph had been sold for a little silver, a great many knives, bits of scented gum, lamps, and walking-sticks.

Then the Ishmaelites packed up again and made their adieux. They had taken time for the deal, sparing not the hours. So now they must make time spatially fruitful again and had in mind to travel another stretch in the night before they encamped. The brothers did not urge them to stop. But they advised them concerning their Journey and the roads to take.

" Above all," they said, " avoid going inland or along

the watershed to Hebron — it is inadvisable, let our friends be warned. The roads are rough, the animals will stumble, and vagabonds are lurking everywhere. Go farther along the plain and turn into the road that leads down through the hills along the foot of the orchards to the borders of the country. Thus you will be safe and can ride always on the pleasant sea-sand seven times seventeen days or as far as you like; it is a pleasure to travel by the sea, one never tires of it, and it is on all accounts most sensible."

The merchants promised, as they took their leave. The camels got up beneath them, and Joseph, the bartered slave, was mounted with Kedma, the old man's son. His eyelids drooped as they had done the whole time, even when he ate of the lamb. And the brothers, too, stood with downcast eyes as the train disappeared in the quickly falling twilight. Then they took a long breath and breathed it out again:

" Now is he gone and is no more! "

REUBEN COMES TO THE PIT

BUT in the falling dusk and in the whispering evening that drew on, lighted by great stars, Reuben, Leah's son, was driving his laden ass from Dothan along sequestered paths toward the grave of Joseph, that he might fulfil the plans he had made the night before in anguish and in love.

In his broad, powerful breast his heart throbbed strongly; for though he was big, he was soft and excitable, and he feared the brethren, that they might seek him and prevent the work of rescue, which was to be like-

wise the instrument of his atonement and reinstatement. His muscular face was pale in the darkness, and his great legs like columns in their bands trod the ground noiselessly. He spoke no word to his ass, but grimly prodded the phlegmatic beast in the flesh of its rump to make it get on. One thing Reuben feared above all: that the stillness of death might prevail in the well when he came up and softly called his brother's name. That Joseph might not have kept soul and body together, but be gone beyond reach, and all preparations be vain, including the ladder which the ropemakers of Dothan had made under his eye.

For Reuben had, after much thought, decided on the ladder. It would do for various contingencies: Joseph could climb up on it if his strength'held out; or, if it did not, he might seat himself between the treads and be drawn up to the daylight by Reuben's muscular arms, which had once enfolded Bilhah and would surely be strong enough to draw up Jacob's lamb out of the depths. He had a coat to cover Joseph's nakedness, and food for five days hung from the animal's flanks — for five days' time would be needed for the flight from his brothers, whom Reuben would thus betray and bring to grief. He bowed his head and owned as much to himself as he stole by night to the grave. This much evil big Reuben would do in order to do good. For that it was good and necessary to save Joseph, of that he had no doubts at all, and if the good and the evil mingled in his deed, it could not be helped. Life was like that. But Reuben also had faith that he could turn evil into good. Once he had put himself right with the father and was again the first-born son, he could hope to rescue the brethren too and hack a way

for them out of their impasse. His word would avail much, and he would give it on their side, in asking all to share the guilt, including even the father himself, that there might come a great insight and mutual pardon, and righteousness might prevail for ever.

Thus Reuben sought to still his throbbing heart and to console himself for his mixed motives, which were turbid and involved like everything in life. But now he had come to the slope and the wall, where he stopped to see that he was not being watched. Then he took rope and coat and descended on tiptoe to the broken steps and penetrated through the fig-tree scrub into the well-chamber.

The stars shone down on the broken flags, but there was no moon, and Reuben walked warily, drawing a deep breath as he went down, for his excitement had winded him and he needed breath for the call he was to cry down into the depths. "Joseph, art thou alive?" With what a passionate joy would he hear the answer, with what heart-sinking the lack of it! And then the call died unuttered, or changed into a hoarse cry of fear. For he was not alone down here. Someone was sitting there in the starlight.

How could that be? Someone sat there beside the well, and it was uncovered. The two halves of the lid lay one on top of the other on the flags, and the figure sat on them in a short mantle, leaning on his staff, and looked at Reuben sleepily, saying not a word.

Big Reuben's legs felt shaky from his stumbling. He was so dazed that for a moment he thought he saw Joseph before him, Joseph who had died and now, a spirit, sat beside his tomb. But this unlovable presence was not

at all like Rachel's son: even Joseph's ghost would surely not have been so uncommon tall; nor would he have had such a thick neck and little head on top. But then why was the stone rolled away from the well? Reuben was utterly puzzled. He stammered:

"Who art thou?"

" One of many," coolly answered the seated figure. He raised his chin and well-shaped mouth so that they looked particularly plastic. " I am nothing startling, be not afraid. But whom seekest thou? "

" Whom I seek? " repeated Reuben, put out by the unexpected encounter. " First of all I will hear what thou dost in this place."

" Oh, so thou wouldst know that? I am the last to imagine that there is anything here to seek. I am set to guard this well, therefore I sit here and watch. If thou imaginest that I have particular pleasure or sit here for the fun of the thing, then thou mistakest. I act according to duty and to carry out orders — it easeth many a vexed question to do so."

Curiously enough Reuben's anger at the presence of the stranger was somewhat appeased by these words. It was so unwelcome and annoying to find anyone on the spot that he was glad to hear that the man was not here by his own wish. It made a sort of bond between them.

" But who hath placed thee here? " he asked, somewhat mollified. " Was it the people of the place? "

" Of the place, yes. Whence such an order cometh, we shall let that pass. It is commonly transmitted through many mouths and there is small use in following it back to its source, for one must stand guard in any case."

" Stand guard by an empty well! " cried Reuben, his voice choking.

" Empty, certainly," the watcher replied.

" An uncovered one," Reuben amended, and pointed with trembling finger at the well-hole. " Who hath rolled away the stone from the well? Was it thou, perchance? "

The man smiled and looked down at his arms in the sleeveless linen garment; they were round, but weak. He was right, these were no arms to roll the lid either on or off.

" Neither on nor off have I rolled the stone," said the stranger, smiling again and shaking his head. " The one thou knowest, the other thou seest. Others have toiled and moiled, and I should not be needing to sit here and watch, were the stone still in its place. But who can say where is the true place of such a stone? Sometimes it is on the hole, but must not the lid be rolled away if refreshment is to come out of the well? "

" What sayest thou? " cried Reuben, tortured by his impatience. " I think thou prattlest, stealing my costly time with thy nonsense. How shall a dry well give refreshment, wherein is nought but dust and mould? "

" That dependeth," the seated one replied, pursing his lips, his little head laid on one side, " what one had previously confided to the dust and what one sank into its womb. If it were life, then will life and refreshment come out again a hundredfold. A kernel of wheat for instance. . . ."

"Thou fellow," Reuben interrupted him in a trembling voice, and the ladder and the mantle for Joseph shook in his hands, " it is intolerable that thou sittest

there speaking of the rudiments of things as one knoweth them by heart and as the child is taught in its mother's lap. I charge thee — "

" Thou art right impatient," said the stranger. " Permit me to say that thou remindest me of a rushing stream. Thou shouldst learn patience and to await; for these are the rudiments of things and must be understood by all, for he who cannot abide nor have patience findeth nothing, either here or anywhere. For all fulfilment is a slow matter. It may begin and may cast this way and that and appear as the temporary present both in heaven and on earth, when as yet it is but a trial and a promise. Thus will fulfilment roll along but slowly, like the stone when it is heavy and hard to roll from the tomb. Yet must one roll and push until it be really rolled away, though meanwhile I myself sit here only as a trial and a promise."

" Sit here then no longer," Reuben cried out. " Dost thou understand? I would pack thee off and have thee vanish that I may be alone with this well, which is my affair more than thine; up, this minute, or I will help thee find thy legs. Canst thou not see, spindle-arms, thou who canst not roll but only sit there and gape, that God hath made me strong as a bear and I am provided with a knotted rope to serve various ends? Up and away, or I will fly at thy throat."

" Touch me not," said the stranger, and stretched out his long round arm toward the angry man. " Bethink thee that I am of this place and thou wilt have them about thine ears if thou layest hand on me. Have I not told thee that I am set here? Vanish of course I could and with ease, but not at thy behest and in neglect of my duty, which telleth me to sit here for practice and watch.

Comest thou with thy fine coat and thy trumpery cords and markst not at all how absurd thou art in coming thus to an empty well — as thou sayest thyself! "

" Empty as a well," explained Reuben impetuously, "empty of water! "

" Empty altogether," answered the watchman. " The grave is empty, now that you are here."

But Reuben held in no longer; he rushed to the well, leaned over, and cried, low but urgently, into the depths:

" Joseph, Joseph, art alive and hast yet strength? "

The man on the stone shook his head and smiled pityingly. He even copied Reuben's voice, calling and clucking with his tongue. Then he said: " Comest here to talk into an empty hole? What unreason! Here is no boy, far and wide. If one was once there, then the place did not hold him. Cease thou to make a fool of thyself with thy gear and thy crying into the void! "

Reuben stood there still bent over the gulf out of which no word answered him.

"Horrible! " he cried. "He is dead or gone. What shall I do? Reuben, what wilt thou do now? "

And all his pain, his disappointment, his despair burst out of him.

" Joseph! " he cried out. " I would save thee and help thee out of the pit with my arms. Here is the ladder, here is the coat for thy body. Where art thou? Thy door is open. Thou art lost. I am lost. Where shall I go, since thou art gone, stolen and dead? — Thou fellow, thou man of the place," he cried, in an abandonment of suffering, " sit not there dumb, on these stones which the thieves have rolled away, but advise and help me. A boy was here; Joseph, my brother, Rachel's child. His

brethren and I, we put him here three days ago in punishment for his arrogance. But his father waiteth for him — with what infinite waiting cannot be told; and if they say to him that a lion hath torn the lamb, he will be struck to earth. Therefore I am come with cord and coat, to draw up the boy out of the well and bring him to the father, for he must have him back! I am the oldest. How shall I come before the father's face if the boy returneth not, and where shall I go? Tell me, help me, who hath rolled away the stone and where has Joseph gone? "

" Seest thou? " said the stranger. " Thou earnest to the well-house, thou wast incensed at my presence and vexed because I sat upon the stone; but now thou comest to me for comfort and advice. And thou dost quite rightly; perhaps it is thou on whose account I am set here near the grave, that I should sink one or other seed-corn in thy understanding and it might germinate there. The boy is no longer here, that thou seest. His dwelling standeth open, it has not held him, thou wilt see him no more. But someone there must be to cherish the seed of expectation, and since it was thou who earnest to save the brother, thou shalt be the one."

"What shall I await, if Joseph is gone, stolen and dead? "

" I know not what thou understandest by dead and what by living. Thou hast laughed at the childish elements of things, but yet I may remind thee of the grain of corn when it lieth in the grave, and ask thee how thou thinkest of it in reference to life and death. For these are after all only words. For it is so that the corn falling into the earth and dying bringeth forth much fruit."

" Words, only words," cried Reuben, and wrung his

hands. " They are only words thou givest me. Is Joseph dead or living? That it is which I must know."

"Manifestly he is dead," responded the watchman. " Thou and the others laid him to rest, as I hear, and since then he hath been stolen or perhaps torn by wild beasts; there is nought for it but to tell the father and make it manifest to him that he may accustom his heart to the truth. And yet, after all, it remaineth always equivocal; for it is not made to get used to, but rather hides always the seed of expectation. Men do much to penetrate the secret by ritual ways. I saw a youth descend into the grave in garland and festal garment, and above him they slaughtered a beast of the flock, whose blood they let run down, that it ran all over him and he received it with all his limbs and senses. So when he ascended again he was divine and had won life — at least for some time to come; for he had to go again into the grave, for the life of mankind cometh to an end several times, and each time cometh the grave and the rebirth, and many times must he be, until at length he finally is."

" Ah, the wreath and the festal garment," moaned Reuben and buried his face in his hands, " they lie torn and the boy is gone naked into the grave."

" Yes, and therefore thou comest hither with thy coat," responded the watchman, " and will clothe him anew. That can God do too. He can clothe anew the naked, and better than thou. Therefore I counsel thee: go home and take thy coat with thee. God can even throw a cloak over him who is clothed; after all, perhaps it was not so serious with the uncovering of this boy of thine. I would, if thou permittest, sink a seed-corn of thought into thy understanding: I would tell thee that all this is but a play

and a feast, like that of the youth sprinkled with blood, a beginning only and attempt toward fulfilment; a present which is not to be taken quite seriously, but is only a jest and an allusion, a symbol, so that we might nudge each other and wink while we behold it. For perhaps this pit was only a grave created by the lesser cycle, and your brother still very much in becoming and by no means already become, as this whole story is in becoming and not already become. Receive this, I pray thee, into the womb of thy understanding and let it quietly die therein and germinate. But if it bear fruit, then give of it to thy father for his comforting."

" My father, my father! " Reuben cried. " Speak not to me of him. How shall I come before the father without the child? "

" Look up," said the watchman. For it had become clearer in the well-house, and the bark of the moon had just swum up above their heads, its darker part faintly visible in the depths of the sky. " Look at it, how it goeth and shineth and maketh the way plain for its brethren. Such allegories happen in heaven and on earth without end. He whose mind is open, and he knoweth how to read them, he abideth in expectation. But the night advanceth apace, and who need not sit and play watchman, he would do well to lie down, wrapped in his coat, with knees comfortably drawn up, that he may rise again in the morning. Co, my friend! Here, at least, thou hast nothing to seek, and as for me I shall not disappear at thy bidding."

Then Reuben turned away shaking his head, and with heavy heart and lagging feet climbed the steps and the slope up to where he had left his animal. Almost the

whole way thence to the brethren's huts he did not cease to shake his bewildered head, in desperation half, and half in dumbfounded reflection. He hardly distinguished the one from the other, but he shook his head.

THE OATH

So he came to the huts and roused the nine, snatched the early sleep from their eyes, and spoke with trembling lips:

" The boy is gone. Where shall I go? "

" Thou? " they asked. " Thou speakest as though he had been only thy brother, when after all he was as much ours. Where shall we all go? That is the question. And what meanest thou by ' gone '? "

" Gone — that is, stolen, disappeared, torn in pieces, dead," Reuben shrieked. " Lost to the father, in any case. The pit is empty."

" Wast thou at the pit? " they asked. " To what end? "

"To the end of finding out," he said wrathfully. " That is still allowed, I should think, to the first-born. Shall what we have done give us peace and not harass us? Yea, I desired to see after the boy, and now I tell you that he is gone and that we must ask ourselves whither we shall go."

" To call thyself the first-born," they answered, " is somewhat bold, as we may remind thee simply by uttering the name of Bilhah. There was danger that the rights of the first-born would fall to the dreamer; but now it is the twins who come next; and Dan too could put in his claim, for he was born in the same year as Levi."

But they had seen the ass with ladder and coat — Reu-

ben had not even tried to hide them — and easily put this and that together. So then big Reuben had meant to steal a march on them and rescue Joseph; he had intended to exalt his own head and to put them in a hole. Very fine. Tbey exchanged meaningful glances. But if that was the way of it, their glances said, then they owed Reuben no explanation of what they had done in the meantime. Unfaith for unfaith. Reuben needed to hear nothing, of the Ishmaelites nor how at that moment they were bearing Joseph out of sight and hearing. If he knew, he might follow after them. Therefore the brethren were silent, shrugged their shoulders at his news, and feigned indifference.

" Gone is gone," they said, " no matter whether it signifieth stolen, vanished, torn to pieces, betrayed, or sold; we would snap our fingers at it, were it worth a snap. Was it not our longing and our just desire that he might cease to be? And now it has been vouchsafed us, the pit is empty."

But he wondered that they took this surprising and monstrous news so coldly; peered into their eyes and shook his head.

" And the father! " he cried, in sudden passion, flinging up his arms.

" That hath been settled and arranged," they said, " by the cleverness of Dan. For the father shall not be let to wait and doubt, but it shall be clean and clear to him and graspable with his hands, that Dumuzi is no more and his pampered darling no longer remaineth. But we shall be united before him by means of the sign. See what we have got ready while thou wentest thine own ways."

And they fetched out the remnants of the garment, which was stiff with half-dried blood.

" Is it his blood? " Reuben cried with his high voice out of his mighty body, and shuddered frightfully. . . . For a moment he thought not otherwise than that they had been beforehand with him at the pit and killed Joseph.

They smiled at one another.

" What all dost thou not dream and spin! " they said. " But it hath been done according to our agreement, and a beast of the flock hath given his blood in sign that Joseph is gone. The garment bring we now before the father and let it be his affair to explain it as he must, for there is nothing left than that a lion surprised him in the field and tore him to pieces."

Reuben sat, his huge knees in front of him, and rubbed his fists in his eye-sockets.

"Unhappy! " he groaned. "Unhappy wretches that we are! You prattle light-heartedly of the future, yet see it not and know it not. For unclear and pale it lieth in the distance and you lack the power in your heads to bring it near, and for even the twinkling of an eyelid to live in the hour when it hath become real. Otherwise you would shudder and would wish rather that lightning would strike you down in time or that you were sunk in water with a millstone round your necks where it is deepest than that you should bring in the dish and serve up the soup that you have brewed. But I have lain before him when I did evilly and he cursed me and I know the fire of his soul when it is angry. And I can see, as though it were happening, the frightful wrestlings of his soul in its affliction. *That* shall we bring before the father and

let it speak to him! Ye praters and babblers! Yea, he will interpret it! But who will dare to look at him when he interpreteth it, and who will bear it when he uttereth his soul? For God created it large and tender and taught it how to reveal itself with overwhelming power. Ye see nothing and imagine nothing with clearness that hath not yet happened; therefore you prattle cheerfully of the future and know no fears. But I am afraid," he cried out, and stood up before them strong like a bear, like a tower, with arms outstretched. " Where shall I go when he interpreteth it? "

The nine sat there each one quite intimidated, looking down at his lap.

" Very good," responded Judah softly. " Here is nobody who spiteth thee on account of thy fear, Reuben, son of thy mother; for likewise it is brave to confess thy fear. And if thou thinkest we are blithe and gay round heart and kidneys and know nought of the fear of Jacob, then thou mistaketh. But what good is it to regret what has happened and what avail to boggle at the inevitable? Joseph is out of the world, and this coat witnesseth the truth. A sign is milder than words. Therefore we shall bring the sign before Jacob and are dispensed of words."

" Must we then," asked Asher, Zilpah's son, and licked his lips after his habit, " must we then, since we speak of carrying the robe, all of us at once bring the sign to Jacob and all of us be there when he interpreteth it? Rather let one go delicately ahead with the garment and bring it to him; but we others come afterwards and get there only when he hath already interpreted it to himself. It seemeth to me milder so. I propose Naphtali, the **run-**

ner, for bearer and messenger. Or let us draw lots to see who shall bear it."

" Draw lots," cried Naphtali in haste. " I am for drawing lots, for I too imagine the future when I speak of it and I freely confess my fear."

" Listen, men," said Dan. " Now I will be the judge and free you all. For from me cometh the plan and I can shape it in my mind like wet earth and potter's clay. I will improve it; for we shall not bring Jacob the robe, neither one nor all of us. To strangers will we give it, somebody whom we shall hire, people of the place and the neighbourhood, receptive to good words and a little wool and a few curds. We will impress on him what he shall say to Jacob: thus and thus; and * This found we in the field near Dothan and came upon it in the desert by chance. Look at it closer, father and lord, whether it is not indeed the garment of thy son.' Thus shall they speak, and when they have said, let them go away. But we will tarry a few days before we follow, until he has fully interpreted to himself the sign and knows that he has lost one and gained ten. Are ye satisfied? "

" It is well," they said, " or at least is worth talking about. Therefore let us accept it, for anything that is a practical plan, in a case like this, must be considered good."

They all accepted it, even Reuben, although he had laughed bitterly when Dan spoke of ten whom Jacob was winning for one. But they kept on sitting before the huts under the stars and continued to take counsel, for they were somewhat uncertain of each other. The nine looked at Reuben, who had obviously intended to steal the lad

and cheat them; and they were afraid before him. But he looked at the nine who had remained so strangely unmoved at the news that the pit was empty, and did not know what he should think.

"A frightful oath," said Levi, rude but pious, who liked to arrange religious ceremonies and had knowledge of them; "we must swear a frightful oath, that none of us ever tell Jacob or anyone a single little word of what hath happened here and what we did with the dreamer; not by a sign or a flicker of an eyelash, so long as he shall live."

" Thou sayest it, that we must," agreed Asher. " And this oath must bind us ten together and make us into a league so that we are like one body and one silence, as though we were not single persons, one here and one there, but one man who presseth his lips together and openeth them not, even in death, but dieth, his mouth shut together over his secret. One can stifle and slay an event by silence, which one rolleth over it like a stone. Then the breath goeth out of it for lack of air and light, and the event ceaseth to have happened. Believe me, so dieth much that has happened, if the silence over it is unbroken; for without the breath of words can nought exist. We must keep silence as one man; then will this story be as it had not been; and thereto Levi's frightful oath may help us — for it shall make us a bond."

They agreed to this, no one of them being willing to rely upon himself for his silence, but preferring to share in a mighty common bond, which should shelter him from his weakness. Therefore Levi, Leah's son, devised frightful formulas for the oath; they drew so close together that their noses rubbed and their breath mingled,

put their hands in a pile, and with one voice called on the Highest, El Elyon, God of Abraham, Yitzchak, and Jacob. Neither did they forget the several Baals of the land, known unto them: Anu of Uruk, Ellil of Nippur, and Bel Harran, Sin, the moon; but named them as compurgators and swore with one voice, mouth almost on mouth, that he who did not keep silence about "it" or who did even with nod, wink, or sign betray it or glance at it, such a one should turn whore, and the daughter of Sin, mistress of womenkind, should take from him the bow, that is his manhood, that he should be like a mule, but more rightly said a whore, who took her hire upon the street. One land should drive him into the other, so that he should not know where to lay his whorish head and should neither *live* nor die, but life and death should spit him to one another in disgust his life long.

Thus the oath. When they had sworn it they were easier and steadier, for this was a mighty insurance. But when they broke up the counsel and went each one to his sleep, one said to another (it was Issachar said it to Zebulun):

"I have an envy, and my envy is of Turturra, the little one, Benjamin, our youngest at home, for that he knoweth nothing of all this and remaineth outside this matter and this oath. He is fortunate and I envy him. Thou too?"

"I too, indeed," answered Zebulun.

But Reuben for his part was trying to remember the words of the irritating youth of the place, who had sat on the well-stone. It was not easy to remember them, for they had been vague and full of twilight, more idle than real words and hard to reproduce. Yet in Reuben's deep-

est understanding a seed did remain behind, which knew nought of itself, as the seed of life knoweth nought of itself in the body of the mother, but the mother knoweth of it. It was the seed of expectation which Reuben cherished, and nourished it secretly, sleeping and waking, till he was a greyhaired man, through as many years as Jacob had served for the devil Laban.

7

HE WHO WAS MANGLED

JACOB MOURNS FOR JOSEPH

Is a sign more merciful than words? That is a moot question. Judah argued from the point of view of the bringer of bad tidings who prefers the sign because it saves him the trouble of words. But for him who receives it? In the strength of his ignorance he can put the word aside; he can tread it underfoot as a lie and an abominable fabrication and consign it to perdition as unutterable rubbish. He can roar with laughter born of solid conviction — before it dawns on the poor wretch that the matter is not to be got rid of that way. The word penetrates but slowly. At first it is incredible, its sense not to be grasped or realized. You are still free to remain in your ignorance by retorting upon the messenger the confusion which his message would set up in your own heart and brain, and to denounce him roundly as wrong in the head. " What is that you say? " you may ask him. " Are you not well? Come, let me look after you, have a little something to drink, then you will feel better and talk at least so that a body can take in what you say." It is not very pleasant for the messenger, but he pities you

and knows himself master of the situation; he is kind, and slowly his look of mingled reason and compassion casts doubt into your soul. You cannot sustain that look, you understand that it is impossible to hold to that allocation of roles to which you cling as a means of self-preservation; and at length you perceive that it is you who need to take a little drink from him.

It is the word which permits of this slow rear-guard action against the forces of truth. With a sign nothing of the sort is possible. No temporizing fiction avails against its heaped-up cruelty. It is unmistakable, it does not need to be realized, because it is real. It is palpable, it scorns to spare by being only gradually effective. It leaves no possible way of escape. It forces you to conceive in your own head the idea which, if presented in words, you would brush aside as madness; it drives you to the conclusion that either you are mad or it is true. Directness and indirectness are differently mingled in the word and the sign; it is hard to tell which is the more brutally immediate. The sign is mute — not out of gentleness, however, but only because it needs not to speak to be understood, being the thing itself. Without a word it lays you low.

And Jacob, truly, according to all expectation, was, at sight of the coat of many colours, stricken to the earth. This is an assured fact. But nobody saw just what happened; for the two wretched men of Dothan who had undertaken, in consideration of a fixed amount of wool and curds, to play the role of finders, had taken to their heels as soon as they had made their little speech, not waiting to see what would be its effect. They gave the blood-stiffened rags into the hands of Jacob the man of God

and left him standing there before his tent of skins; they slunk away, first taking very long steps and then bursting into a run as they got farther off. No one knows how long he stood there looking down at that little, which, as his understanding slowly forced him to comprehend, was all there was left in the world of Joseph. Then, indeed, he had fallen, and women passing came and found him lying there; the wives of his sons they were, the Shechemite Bunah, Simeon's spouse, also Levi's, the so-called grandchild of Eber. These lifted him in alarm and brought him within his tent. They knew at once, from what he held in his hands, the cause of his attack.

It was no common faint in which he lay, but a sort of rigor, that gripped every muscle and fibre of his body, turning it to stone, so that one could not bend a joint without breaking it. It is a rare phenomenon, but does sometimes occur, as a reaction to some extraordinary stress; it is like a spasm of resistance, a desperate, defiant insensibility called up to meet something which the system cannot bear. It will last some hours, slowly capitulating before the relentless onslaught of reality and suffering, against which there is no help.

Men-servants and women-servants, surrounding him on all sides, watched fearfully the spectacle of this pillar of salt slowly melting before their eyes into the limp receptivity of abject suffering. He had still no voice and could only whisper his answer — as it were his admission — to the long-since-departed messengers: "Yes, it is my son's coat." But then suddenly he cried out, in a voice which rose to a shriek under the spur of his despair: " A beast of prey hath preyed upon Joseph; an evil beast hath rent him in pieces." And as though his

own words put him in mind of what was now to be done, he began tearing his clothes.

It was high summer, his clothing was light and offered little resistance. He put all his strength into the work, but it took some time, because of the uncannily silent thoroughness with which he did it. The onlookers saw with horror, and with futile gestures designed to prevent the extravagance, that he did not stop at the upper garment, as they expected; no, he went on apparently of fell design to strip off every rag he had on, throw the several pieces from him, and stand there stark naked. Considering the known delicacy of the man's feelings, that aversion to exposure of the flesh which everybody respected in him, the sight was so unnatural and debasing that nobody could bear it. With one accord, wailing and protesting, the onlookers turned away and went hence.

There is only one right and proper word for the feeling which was at the bottom of their action: shame. But one must understand it in its ultimate and often forgotten sense, as a monosyllabic description of the horror we feel when the primitive breaks through the layers of civilization, at the surface of which it is only active in a much softened and allegorical form. We must regard the tearing of the upper garments in heavy sorrow as being of such a nature; it is the civilized and domesticated form of the original or primitive custom of shedding all the clothes, shedding every covering and adornment considered as the badge of human dignity now destroyed and ruined by the extremity of human woe. It is the abasement of man to mere creature. So it was with Jacob. In the depth of his grief he went back to the original meaning, from the allegory to the crude

thing itself and to the horrible reality. He did what" one does not do " — and that, rightly considered, is the source of all horror. For therein the undermost comes uppermost. If, for instance, it had occurred to him to give utterance to the abandonment of his misery by bleating like a ram, his people could not have felt more nauseated than they did.

They fled, then, out of shame. But we may question whether they so best served the pathetic old man; whether he was not gratifying his deepest desire in this crass exhibition of utter woe and whether it was quite so gratifying to him to be left alone with it. He was not, however, actually alone; for what he did needed no human witness to serve its end and aim, which was to stir up feelings of horror. At Whom, or, to be exact, against Whom, his action was directed; in Whom it was designed to stir up feelings of horror; before Whose eyes he was trying to bring this manifestation of a return to the original state of nature — all this the desperate father knew only too well. His people came to know it too, especially Eliezer, " Abraham's oldest servant." He took particular interest in it, that strange institution of an old man who knew how to use the first person singular in so truly singular a way, and to meet whom the earth had advanced by bounds.

He, too, was pierced to the heart by the sight of the token and by the frightful news that Joseph, his lovely and so intelligent pupil, had fallen victim to a mischance on his journey and been made the prey of a ravening beast. But his curiously impersonal character, his peculiarly extensive consciousness of his own individuality, enabled him to receive the blow with a certain compo-

sure; also, his natural concern for Jacob, the man of sorrows, left him small leisure to dwell upon his own pain. It was Eliezer who brought food to Jacob, though the latter refused for days to touch it; who enforced him to seek his couch by night and then did not stir from beside it. By day, Jacob had taken up his station on a heap of potsherds and ashes in a remote and shadeless .corner of the settlement. There he sat, naked, with the pieces of the coat in his hands, his hair, beard, and shoulders strewn with ashes. From time to time he scraped himself with a potsherd from the heap, in token that he was afflicted with sores and boils. All of which was purely symbolic behaviour (for he had none), and the scraping was part of the demonstration, directed to the same address as the rest.

Certainly the sight of this pitiful figure, so absorbed in its penance, was touching enough, even without the symbolic representation of impurity. Everybody save the eldest servant avoided in awe and embarrassment the scene of this exposure. Jacob's body was no longer that of the slender yet sturdy young man who had wrestled undefeated with the ox-eyed stranger by Jabbok ford and lived out that windy night with the unchosen bride. Nor was it that of him who late begot Joseph upon the true wife. Some seventy years, not precisely counted and reckoned, but " counting " to good effect in the objective sense, had since passed over his head and marked him with the touching if unattractive mis-shapenness of old age; and this it was that made his naked state so painful to see. Youth displays itself freely and joyously, with a good conscience based on its own beauty. Age shrouds itself in modesty and dignity — and well knows

why. This breast, with its growth of white hairs on a skin reddened by the sun, and its shape, as a man's does in age, approaching to a woman's; these nerveless arms and spent thighs, the folds of the relaxed abdomen — all this was no sight for anybody save old Eliezer, who took it with composure and made no objection, so little minded was he to put obstacles in the way of his master's demonstration.

He was even less likely to prevent Jacob in the performance of the other rites, which did not go beyond what was customary in heavy sorrow: particularly the sojourn on the dust-heap, the repeated sprinkling of ashes, which then mingled with his sweat and his tears. These were only proper. Eliezer was merely concerned to erect a temporary shelter over the place of penance, that the sun of Tammuz might not turn the penance into torture. Even in its shade Jacob's woebegone face was suffused with bright crimson from the heat and his affliction; his jaw hung down, his eyes rolled upwards ever and anon out of the unfathomable deeps of his suffering. And he remarked all this himself, as soft and self-examining natures do, being concerned with their own condition and convinced that it receives too little notice by going unmentioned.

" Crimson and swollen," he said, his voice trembling, " is my countenance from weeping. For deep-bowed in my affliction I sit me down to weep, and my face is wet with the tears that flow down it."

The words, as one could tell, were not original with him. For Noah, according to the legend, was supposed to have said some such thing, and Jacob made it his own. And indeed it is good, it is convenient and consol-

ing, that from the suffering of our ancestors we inherit right and suitable words in which to clothe our own, which then fit it as though they were made for it; so that they give us ease in so far as words can give ease from pain, and unite our own sorrow with that which has been and will always be. Certainly Jacob could do his grief no greater honour than to set it on a level with the great flood and apply to it words which were coined for that catastrophe.

At all events, he spoke and lamented much in his despair, in words already coined or only half-coined. And over and over again came the wailing cry: "Joseph is rent, is rent in pieces" — which may easily have been already in existence, but lost nothing of its impressiveness by the fact. No, that they had, however much they may have been used before.

"The lamb and the mother ewe are slain," intoned Jacob; he rocked to and fro and wept most bitterly. "First the mother and now the lamb as well. The mother ewe hath forsaken the lamb, when it was only a furlong to the inn; and now the lamb too hath strayed and is lost. Ah, no, ah, no, ah, no! Woe, alas! It is too much. Wailing ariseth above the beloved son. Over the young shoot whose roots are torn out, over my hopes that are rooted up like to a sapling. Woe, alas, my Damu, my child! His dwelling is become the underworld. Bread will I not eat, water will I not drink. Joseph is rent, is rent in pieces. . . ."

From time to time Eliezer wiped his master's face with a cloth wet in water. He also took part in the lamentations, in so far as they kept to the prescribed formulas, and paid honour to all that abides through change, by

joining in the half-sung, half-murmured cry of "Woe, alas! " or "He is rent, he is rent!" Indeed, the whole courtyard resounded for hours; Jacob's people would have done the same even though their mourning had been less sincere than it really was. "*Hoi achi! Hoi Adon!* Alas for our brother! Woe, alas for our Lord! " Jacob and Eliezer could hear the chorus from where they were; and the servants in their turn could hear the rejection, not quite literally meant, of food and drink, for that the herb was withered in the desert wind and the sapling was torn out by the root.

Customs are useful: the regulation of both our joy and our grief in prescribed channels, that they may not flow in every direction and end in excess and confusion, but keep to a settled bed ready to receive them. Jacob, too, felt the blessing and usefulness of conforming to tradition; but the grandson of Abraham was far too individual a nature, he had far too lively a sense of his own personality in relation to the general, to be able to confine himself to formulas. He spoke and lamented in his own words as well, Eliezer attending and wiping his face from time to time and throwing in a word of soothing confirmation or of correction and warning.

"What I have feared," Jacob broke out, in a voice diminished, heightened in pitch, and sometimes half choked by anguish, "what I have feared is come upon me, and that which gave me concern is come to pass. Canst thou understand that, Eliezer? Canst thou grasp it? No, no, no, no one can understand it, when that which one has feared actually cometh to pass. Had I had no concern nor thought, if it had burst upon me unsuspecting, then I would believe it. I would say unto my heart:

' Thou tookest no heed, hadst no care to avoid the evil by foreseeing it.' A surprise is believable. But that that which hath been foreboded cometh, and shrinketh not from coming, that is an abomination in mine eyes, and with it I come not to terms."

"There is nothing hard and fast in these matters," responded Eliezer.

" No, not before the law. But for man's feelings, which likewise have their reason and their limits. For why was fear given to men, and foresight, but that he might therewith conjure evil and take away from fate betimes the power of thinking. It may be angry, but is also ashamed and sayeth to itself: [6] Are they still my thoughts? They are the thoughts of man, I like them no more.' But what shall become of man if forethought no longer avail and he feareth in vain; that is, he feareth with reason? Or how shall a man live if he can no longer rely on things turning out differently from what he thought? "

" God is free," Eliezer said.

Jacob closed his lips. He took up again the potsherd he had dropped and began again to scrape his symbolic sores. For the moment he did not continue the subject. He went on:

" How have I feared and anguished lest a wild beast from the thicket one day fall upon my child and do him a harm; and cared not at all that I was a laughing-stock among my people for my solicitude, nor minded when they said of me:' Lo, how the old dotard playeth at being nurse!' And was ridiculous like a man who sayeth always: [c] I am ill, I am ill unto death,' yet looketh healthy and doth not die, and nobody taketh it seriously and in **the** end not he himself. But when they **find** him **dead and**

are remorseful that they laughed, and say: 'Lo, he had right in what he said,[9] can it do the man any good that they are ashamed? No, for he is dead. And would rather have been a fool before them and before himself than to be justified in so unpalatable a way. Here I sit in the dust, my face is red and swollen from weeping, and ashes and tears course down it. Can I rejoice in my tears, because it hath come to pass? No, because it hath come to pass. Dead am I indeed, for dead is Joseph, Joseph is rent, is rent in pieces.

"Lo, Eliezer, take and see: the robe, the remnant of the picture-garment. I lifted it from off the dearest and true bride in the bridal chamber and I handed to her the blossom of my soul. But then it proved to be the unchosen one, through Laban's deceit, and my soul was outraged and intolerably torn for a long time — until the right one in horrible pain brought me the boy, Dumuzi, my all; now he too is rent and is slain, who was the delight of my eyes. Can that be explained? Is it acceptable, is it acceptable, this demand? No, no, no, no, I covet to live no more. I would my soul were bare space and these bones given over to death."

" Israel, sin not."

" Ah, Eliezer, teach thou me to fear God and to adore His overwhelming power. He hath Himself royally paid for name and blessing and Esau's bitter tears; paid mightily. He setteth the price according to His arbitrary will and is moved by strange considerations. He hath not dealt with me after my knowledge of what is too much for me. He taketh what He judgeth I can pay, knowing better than I what my soul is able. Can I argue with Him from like to like? I sit here in these ashes and

scrape myself, what will He more? My lips speak: what the Lord doth is well done. Let Him keep to my lips. What I think in my heart is my affair."

" But He readeth likewise the heart."

" That is not my fault. He it was, and not I, who so arranged that He seeth also the heart. He would have done better to leave men a refuge before the overwhelming, that man might grumble a little against the unacceptable and think his thoughts about the justice of things. His refuge was this heart, and his pleasant tent. Came He to visit, it was finely adorned, and swept with a broom, and the seat of honour was prepared for Him. Now is nothing but ashes therein, mingled with tears, with filth and misery. Let Him avoid my heart, that He not defile Himself, and let Him keep to my lips."

" But yet thou shouldest not sin, Yakow ben Yitzchak."

" Thresh not words, old man, they are but empty straw. Espouse my cause, and not God's; for He is overgreat and laugheth at thy concern, while I am but a storehouse of wailing. Speak not to me from the outside in, but speak to me out of thy soul, nothing else can I bear. Knowest thou and hast understood that Joseph is gone and returneth not to me, never and nevermore? Only when thou thinkest thereon canst thou speak to me out of thy soul and thresh no empty straw. Out of my own mouth I laid upon him the journey and said: ' Go toward Shechem and bow before thy brethren that they may come home and Israel not stand here like a tree without its boughs/ This task laid I upon him and upon me, chastening us both somewhat rudely, for he should travel alone without a servant. I recognized his folly for my folly and concealed not from myself what God

would. **But** God dissembled from me what He **knew, for** He inspired me to command the child:' Go hither *; and hid Himself away from me with His knowledge and His savage design. Such is the faith of the Almighty God, and thus repayeth He the truth with truth."

" Have a care at least to thy lips, son of the true wife."

" My lips are made to me so that I can spew out what I cannot bear. Speak not from outside, Eliezer, but from within. What is God thinking of, that He layeth on me that from which my eyes turn inwards and I lose my senses because it is what I cannot bear? Have I then power from stones and is my flesh of bronze? If only He had made me of bronze in His wisdom — but as I am, it is nought for me. My child, my Damu! The Lord hath given him, the Lord hath taken him away — would He had not given him at first or that I myself had not come out of my mother's womb; would there were nothing at all! What shall one think, Eliezer, and whither turn and twist in his need? If I were not, then should I know nought, and all would be nought. But even as I am, it is better that Joseph is gone than that he had never been; for so I still have what remaineth to me, and that is my mourning for him. Ah, God hath taken care that one cannot be against Him and must say yes, even while one sayeth no. Yea, He had given him to my old age, His name be praised. He had moulded him with His hands and made him lovely. Like milk had He milked him and built his bony structure, had drawn over it skin and flesh and poured out grace upon him so that he took me by the ear-lobes and laughed: ' Dearest Father, give it to me!' And I gave it him, for I was not of bronze or **stone.** When **I** called him to the journey and gave him the

command, he cried: 'Here am 1/ and kicked up his heels — when I think upon it my tears pour out like water. For it was even as though I had laid wood upon him for the burnt sacrifice and taken him by the hand and myself carried fire and knife. Oh, Eliezer, I have confessed before God and openly admitted in all humility that I should not have been able. Thinkest thou He might graciously have accepted my submission and had pity of my confession? No, but He breathed fire out of His nostrils and spake: ' What thou canst not do shall be done; whether or no thou art able to give it, I will take it.' That is God.

" Behold and see: here is the coat and the rags of the coat stiff with blood. That is the blood of his veins, which the ravening beast rent, and it rent his flesh. Oh, horror, horror! Oh, sin of God. Oh, wild, blind, reasonless misdeed! Too much had I laid upon him, Eliezer, too much for the child. He went astray upon the field and wandered lost in the waste — then came the hideous monster upon him and struck him down and devoured, unheeding his anguish. Mayhap he called upon me, or upon the mother, who died when he was small. No one heard him, God saw that it should be so. Thinkest thou it was a lion who struck him down, or a great boar that fell upon him with standing bristles and buried his tusks in him? . . ."

He shuddered, and plunged into a brooding silence. Inevitably the word " boar " set up in him trains of thought which lifted the horrible single event now wringing his heart and placed it in the upper regions, among the primitive and symbolic, in the timeless and ever revolving sphere; set it, as it were, under the stars. The boar, the raging swine of swine **that** was **Seth,** the **God-**

murderer, it was the Red. It was Esau, whom he, Jacob, as a variant upon the pattern, had known how to mollify, by weeping at Eliphaz's feet; but who in the true and primeval pattern had cut up his brother and himself might occur here below as cut up and divided into ten pieces. And at the thought a surmise struggled to rise into Jacob's consciousness; a sort of traditional suspicion lying in the deeper layers of his mind, where he had dwelt ever since he saw the blood-stained tatters of the coat. It was a sinister conjecture as to the identity of the boar who had torn Joseph. But it fell back again before it reached the surface — in fact he himself helped to push it down. Strange though it may seem, he recoiled from knowledge of such a nature, he would have none of it, because it would have made him recognize the upper in the lower; because his suspicion would have been directed against itself. He was courageous, he loved the truth, he had recognized his responsibility for Joseph's act; and he had summoned strength to send him upon the journey. But he was not brave enough, despite all his love of truth, to face the thought of the brothers' guilt, because that would have driven him to a consciousness of his own. Surely he may be pardoned for this. He could not have endured — and therefore his whole being rejected in agony — the bitter thought that he himself had been the chief boar, and that his foolish doting, born of his own pride and self-indulgence, had been the instrument which had brought the lad to his death. And yet the unbearableness of his suffering consisted precisely in this suppressed suspicion. And his need to manifest his wretchedness in the most striking way before God should be referred to the same source.

For to Jacob God was the important thing, He was behind everything; upon Him were Jacob's weeping, brooding, desperate eyes directed. Lion or boar, it was God who had willed, had allowed — in a word, had done the frightful thing; and he felt a certain recognizable satisfaction in that his despair raised him up to a height where he might actually expostulate with God, despite the contradiction of his outward debasement in nakedness and in ashes. Indeed, without the debasement there could have been no expostulating. Jacob scraped his wretchedness — and in exchange he spoke freely and guarded not his lips.

" That is God," he repeated, with visible shuddering. " The Lord hath not asked me, Eliezer, nor set before me the test, saying: * Offer Me up the son whom thou lovest.' Perhaps I should have been strong beyond my humble expectation and should have taken the child to Moriah despite his question where then was the sheep for the burnt offering; perhaps I could have heard it without falling in a faint and been able to lift the knife over Isaac and had faith in the ram — it would have depended on the test! But not so, not so, Eliezer. He did not even vouchsafe me the test. But lured the child from my heart by dint of my honest admission that I was not guiltless of the brother-strife, and led him astray, that the lion should fall upon him, and a wild boar strike its tusks in his flesh and root its snout in his entrails. For this beast, I may tell thee, devoureth everything. It brought the little swine to his lair of Joseph to eat. Can one understand and accept that? No, it is insupportable. I spew it out as a bird the feathers. There it lieth. May God do with it what He will, for it is nought for me."

" Bethink thyself, Israel."

" No, I am without the power, my steward. God hath snatched my senses from me, now let Him hear my words. He is my creator, I know full well. He hath milked me like milk and let me curdle like cheese, 1 admit it. But how is it with Him, and where would He be without us, the fathers and me? Is He short of memory? Hath He forgotten the trouble and labour of man on His account? And how Abram found Him and thought Him forth, so that He might kiss His finger and cry: [4] At last am I called Lord and Highest!' I ask: hath He forgotten the bond, that He gnasheth with His teeth against me and behaveth as though I were His foe? Where is my transgression and my misdeed? Let Him show me! Have I burned incense to the Baals of the land and thrown kisses to the stars? There was no vice in me, and my prayer was pure. Why must I endure violence instead of justice? Let Him in His wilfulness shatter me straightway and throw me in the pit, for that were a trifle to Him, even without right, and I covet not greatly to live if I must suffer violence. Doth He then mock the spirit of man, that He arrogantly destroyeth both good and evil? But then where would He be Himself without the spirit of man? Eliezer, the covenant is broken! Ask me not why, for I should have to answer thee sadly. God hath not held the pace — dost thou understand me? For God and man chose each other and made a compact whereby they might really become, the one in the other, what they are, and be holy one in the other. But when man hath grown fine-grained and tender-hearted in God, with disciplined soul, and God then inviteth him to an abomination of desolation which he can in no wise stomach but must

spew it out and say: * It is nothing for me '; then, Eliezer, one must conclude that God hath not kept pace in the work of sanctification, but hath halted behind and is still a sorcerer."

Eliezer was of course aghast to hear such words; he prayed to the Lord to have mercy upon his master, whose affliction had brought him beside himself; at the same time he did not spare Jacob in his reproaches.

" Thy words are beyond all bounds',' he said; " I cannot hear them, for they drag down the majesty of God against all warrant. That say I unto thee, who with Abram, thanks to God's help, struck down the kings from the East and toward whom the earth sprang on the bridal journey. For thou hast called God a hateful sorcerer and settest thyself up against Him as fine and tender; but it is thy words out of which the desert howls, and in thy great pain thou makest a mock of pity, for thou beliest Him and lettest thyself down with the frightfullest licence of thy tongue. Dost thou decree upon wrong and right and sit in judgement upon Him who made not only the behemoth, whose tail stretcheth like a cedar, and leviathan, whose teeth are dreadful to see and whose scales are like to brazen shields; but likewise Orion, the seven-starred constellation, the dawn, hornets, snakes, and the dust-abubu? Did He hot give to thee Yitzchak's blessing before Esau, who was somewhat older, and gloriously confirmed the promise to thee at Beth-el in the vision of the ladder? To all that thou consentedst, and found no objection therein on the score of the fine and tender human spirit, for it was all after thy liking. Hath He not made thee rich and fat in the house of Laban and moved the dusty bolts to open, that thou earnest away

with child and chattel, and Laban was like a lamb before thee on the Mount of Gilead? But now, when a misfortune is fallen on thee, a very heavy one, that no one denieth, then thou art defiant, my master, and kickest out like a balky ass and wouldst upset everything in the most reckless way and say: ' God hath not kept pace in sanctification.' Art thou then free of sin, being flesh, and is it so certain that thou hadst practised righteousness thy life long? Canst thou understand that which is far above thy understanding, and fathom the riddle of life and ride over it roughshod with thy human words and say: [4] It is nought for me, and I am holier than God'? Truly, these things should I not need to hear, 0 son of the true wife! "

" Yea, thou sayest, Eliezer," answered Jacob to that, with dismal irony. " Truth is in thy mouth, and well thou knowest it. Thou hast eaten up wisdom with a spoon and sweatest it out of all thy pores. It is truly edifying how thou chidest me and forgettest not to bring in how thou hast holpen Abram to strike down the kings, that which is out and out impossible; for in the eye of reason thou art born of a slave girl at Damascus and hast seen Abram with thine eyes as little as I myself! Lo, how I in my misery make free with thy wisdom! Pure was I, but God hath drenched me over and over in filth, and such as thou art find it reasonable, for knowing nought of pious palliation they let the truth go naked. I even herewith express my doubt that the earth sprung toward thee. And now it is all out! "

" Jacob, Jacob, what dost thou? Thou destroy est the world in the arrogance of thine affliction, thou smitest it in pieces and throwest them on the head of the admon-

isher. For I would not say upon whose head thou throwest them, strictly speaking. Art thou the first accosted by sorrow, and may nothing go against thee but thou puffest out thy belly with blasphemy and rebellest and runnest against God like a bull? Dost thou think that on thine account the mountains are moved and water runneth uphill? Verily I think that thou wilt burst of malice here on this spot, since thou callest God godless and the Most High unjust!"

" Silence, Eliezer. Speak not of me so amiss, for I am bruised with mine affliction and cannot bear it. Is it God hath had to give away His son, so that He came before swine and before the grice of the swine in his lair, or is it I? Why then speakest thou for Him, taking His part and not mine? Hast thou any understanding of what I say? Nay, nought at all dost thou understand, and wilt speak for God. Ah, thou God's-defender, thou wilt receive thy reward and be counted high in His sight for that thou hast stood up for Him and shrewdly praised His deeds, He being God! But I tell thee He will fall upon thee! For thou wilt praise Him falsely, deceiving Him as one deceiveth a man, and wilt secretly flatter Him. Thou hypocrite, He will have none of this way of serving His cause and waiting upon Him with fawning, when what He hath done to me shrieketh to heaven, in that He hath thrown Joseph to the swine. For what thou sayest I too could say, and thou knowest I am not duller of sense than thou. But I speak to Him otherwise, and even so am nearer to Him than thou! For one must defend God against His defenders, and protect Him against those who would protect Him. Thinkest thou He is a man, even of overwhelming power, and it is His side thou

must espouse against me, a worm? When thou callest Him eternally great, thou utterest merely wind, if thou knowest not that God is still above God, still everlastingly above Himself, and will punish from above, where He is my healing and my reliance and where thou art not, if thou regardest thyself as between Him and me! "

" We are altogether evil flesh and prone to sin," responded Eliezer quietly. " Each of us must deal with God according to his understanding and to the height he can reach, for no one can reach His height. Most likely we have both greatly sinned in our speech. But come now, my dear master, enter thy house, for here is enough of the violence of sorrow. Thy face is quite swollen from the heat on this pile of shards, and thou art too tender and fine for such a height of affliction."

" From weeping," said Jacob, " from weeping for the beloved is my face crimson and swollen." But he allowed himself to be led into the tent, being not further interested in the dust-heap, in stark nakedness and scraping his imaginary sores, they having served his turn to the end that he might expostulate his fill with God.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JACOB

Now at least he put on a sackcloth, after the first three days, and his life was a little less distracted by grief; so that the sons when they arrived did not find him in the deepest depth of his affliction. But as yet they had not come; it was their wives who mourned and lamented, supported his head and consoled him, those at least who dwelt with him; for Judah's Shuah was not there. Likewise Zilpah and Bilhah and little Benjamin, to whom

he clung and with whom he sobbed. He could not love the little one in the least as he loved Joseph, and when he looked at him his gaze was full of gloom, because Benjamin had cost him Rachel. But now he pressed the child passionately to his heart, calling him Benoni for his mother's sake, and swore to him that he would never under any circumstances send him on a journey; neither alone nor even with escort. Always, however big he got, and even as a married man, he should stop here under the father's eye, cherished and protected, and not take a step from the safest roads, for there was no confidence in the world, in nothing and in nobody.

Benjamin accepted the assurance, though with a heavy heart. He remembered his excursions 'with Joseph to the grove of Adonis; and the thought that the dear and lovely one would never again run and jump with him, nor even fan his little hand when it sweated; that he would never again relate his great dreams of heaven and make proud the heart of the little urchin with confidence in his understanding — all that wrung bitter tears from his eyes. But at bottom he was not capable of realizing what they told him of Joseph, that he would never come back, that he would never be with him again and was dead; he did not believe it despite the horrible evidence, which never left the father's hand. Our natural incapacity to believe in death is the denial of a denial and thus an affirmation! It is helpless belief, for all belief is helpless, and its helplessness is its strength. As for Benjamin, he clothed his unquenchable belief in the idea that Joseph had been snatched away. " He will come back," he asseverated, caressing the old man. " Or he will have us come to him." Jacob for his part was no child, but weighed down

with the stories life had told him. He had drunk too deep of the bitter-tasting reality of death to have anything but a melancholy smile for Benoni's consolations. But he too, at bottom, was utterly unable to affirm the denial of life; and his efforts to avoid doing so, to get round the necessity of coming to terms with both reality and impossibility, with this inhuman contradiction, were of such an extravagant nature that in our day we should be forced to speak of mental derangement. His household would not have gone so far, but Eliezer was in sore straits with the desperate plans and speculations that Jacob revolved.

We are told that when he was spoken to, his sole answer was: " I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." It was, then and afterwards, generally understood that he wished not longer to live, but simply to die and to unite himself in death with his son — partly in view of his lament that it was all too bitter and hard that he had to lay down his grey head in death for such a grief. He meant it so to be understood. But Eliezer came to hear otherwise and in greater detail. However mad it may sound, Jacob's mind was dwelling on the possibility of descending into the pit — in other words to the kingdom of the dead — and fetching Joseph back.

The idea was the more senseless in that it was not the father but the mother-bride who set out to free the true son from his prison in the lower world and return him to the upper one desolated for lack of him. But Jacob's wandering wits led him to make the most fantastic analogies; moreover he had long since a tendency to deal freely with sex. He had never known how to make a clear distinction between Rachel's eyes and Joseph's.

They were really the same, really those from which he had kissed away the impatient tears — now since Rachel's death they had become indistinguishable; the beloved beings themselves flowed together to a double-sexed picture which was the object of his yearning. And like everything else that was of the upper sphere, this yearning too was male-female — supra-sexual. But as it was Jacob's yearning and he its, so Jacob partook of this nature — a conclusion which he had long since accepted with his emotions. Since Rachel's death he had been to Joseph mother and father both. He had taken over the maternal role to such an extent that it conditioned the nature of his love for Joseph; the identification of Joseph with Rachel had its counterpart in his own identification with the departed as well. But a double object can only be completely loved with a double love. It invokes the masculine in so far as it is feminine, the feminine in so far as it is masculine. A father-feeling which sees in its object at once the son and the beloved; in which there mingles a tenderness which is proper to the love of the mother for the son, is indeed masculine in so far as it has to do with the beloved in the son, but maternal in so far as it is love to the son. This dual nature of his love made possible to Jacob the mad projects with which he burdened the ears of Eliezer concerning the bringing back of Joseph to life by conforming to the mythical pattern.

" I will go down," he asseverated, " to my son. Look at me, Eliezer — is not the shape of my breast grown somewhat feminine? In my years nature probably seeks a balance. Women get beards and men bosoms. I will find my way into the land without return, tomorrow I

will set out. Why lookest thou doubtfully at me? May it not be possible? One must go always westward, and cross the Chubu river, then one cometh to the seven gates. Nay, doubt not, doubt not. No one loved him more than I. I will be as his mother. I will find him and go down with him to the lowest depth whence springeth the water of life. I will sprinkle him and will loose the dusty bolts for his return. Have I not once already done so? Am I not a master of the arts of outwitting and of flight? I will get the better of the mistress below there as I did once of Laban, and they too shall deal with me with fair words. Why must I see that thou shakest thy head? "

" Ah, dear master, I enter as far as I can into thine aspirations and grant that in the beginning all would go according to thy thoughts. But at the latest at the seventh gate it must and would be revealed that thou art not the mother."

" Of a certainty," responded Jacob, and could not in all his extremity quite suppress a gratified smile. " That is inevitable. It would become plain that I did not suckle but begot him. . • . Eliezer," said he, for his thoughts had suddenly taken a turn from the mother-bride to the phallic, " I will beget him anew. Might that not be possible, to beget him again, just as he was, very Joseph, and thus to lead him back from below? Am I not after all still here, from whom he came; should he then be lost? So long as I live, can I not give him up for lost! I will awaken him anew and by begetting re-establish his image on earth! "

" But Rachel is no more here, who shared in the begetting, and ye two must unite if very Joseph is to spring from you. But even if she lived and you begot again,

yet would it not be the hour nor the horoscope which summoned Joseph into being. Not him would you call up, neither Benjamin, but a third whom no eye yet hath seen. For nought happeneth twice and all that is here is only itself, as it were, for ever."

" But then it may not die and be lost, Eliezer. That is impossible. If everything is only for once and hath its like neither next to nor after him, and no great cycle bringeth it round again, then can it not be destroyed and thrown to the pigs; that I cannot accept. True it is that Rachel was necessary to Joseph's begetting, and that the hour too must coincide. But of this I was aware and knowingly have I challenged thy reply. For the begetter is only the tool of creating; it is blind, and knows not what it doth. When we begot Joseph, the true wife and I, we begot not him, but a something — anything — and that it became Joseph was the work of God. Begetting is not creating. It only plungeth life into life, in blind lust: but He createth. Oh, that my life might plunge into death and know it, that I might beget upon it and awaken to life Joseph, as he was! Toward that goal is my musing directed; that is my meaning when I say: 'I will go down.' Might I beget backwards into the past and into the hour that was Joseph's hour! Why shakest thou thy head so misgivingly? That I cannot do it I know myself, but that I wish it, over that shouldst thou not shake thy head, for God hath so ordered it that I am here and Joseph not, which is a shrieking contradiction and rendeth my heart. Knowst thou what that is, a heart rent in twain? No, thou but prattlest when thou sayest it, meaning only that my case is sad. But my heart is literally torn so that I am forced to think against reason and must brood upon the impossible."

" I shake my head, master, for pity, because of thy defiance of that which thou wouldst call a contradiction; namely, that thou art and thy son no more. For therein is precisely thy sorrow, which thou manifestest to a high degree and hast performed for three days long upon the heap of shards. But now it would be better for thee to give thyself gradually unto God's counsel, which sayeth that thou shouldst summon up thy heart and speak no longer of such disjointed thoughts as that of begetting Joseph anew. How were that possible? When thou begottest him thou knewest him not. For man begetteth only what he doth not know. But would he beget consciously and knowing, his art would be creation and he in his presumption would be thinking of himself as God."

" Well, Eliezer, and what then? Must man then not presume, and would he be still man if he did not at all times itch to be like God? Thou forgettest," said Jacob in a whisper, approaching his mouth to Eliezer's ear, " that I have secret knowledge of procreation more than most men, and well know the means and ways of blurring the distinction between begetting and creating, and how to let somewhat of creation flow into the begetting, as Laban learned when I made the white ewes conceive over the peeled wands and they cast speckled in my favour. Seek me a woman, Eliezer, who resembleth Rachel in eyes and limbs, there must be such. I will beget with her, mine eyes firmly and consciously directed upon Joseph's image, which I know so well. Then will she bear him again to me from the dead." "

" Thy words," replied Eliezer, just as softly, " make me to shudder, and I would not willingly have heard them. For it seemeth to me they come not only out of the depths of thy lamenting, but even from deeper still-

Weighted with years thou art besides, and it is not proper thou shouldst think of begetting any more, to say nothing of such begetting as has a tinge of creating and should at no time be thought of."

" Mistake me not, Eliezer. I am an old man, yet full of virility and not at all like the angels, as I am well aware. I should like well to beget. — To be sure," he added after a pause, " my vital powers are for the time cast down by grief over Joseph, so that because of my affliction I might not be able to beget, whereas truly I would wish to precisely on account of it. Therein canst thou see in me the contradictions which rend me, which God hath brought about."

" I can see that thy affliction is set as guard and protection against great sacrilege."

Jacob pondered.

" Then," he said, close to his servant's ear, as before, " one must deceive the watchman and play him a trick, which may easily happen, as he is the obstacle and the motive both at once. For it must be possible, Eliezer, to make a man without begetting him, if one is prevented by suffering and grief! Hath then God begotten man in the womb of woman? No, for there was none, and it is an offence to think of such a thing. Rather He made him as He would, with His hands, out of clay, and breathed the living breath in his nostrils, that he might walk. Nay, Eliezer, but listen and let thyself be won. If we were to make a figure out of clay and a thing formed of earth, like an image, three ells long and with all its limbs, as God thought of and envisaged them when He conceived man in the spirit and made him after His image. God saw and made man, Adam, for He is the creator. But

I see Joseph, the single creature, as I know him, and I will awake him much more eagerly even than when I conceived him and did not know him. And it would lie before us, Eliezer, the figure, and stretch itself in human length on the ground, the face turned toward heaven; we, however, should stand at its feet and look into its face of clay. Ah, my oldest servant, my heart beats high and fast, for how if we did it? "

" If we did what, master? What new and strange thing doth thine anguish conceive? "

" Do I yet know already, my elder servant, and can I tell thee? But let thyself be won and help me to that which I do not yet rightly know! And if we went round the figure once and seven times, I to the right and thou to the left, and laid a little leaf in its dead mouth, a little leaf with God's name. . . . I would kneel down and enclose in my arms the clay and kiss it as I could kiss it, from the bottom of my heart. . . . There! " he shrieked aloud. " Eliezer, lo! The body turneth red, red as fire, it gloweth, it scorcheth me, but I let it not down, I hold it fast in my arms and kiss it again. Then is it extinguished and water floweth into the clayey body, it swelleth and gusheth with water, and lo, hair springeth up on his head, and nails sprout on fingers and toes. Then I kiss him for the third time and blow into him my breath which is God's breath; and fire, water, and breath of air, these three bring it about that the fourth, the earth, waketh to life and in deep amaze openeth its eyes to me the awaker and speaketh: ' Abba, dear Father. . . .' "

" All that maketh me to shudder," said Eliezer, and indeed he was trembling slightly, " for it is as though thou hadst won me over for these new and mysterious

doings and that the *golem* liveth before mine eyes. Truly my life is a burden to me and thou makest a strange return that I am constant to thy couch of affliction and loyally support thy head, whilst thou speakest of wonder-making and images, and so enforcest me that I see all with thine eyes, whether I would or no."

And Eliezer was glad of the brethren when they returned, but they were not so.

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GRIEF

THEY came the seventh day after Jacob had received the sign, they too with sackcloth round their loins, and their hair full of ashes. They were sick at heart, and none of them understood how they could ever have persuaded themselves that all would be well and the father's heart would return again to them, if only the spoiled brat were out of the way. Long ago they had discarded the hope and wondered that they could ever have entertained it. On their journey thither they confessed, haltingly, to each other and to themselves, that putting Joseph away had in no wise altered their father's attitude to them.

They were pretty well aware how Jacob was taking it, and how he felt about them; they understood in what uneasy discomfort their lives would henceforth be led. Deep within the father, obscurely and perhaps not quite consciously, he thought of them as the murderers of the boy. Perhaps he did not believe that they had slain their brother with their own hands. Somehow the beast had done it for them, taking away the blood-deed and doing according to their wish, so that in his eyes they might be guiltless and unassailable and yet the more despica-

ble murderers. In reality, of course, it was just the other way round: they were guilty, indeed, but were no murderers. However, they could not tell the father that; to clear themselves of the blood-guilt they must have confessed their guilt, which would have meant forswearing their oath and their bond. Though indeed they had moments when they found the oath as futile as everything else.

In short, no comfort could be expected, none at all — they could see that perfectly well. A bad conscience is bad enough; but a bad conscience with a grievance is almost worse; for it makes sullen confusion in the soul, it is both foolish and anguishing and cuts a sorry figure. Thus then they would stand before Jacob all their life long, the ten, and there would be no relief. For he suspected them and they learned to know what that means: a mistrust and suspicion, one man mistrusting himself in that he mistrusts another and the other in himself, so others cannot have the repose he cannot find himself, but must peer and pry and taunt and plague himself by plaguing others — for that is the nature of suspicion and incurable mistrust.

AH this they perceived in the first moment when they stood before Jacob — they read it all in the look which he directed toward them, as he raised himself a little from the arm on which he lay. That gaze, reddened by weeping, melancholy and piercing at once, anxious and mistrustful, tried to penetrate their hearts, yet knowing it could not; it held them long before fitting words came: the unanswerable, already answered, empty, senseless, fruitless, pathetic query:

" Where is Joseph? "

They stood with hanging heads before that impossible question: those sorry figures, those sinners with a grievance. They saw that he would spare them nothing, but make all things as hard as he could. When he knew of their approach, he might have risen to receive them; but — though a week had passed since he had received the sign — he lay there, with his face on his arm, and only raised it after a good space of time. And his look conveyed the question which in the abandonment of his grief he insisted on asking them. He deliberately made use of affliction in order to lie thus before them and ask his question, so that it might sound like an outburst of anguish. They saw through all that. Men saw through each other in that distant day as well as in this.

They answered, wryly (Jehudah spoke for the rest) :

" We know, dear lord, what pain and deep mourning hath afflicted thee."

" Me? " he asked. " Not you also? "

" Us too of course," they replied. " Of us we would wish not to speak."

" Why not? "

" Out of reverence."

A lamentable exchange of words. They shuddered to think that it would be so from now on.

" Joseph is no more here," he said.

" Alas! " they responded.

" I gave him up to the journey," he said again, " and he exulted in it. I told him to go to Shechem that he might bow before you and incline your hearts to return. Did he do so? "

" Alas, the tragic thing befell," they replied, " that he did not get so far as to reach us. Before he could do so,

the wild beast had struck him down. For we were pasturing no longer in the vale of Shechem, but in the valley of Dothan. So the boy went astray and was struck down. We saw him no more with our eyes since the day when he announced to you and us in the field what he had dreamed."

" The dreams," said Jacob, " which he dreamed, they were then a vexation to you, heavy and great, so that you bore a grudge to him in your hearts? "

" Something of a grudge," they answered. " A grudge indeed, yet in measure. We saw that his dreams gave thee vexation, for that you chid him and indeed even threatened to pull his hair. Therefore we too were angry with him to some extent. Now, alas, hath the cruel beast worried him far more than was thy intent."

" It hath rent him," said Jacob, and wept. " Why say you worried, for it rent and devoured him? To say worried instead of rent, it is a scorn and a mocking and sounds like gladness."

" Out of bitter affliction," they answered, " it might happen that one said worried for torn — or even to spare the afflicted."

" That is true," he said. " You are right in what you say and I must be content. But if Joseph could not incline your hearts, why then are ye returned? "

" To mourn with you."

" Then mourn," responded Jacob. And they sat down with him to join in a lament: " How long liest thou there? " and as they did so, Jehudah supported his father's head on his knee and dried his tears. But after a little while Jacob interrupted the lamentations and said;

" I do not care to have thee support my head, Judah, and dry my tears. The twins shall do it."

The offended Judah gave over his father's head to the twins and they held it awhile as they lamented, until Jacob said again:

" I know not why, but it is unpleasant to me that Simeon and Levi should do me this service. Reuben shall do it."

Hugely insulted, the twins gave over the head to Reuben, who held it in his turn, until Jacob said once more: " It suiteth and comforteth me not that Reuben holdeth my head and drieth my brow. Dan shall do it."

But things went no better with Dan, he had to pass on the head to Naphtali, of whom Jacob tired even more quickly, and chose Gad for the next in turn. Thus it went on through Asher and Issachar to Zebulun, Jacob saying each time something to the same effect:

" I feel it vaguely displeasing that he should hold my head; another shall do it."

Until all of them had been affronted and put aside — then he said:

" We will cease to mourn."

So they just sat silent round him with dropped jaws. For they understood that he partly thought of them as Joseph's murderers, which indeed they partly were, and if not wholly, then it was only by chance. They were mightily aggrieved that he took the part for the whole, and hardened their hearts.

Thus, they thought, would their lives be spent from now on: sinners suffering under a misunderstanding which they could never wholly explain. This was their reward for putting Joseph away. Jacob's eyes rested upon

them. Those bright, brown, tear-inflamed eyes with the enlarged glands beneath them, those troubled eyes that were wont to be turned inward in musings upon the nature of God; now they were bent upon his sons, always upon them whenever they themselves were not looking: brooding and spying in incurable misgiving and turning aside when one met their gaze. As they were eating, he began:

" But if a man hath hired an ox or an ass and there cometh a stroke, or a god striketh the beast so that it is dead, then shall the man swear and purge himself from guilt, before he can be free from suspicion."

Their hands felt cold; for they understood what Jacob's words pointed at.

" Swear? " they grumbled, their hearts sinking. " He must swear when nobody seeth how it went with the beast and there is no blood and no wounding such as the lion doth or any beast of prey. But if there be blood or traces, who shall molest the hireling? It is the affair of the owner."

" Is so the way of it? "

" So it standeth written."

"But it standeth written: if a shepherd pasture the owner's sheep, and a lion killeth among the fold, then the shepherd shall swear an oath to clear himself, and the damage shall be the owner's. Then how standeth it with me? Shall not the hired shepherd also swear if it seem clear and certain that the lion hath killed? "

" Yes and no," they answered, and their feet too were cold by now. " More no than yes, if it please thee. For if it is a sheepfold on which the lion falleth, then he draggeth his prey out away and no one seeth, and it must

be sworn. But if the shepherd can produce the slain and bring forth some mangled remnant, then shall he not be made to swear."

" You might all be judges, so well you know the law. But if the sheep were the judge's and were of value to him, but to the shepherd of none — is it not enough that it was not his and of no worth to him, to force him to swear? "

" Not ever yet in the world was that enough to force an oath."

" But if the shepherd hated the sheep? " he asked, and looked at them with wild and frightened eyes. Wildly, fearfully, with heart-sinking they countered the gaze. It eased their pain that his eyes roved from one to the other so that none of them had to bear that mistrustful look for long at a time.

" Can one hate a sheep? " they asked, and their faces were cold and sweaty. "That does not happen in the world, there can be no law concerning it, and it cometh not into consideration. But we are no hired shepherds; rather the sons of the king of shepherds, and if we lose a sheep, so is it our loss as well as his, and all in all there can be no talk of judging or of a compulsory oath, in any case."

Such idle, cowardly, wretched talk! Must it go on like that for always? Then were it better that the brethren should go away again, to Shechem, Dothan, or elsewhere, since it was proven that their stay here without Joseph was as impossible as it had been with him.

But did they go? Not at all, they stopped, and if one of them went his own ways, he soon came back. Their evil consciences had need of his suspicion, his suspicion

of their evil consciences. They were bound to one another in God and in Joseph; in the beginning they suffered greatly in living together; yet they accepted it as penance, Jacob and his sons. For these knew what they had done, and if they knew they were guilty, Jacob knew that he was too.

But time passed and habit was re-formed. Habit wiped the peering mistrust out of Jacob's eyes; habit made vague in the minds of the ten brothers as to what they had actually done. Gradually they lost sight of the distinction between doing and happening. It had happened that Joseph was lost — the question how slowly retreated behind the fact as father and sons adjusted themselves to it. He was not here; that was the fixed fact upon which they all came to rest. The ten knew that he had not been murdered, as Jacob thought. But even this difference in knowledge lost meaning in the end, for to them as to him Joseph was a shadow, wandering far outside any sphere of human knowledge in the land of no-return. In this idea father and sons were at one. The poor old man from whom God had snatched his treasure of feeling, so that no sweet spring could bloom any more in his heart, but only parching summer and the barrenness of winter reigned therein and he was really as " stiff " as at the beginning, in his seizure, did not cease to bewail his lamb; and when he wept they did so with him, for their hatred was taken from them, until in the end they could not clearly remember how it was the fool had so angered them. They could even mourn him, too; for they knew him to be safe in the shadow, and in absence, and buried outside the circle of their life — and Jacob did so too.

He relinquished the idea of " going down " as mother

and fetching Joseph back; he no longer distressed anyone with wild plans of begetting him anew or shaping him out of clay and playing the part of God. Life and love are beautiful; but death has also its good side, hiding and preserving the beloved in the past and in absence; so that where once there were care and fear there is now perfect calm. Where was Joseph? In Abraham's bosom. With God, who had " taken him to Himself." Or whatever other words one finds for that last absence — all of them chosen to express gently and finally, if somewhat hollowly and bleakly, the ultimate security of all.

Death, after having restored, preserves. What had Jacob done to restore Joseph, since he had been dismembered? Death itself had seen to that, and quickly. Death had recomposed a whole out of fourteen pieces (or even more), recomposed it in laughing beauty, and thus preserved him more sweetly and better than the people of the evil land of Egypt preserved their dead with bandages and spices: inviolate, unchanged, unchangeable, that dear, vain, brilliant, wheedling youth of seventeen, who had sat on white Hulda and ridden away.

Unchanged, unchangeable; needing no more carefulness, yet ever seventeen however much the years might increase since he rode away and the years of the living increase with them.

So was Joseph for Jacob; and so how shall any say that death has not its good side, however chill and hollow it may be? Jacob adapted himself to it. He looked back with chagrin upon his bickering and arguing with God in the first flowering of his grief, and no longer found it reactionary, but splendid and worthy of reverence in-

stead, that God had not crushed him out of hand, but rather in silent forbearance had let him give rein to the intemperance of his misery.

Ah, good old man! Didst thou divine what amazing favour still lay behind the silence of thy dread and wonderful God, and with what incredible rapture thy soul was still to be shaken, according to His word? When thou wast young in the flesh, thou didst once awake at dawn to find thy dearest bliss turned to illusion and trickery. Very old must thou become before thou learnest that nought but illusion and trickery was thy sorest anguish likewise.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is composed on the linotype in Bodoni, so called after Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813), son of a printer of Piedmont. After gaining experience and fame as superintendent of the Press of the Propaganda in Rome, Bodoni became in 1766 the head of the ducal printing house at Parm.a, which he soon made the foremost of its kind in Europe. His Manuale Tipografico, *completed by his widow in 1818, contains 279 pages of specimens of types, including alphabet* of about thirty foreign languages. His editions of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French classics, especially his Homer, are celebrated for their typography. In type-designing he was an innovator, making his new faces rounder, wider, and lighter, with greater openness and delicacy. His types were rather too rigidly perfect in detail, the thick lines contrasting sharply with the thin wiry lines. It was this feature, doubtless, that caused William Morris's condemnation of the Bodoni types as "swelteringly hideous." Bodoni Book, as reproduced by the Linotype Company, is a modern version based, not upon any one of Bodoni's fonts, but upon a composite conception of the Bodoni manner, designed to avoid the details stigmatized as bad by typographical experts* ***and*** *to secure the pleasing and effective results of which the Bodoni types are capable.*

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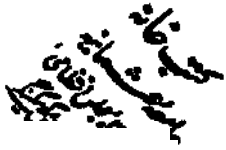
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