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THOMAS MANN

—HIS WORKS—

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PUBLICATION IN ENGLISH

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ALFRED A. KNOPF

# JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS



THOMAS MANN

JOSEPH AM) HIS BROTHERS



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

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1934

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# JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS



# PRELUDE

## DESCENT INTO HELL

VERY deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless?

Bottomless indeed, if — and perhaps only if — the past we mean is the past merely of the life of mankind, that riddling essence of which our own normally unsatisfied and quite abnormally wretched existences form a part; whose mystery, of course, includes our own and is the alpha and omega of all our questions, lending burning immediacy to all we say, and significance to all our striving. For the deeper we sound, the further down into the lower world of the past we probe and press, the more do we find that the earliest foundations of humanity, its history and culture, reveal themselves unfathomable. No matter to what hazardous lengths we let out our line they still withdraw again, and further, into the depths. Again and further are the right words, for the unsearchable plays a kind of mocking game with our researching ardours; it offers apparent holds and goals, behind which, when we have gained them, new reaches of the past still open out — as happens to the coastwise voyager, who finds no end to his journey, for behind each

headland of clayey dune he conquers, fresh headlands and new distances lure him on.

Thus there may exist provisional origins, which practically and in fact form the first beginnings of the particular tradition held by a given community, folk or communion of faith; and memory, though sufficiently instructed that the depths have not actually been plumbed, yet nationally may find reassurance in some primitive point of time and, personally and historically speaking, come to rest there.

Young Joseph, for instance, son of Jacob and the lovely, too-soon-departed Rachel; Joseph, living when Kurigalzu the Cassite reigned at Babel, Lord of the Four Regions, King of Sumeria and Akkadia, greatly comfortable to the heart of Bel-Marduk, a ruler both luxurious and stern, the curls of whose beard stood ranged in such perfect rows that they looked like a division of well-furnished shield-bearers; while at Thebes, in the land which Joseph was used to call Mizraim, also Kemt, the Black, His Sanctity the good God, called Amun-is-satisfied, third of this name, the sun's very son, beamed on the horizon of his palace and blinded the enraptured eyes of his dust-born subjects; when Asshur increased by the might of its gods, and on the great shore route from Gaza up to the passes of the cedar mountains the royal caravans went to and fro, bearing gifts in lapis-lazuli and stamped gold, between the court of the Land of the Rivers and Pharaoh's court; when in the cities of the Amorites, at Beth Shan, Ajalon, Ta'anach, Urushalim, they served Astarte, while at Shechem and Beth-lahma the seven days' wailing went up for the true Son, the dismembered one, and at Gebal, the City of the Book,

El was adored, who needed no temple or rite; Joseph, then, living in that district of the land of Canaan which in Egypt is called Upper Retenu, in his father's tents at Hebron, shaded by terebinth and evergreen oaks, a youth famed for his charm and charming especially by right from his mother, who had been sweet and lovely like to the moon when it is full and like Ishtar's star when it swims mildly in the clear sky; but also armed from the father's side with gifts of the spirit and perhaps in a sense excelling even him; Joseph, lastly and in conclusion (for the fifth and the sixth time I name his name, and with gratification, for there is mystery in names, and I will have it that knowledge of his confers power to invoke that once so living and conversable personality, albeit now sunk so deep below the marge of time); Joseph, for his part, regarded a certain town called Uru, in Southern Babylonia, which in his tongue he called Ur Kashdim, Ur of the Chaldees, as the beginning of all things — that is, of all that mattered to him.

Thence, namely, in times long gone by — Joseph was never quite clear how far back they lay — a brooding and inwardly unquiet man, with his wife, whom probably out of tenderness he would call his sister, together with other members of his family, had departed, to do as the moon did, that was the deity of Ur, to wander and to rove, because he found it most right and fitting to his unsatisfied, doubting, yes, tormented state. His removal, which wore an undeniable colour of contumacy, had been connected with certain structures which had impressed him as offensive, and which Nimrod the Mighty, then ruling in Ur, had, if not erected, yet restored and exceedingly increased in height. It was the private con-

viction of the man from Ur that Nimrod had done this less in honour of the divine lights of the firmament to which they were dedicated, than as a bar against dispersion and as a sky-soaring monument to his own accumulated power. From that power the man from Ur had now escaped, by dispersing himself, and with his dependents taking to pilgrimages of indeterminate length. The tradition handed down to Joseph varied somewhat as to which had more particularly annoyed the objector: whether the great moon-citadel of Ur, the turreted temple of the god Sin, after whom the whole land of Shinar was named, the same word appearing in his own region, as for instance in the mountain called Sinai; or that towering house of the sun, E-sagila, the temple of Marduk at Babel itself, whose summit Nimrod had exalted *to the height of the heavens*, and a precise description of which Joseph had received by word of mouth. There had clearly been much else at which the musing man had taken offence, beginning with that very mightiness of Nimrod and going on to certain customs and practices which to others had seemed hallowed and unalienable by long tradition but more and more filled his own soul with doubts. And since it is not good to sit still when one's soul smarts with doubt, he had simply put himself in motion.

He reached Harran, city of the way and moon-city of the north, in the land of Naharain, where he dwelt many years and gathered recruits, receiving them into close relationship with his own. But it was a relationship which spelt unrest and almost nothing else; a soul-unrest which expressed itself in an unrest of body that had little to do with ordinary light-hearted wanderlust and the ad-

venturousness of the free-footed, but was rather the suffering of the hunted and solitary man, whose blood already throbbed with the dark beginnings of oncoming destiny; perhaps the burden of its weight and scope stood in precise relation to his torment and unrest. Thus Harran too, lying as it did within Nimrod's sphere of control, proved but a "station on the way," from which the moon-man eventually set forth again, together with Sarah his sister-wife and all his kin and his and their possessions, to continue as their guide and Mahdi his hegira towards an unknown goal.

So they had reached the west country and the Amurru who dwelt in the land of Canaan, where once the Hittites had been lords; had crossed the country by stages and thrust deep, deep southwards under other suns, into the land of mud, where the water flows the wrong way, unlike the waters of the land of Naharina, and one travelled northwards downstream; where a people stiff with age worshipped its dead, and where for the man of Ur and for his requirements there would have been nothing to seek or to find. Backwards he turned to the westland, the middle land, which lay between Nimrod's domains and the land of mud; and in the southern part, not far from the desert, in a mountainous region, where there was little ploughland, but plenty of grazing for his cattle, he acquired a kind of superficial permanence and dwelt and dealt with the inhabitants on friendly terms.

Tradition has it that his god — that god upon whose image his spirit laboured, highest among all the rest, whom alone to serve he was in pride and love resolved, the God of the ages, for whom he sought a name and found none sufficient, wherefore he gave him the plural,

calling him, provisionally, Elohim, the Godhead — Elohim, then, had made him promises as far-reaching as clearly defined, to the effect not only that he, the man from Ur, should become a folk in numbers like the sands of the sea and a blessing unto all peoples, but also that the land wherein he now dwelt as a stranger, and whither Elohim had led him out of Chaldaea, should be to him and to his seed in everlasting possession in all its parts — whereby the God of gods had expressly specified the populations and present inhabitants of the land, whose " gates " the seed of the man from Ur should possess. In other words, God had destined these populations to defeat and subjection in the interest of the man from Ur and his seed. But all this must be accepted with caution, or at least with understanding. We are dealing with later interpolations deliberately calculated to confirm as the earliest intentions of the divine political situations which had first been established by force. As a matter of fact the moon-wanderer's spirit was by no means of a kind likely to receive or to elicit promises of a political nature. There is no evidence that when he left home he had already thought of the Amurruland as a theatre of his future activities; and the fact that his wanderings also took him through the land of tombs and of the blunt-nosed lion maid would seem to point to the opposite conclusion. But when he left Nimrod's high and mighty state in his rear, likewise avoiding the greatly estimable kingdom of the double-crowned king of the oasis, and turned westwards — into a region, that is, whose shattered public life condemned it to impotence and servitude — his conduct does not argue the possession of political vision or of a taste for imperial great-

ness. What had set him in motion was unrest of the spirit, a need of God, and if — as there can be no doubt — dispensations were vouchsafed him, they had reference to the irradiations of his personal experience of God, which was of a new kind altogether; and his whole concern from the beginning had been to win for it sympathy and adherence. He suffered; and when he compared the measure of his inward distress with that of the great majority, he drew the conclusion that it was pregnant with the future. Not in vain, so he heard from the newly beheld God, shall have been thy torment and thine unrest; for it shall fructify many souls and make proselytes in numbers like to the sands of the seas; and it shall give impulse to great expansions of life hidden in it as in a seed; and in one word, thou shalt be a blessing. A blessing? It is unlikely that the word gives the true meaning of that which happened to him in his very sight and which corresponded to his temperament and to his experience of himself. For the word " blessing " carries with it an idea which but ill describes men of his sort: men, that is, of roving spirit and discomfortable mind, whose novel conception of the deity is destined to make its mark upon the future. The life of men with whom new histories begin can seldom or never be a sheer unclouded blessing; not this it is which their consciousness of self whispers in their ears. " And thou shalt be a destiny ": such is the purer and more precise meaning of the promise, in whatever language it may have been spoken. And whether that destiny might or might not be a blessing is a question the twofold nature of which is apparent from the fact that it can always and without exception be answered in different ways — though of

course it was always answered in the affirmative by the community — continually waxing in numbers and in grace — of those who recognized the true Baal and Adad of the pantheon in the God who had brought out of Chaldaea the man from Ur; that community to the existence of which young Joseph traced back his own spiritual and physical being.

## 2

SOMETIMES, indeed, he thought of the moon-wanderer as his own great-grandfather — though such an idea is to be sternly rejected from the realms of the possible. He himself was perfectly aware, on the ground of much and varied instruction, that the position was one of far wider bearings. Not so wide, however, that that mighty man of the earth whose boundary stones, adorned with representations of the signs of the zodiac, the man from Ur had put behind him, had actually been Nimrod, the first king on earth, who had begotten Bel of Shinar. No, for according to the tablets, this had been Hammurabi, the Lawgiver, restorer of those citadels of the sun and moon; and when young Joseph put him on a level with that prehistoric Nimrod, it was by a play of thought which most charmingly becomes his spirit but which would be unbecoming and hence forbidden to ours. The same is true of his occasional confusion of the man from Ur with his father's ancestor and his, who had borne the same or a similar name. Between the boy Joseph and the pilgrimage of his ancestor in the spirit and the flesh there lay, according to the system of chronology which his age and sphere rejoiced in, fully twenty generations,

or, roughly speaking, six hundred Babylonian years, a period as long as from our time back into the Gothic Middle Ages — as long, and yet not so long either.

True, we have received our mathematical sidereal time handed down to us from ages long before the man from Ur ever set out on his wanderings, and, in like manner, shall we hand it on to our furthest descendants. But even so, the meaning, weight and fullness of earthly time is not everywhere one and the same. Time has uneven measure, despite all the objectivity of the Chaldaean chronology. Six hundred years at that time and under that sky did not mean what they mean in our western history. They were a more level, silent, speechless reach; time was less effective, her power to bring about change was both weaker and more restricted in its range—• though certainly in those twenty generations she had produced changes and revolutions of a considerable kind: natural revolutions, even changes in the earth's surface in Joseph's immediate circle, as we know and as he knew too. For where, in his day, were Gomorrah, and Sodom, the dwelling-place of Lot of Harran, who had been received into the spiritual community of the man from Ur; where were those voluptuous cities? Lo, the leaden alkaline lake lay there where their unchastity had flourished, for the whole region had been swept with a burning fiery flood of pitch and sulphur, so frightful and apparently so destructive of all life that Lot's daughters, timely escaped with their father, though he would have given them up to the lust of the Sodomites instead of certain important guests whom he harboured, went and lay with their father, being under the delusion that save themselves there were none left upon the earth,

and out of womanly carefulness for the continuance of the race.

Thus time in its course had left behind it even visible alterations. There had been times of blessing and times of curse, times of fullness and times of dearth, wars and campaigns, changing overlords and new gods. Yet on the whole time then had been more conservatively minded than time now, the frame of Joseph's life, his ways and habits of thought were far more like his ancestors' than ours are like the crusaders'. Memory, resting on oral tradition from generation to generation, was more direct and confiding, it flowed freer, time was a more unified and thus a briefer vista; young Joseph cannot be blamed for vaguely foreshortening it, for sometimes, in a dreamy mood, perhaps by night and moonlight, taking the man from Ur for his father's grandfather — or even worse. For it must be stated here that in all probability this man from Ur was not the original and actual man from Ur. Probably — even to young Joseph, in a preciser hour, and by broad daylight — this man from Ur had never seen the moon-citadel of Uru; it had been *his father* who had gone thence northwards, towards Harran in the land of Naharain. And thus it was only from Harran that this falsely so-called man from Ur, having received the command from the Lord God, had set out towards the country of the Amorites, together with that Lot, later settled in Sodom, whom the tradition of the community vaguely stated to be the son of the brother of the man from Ur, on the ground, indeed, that he was the "son of Harran." Now Lot of Sodom was certainly a son of Harran, since he as well as the Ur-man came from there. But to turn

Harran, the "city of the way," into a brother of the man from Ur, and thus to make a nephew out of his proselyte Lot, was a kind of dreamy toying with ideas which, while scarcely permissible in broad daylight, yet makes it easier to understand why young Joseph fell naturally into the same kind of game.

He did so in the same good faith as governed, for instance, the star-worshippers and astrologers at Shinar, in their prognostications according to the principle of stellar representation, and exchanged one planet with another, for instance the sun, when it had set, with Ninurta the planet of war and state, or the planet Marduk with Scorpio, thereafter blithely calling Scorpio Marduk and Ninurta the sun. He did so, that is, on practical grounds, for his desire to set a beginning to the chain of events to which he belonged encountered the same difficulty that it always does: the fact that everybody has a father, that nothing comes first and of itself, its own cause, but that everybody is begotten and points backwards, deeper down into the depths of beginnings, the bottoms and the abysses of the well of the past. Joseph knew, of course, that the father of the Ur-man, that is to say the real man from Uru, must have had a father, who must thus have really been the beginning of his own personal history, and so on, back to Abel, son of Adam, the ancestor of those who dwell in tents and keep sheep. Thus even the exodus from Shinar afforded him only one particular and conditioned beginning; he was well instructed, by song and saga, how it went on further and further into the general, through many histories, back to Adapa or Adama, the first man, who, indeed, according to a lying Babylonian saga, which Joseph

more or less knew by heart, had been the son of Ea, god of wisdom and the water depths, and had served the gods as baker and cup-bearer — but of whom Joseph had better and more inspired knowledge; back to the garden in the East wherein had stood the two trees, the tree of life and the unchaste tree of death; back to the beginning, the origin of the world and the heavens and the earthly universe out of confusion and chaos, by the might of the Word, which moved above the face of the deep and was God. But this, too, was it not only a conditioned and particular beginning of things? For there liad already been forms of existence which looked up to the Creator in admiration and in amaze: sons of God, angels of the starry firmament, about whom Joseph himself knew some odd and even funny stories, and also rebellious demons. These must have had their origin in some past aeon of the world, which had grown old and sunk and become raw material — and had even this been the very first beginning?

Here young Joseph's brain began to reel, just as ours does when we lean over the edge of the well; and despite some small inexactitudes which his pretty and well-favoured little head permitted itself but which are unsuitable for us, we may feel close to him and almost contemporary, in respect to those deep backwards and abysms of time into which so long ago he already gazed. He was a human being like ourselves, thus he must appear to us, and despite his earliness in time just as remote as we, mathematically speaking, from the beginnings of humanity (not to speak of the beginnings of things in general), for they do in actual fact lie deep down in the darkness at the bottom of the abyss, and

we, in our researches, must either stop at the conditioned and apparent beginnings, confusing them with the real beginning, in the same way that Joseph confused the man from Ur on the one hand with his father, and on the other with Joseph's own great-grandfather; or else we must keep on being lured from one time-coulisse to the next, backwards and backwards into the immeasurable.

### 3

I HAVE said that Joseph knew by heart some pretty Babylonian verses which originally came from a written tradition of great extent and full of lying wisdom. He had learned them from travellers who touched at Hebron, with whom he had held speech, in his conversable way, and from his tutor, old Eliezer, a freedman of his father, not to be confused (as Joseph sometimes confused him, and even the old man himself probably enjoyed doing) with that Eliezer who was the oldest servant of the original wanderer and who once had wooed the daughter of Bethuel for Isaac at the well. Now we know these verses and legends; we have texts of them, written on tablets found at Nineveh, in the palace of Assurbanipal, king of the universe, son of Assarhaddon, son of Sennacherib; some of them, preserved in graceful cuneiform characters on greyish-yellow clay, are our earliest documented source for the great flood in which the Lord wiped out the first human race on account of its corruption, and which played such an important role in Joseph's own personal tradition. Literally speaking, this source itself is not an original one; these crumbling tablets bear transcriptions made by learned slaves only

some six hundred years before our era, at the command of Assurbanipal, a sovereign much addicted to the written word and the established view, an "exceeding wise one," in the Babylonian phrase, and a zealous accumulator of the fruits of exceeding wisdom. Indeed they were copied from an original a good thousand years older, from the time, that is, of the Lawgiver and the moon-wanderer; which was about as easy, or as hard, for Assurbanipal's tablet-writers to read and to understand as for us to-day a manuscript of the time of Charlemagne. Written in a quite obsolete and undeveloped hand, a hieratic document, it must have been hard to decipher; whether its significance was wholly honoured in the copy remains matter for doubt.

And then, this original: it was not actually an original; not *the* original, when you come to look at it. It was itself a copy of a document out of God knows what distant time; upon which, then, though without precisely knowing where, one might rest, as upon a true original, if it were not itself provided with glosses and additions by the hand of the scribe, who thought thus to make more comprehensible an original text lying again who knows how far back in time; though what they probably did was further to transmogrify the original wisdom of his text. And thus I might go on — if I were not convinced that my readers already understand what I mean when I speak of coulisses and abysses.

The Egyptians expressed it in a phrase which Joseph knew and himself used on occasion. For although none of the sons of Ham were tolerated in Jacob's tents, because of their ancestor the shamer of his sire, who had turned black all over, also because Jacob entertained

religious doubts on the score of morals of Mizraim; yet the eager-minded lad had often mingled with Egyptians, in the towns, in Kirjath Arba as well as in Shechem, and had picked up this and that of the tongue in which he was later to bear such brilliant witness. The Egyptians then, speaking of something that had high and indefinite antiquity, would say: "It comes from the days of Set." By whom, of course, they meant one of their gods, the wily brother of their Marduk or Tammuz, whom they called Osiris, the Martyr, because Set had first lured him into a sarcophagus and cast it into the river, and afterwards torn him to pieces like a wild beast and killed him entirely, so that Osiris, the Sacrifice, now ruled as lord of the dead and everlasting king of the lower world. "From the days of Set"; the people of Egypt had many uses for the phrase, for with them the origins of everything went back in undemonstrable ways into that darkness.

At the edge of the Libyan desert, near Memphis, hewn out of the rock, crouched the colossus and hybrid, fifty-three metres high; lion and maiden, with a maiden's breasts and the beard of a man, and on its headcloth the kingly serpent rearing itself. The huge paws of its cat's body stretched out before it, its nose was blunted by the tooth of time. It had always crouched there, always with its nose blunted by time; and of an age when its nose had not been blunted, or when it had not crouched there, there was no memory at all. Thothmes the Fourth, Golden Hawk and Strong Bull, King of Upper and of Lower Egypt, beloved of the goddess of truth and belonging to the eighteenth dynasty which was also the dynasty of Amun-is-satisfied, by reason of a command

received in a dream before he mounted the throne, had had the colossal statue dug out of the sands of the desert, where it lay in great part drifted over and covered up. But some fifteen hundred years before that, King Cheops of the fourth dynasty — the same, by the bye, who built the great pyramid for his own tomb and made sacrifice to the sphinx — had found it half in ruins; and of any time when it had not been known, or even known with a whole nose, there was no knowledge at all.

Was it Set who himself hewed out of the stone that fabulous beast, in which later generations saw an image of the sun-god, calling it Horus in the mount of light? It was possible, of course, for Set, as likewise Osiris the Sacrifice, had probably not always been a god, but sometime or other a man, and indeed a king over Egypt. The statement is often made that a certain Menes or Horus-Menes some six thousand years before our era founded the first Egyptian dynasty, and everything before that is "pre-dynastic"; he, Menes, having first united the two countries, the upper and the lower, the papyrus and the lily, the red and the white crown, and ruled as first king over Egypt, the history of which began with his reign. Of this statement probably every word is false; to the penetrating eye King Menes turns out to be nothing but a coulisse. Egyptian priests told Herodotus that the written history of their country went back eleven thousand, three hundred and forty years before his era, which means for us about fourteen thousand years; a reckoning which is calculated to rob King Menes' figure of all its primitiveness. The history of Egypt alternates between periods of discord and impotence and periods of bril-

liance and power; epochs of diverse rulers or none at all and epochs of strongly concentrated power; it becomes increasingly clear that these epochs alternated too often to make it likely that King Menes was the earliest ruler over a unified realm. The discords which he healed had followed upon earlier unification and that upon still earlier disruption. How many times the "older," "earlier," "again" are to be repeated we cannot tell; but only that the first unification took place under dynastic deities, whose sons presumably were that Set and Osiris; the sacrifice, murder and dismemberment of the latter being legendary references to quarrels over the succession, which at that time was determined by stratagem and crime. That was a past of a profound, mythical and theological character, even to the point of becoming spiritualized and ghostlike; it became present, it became the object of religious reverence in the shape of certain animals — falcons and jackals — honoured in the ancient capitals, Buto and Nekheb; in these the souls of those beings of primitive time were supposed to be mysteriously preserved.

## 4

"FROM the days of Set" — young Joseph relished the phrase, and I share his enjoyment; for like the Egyptians, I find it most applicable, and to nearly everything in life. Wherever I look, I think of the words: and the origin of all things, when I come to search for it, pales away into the days of Set.

At the time when our story begins — an arbitrary beginning, it is true, but we must begin somewhere, and fix

a point behind which we do not go, otherwise we too shall land in the days of Set — at this time young Joseph already kept the flocks with his brethren, though only under rather privileged conditions; which is to say that when it pleased him so to do, he watched as they did his father's sheep, goats and kine on the plains of Shechem and Hebron. What sort of animals were these, and wherein different from ours? In nothing at all. They were the very same peaceful and familiar beasts, at the same stage of development as those we know. The whole history of cattle-breeding — for instance of the domestic ox from the wild buffalo — lay even in young Joseph's day so far back in the past that "far" is a feeble word to use in such a connection. It has been shown that the ox was bred in the stone age, before the use of metal tools, that is before the bronze age; this boy of the Amurru-land, Joseph, with his Egyptian and Babylonian culture, was almost as remote from those dim times as we ourselves are.

As for the wild sheep from which Jacob's flocks — and ours — were bred, we are told that it is extinct. It died out "long ago." It must have been completely domesticated "in the days of Set." And the breeding of the horse, the ass, the goat and the pig — out of that wild boar which mangled Tammuz, the young shepherd — all that was accomplished in the same remote and misty past. Our historical records go back some seven thousand years — during which time no wild animal was still in process of domestication. There is no tradition nor any memory of such events.

If we look at the cultivation of wild grasses and their development into cereals, the story is the same. Our

species of grain, our barley, oats, rye, maize and wheat — they are the very ones which nourished the youthful Joseph — have been cultivated so long that no botanist can trace the beginning of the process, nor any people boast of having been the first to initiate it. We are told that in the stone age there were five varieties of wheat and three of barley. As for the cultivation of the vine from its wild beginnings — an incomparable achievement, humanly speaking, whatever else one may think about it — tradition, echoing hollowly up from the depths of the past, ascribes it to Noah, the one upright man, survivor of the flood, the same whom the Babylonians called Utnapishtim and also Atrachasis, the exceeding wise one, who imparted to Gilgamesh, his late grandchild, hero of the legends written on the tablets, the story of the beginning of things. This upright man, then, as Joseph likewise knew, was the first to plant vineyards — nor did Joseph consider it such a very upright deed. Why could he not have planted something useful: fig trees, for instance, or olives? But no, he chose to plant the vine, and was drunk therefrom, and in his drunkenness was mocked and shamed of his manhood. But when Joseph imagined all that to have happened not so very long ago, that miracle of the grape, perhaps some dozen of generations before his "great-grandfather," his ideas of time showed themselves to be hazy indeed; the past which he so lightly invoked being actually matter of remote and primeval distances. Having said thus much, it only remains to add — however much we may pale at the thought — that those distances themselves must have lain very late in time, compared with the remoteness of the beginning of the human race, for them to have pro-

duced a civilization capable of that high deed, the cultivation of the vine.

Where then do they lie in time, the beginnings of human civilization? How old is it? I put the question with reference to young Joseph, whose stage of development, though remote from ours, did not essentially differ from it, aside from those less precise habits of thought of his, at which we may benevolently smile. We have only to enquire, to conjure up a whole vista of time-coulisses opening out infinitely, as in mockery. When we ourselves speak of antiquity we mostly mean the Graeco-Roman world — which, relatively speaking, is of a brand new modernity. Going back to the so-called " primitive population " of Greece, the Pelasgians, we are told that before they settled in the islands, the latter were inhabited by the *actual* primitive population, a race which preceded the Phoenicians in the domination of the sea — a fact which reduces to the merest time-coulisse the Phoenician claim to have been the first seafaring folk. But science is increasingly unfavourable to all these theories; more and more it inclines to the hypothesis and the conviction that these " barbarians " were colonists from Atlantis, the lost continent beyond the pillars of Hercules, which in times gone by united Europe with America. But whether this was the earliest region of the earth to be populated by human beings is very doubtful, so doubtful as to be unlikely; it is much more probable that the early history of civilization, including that of Noah, the exceeding wise one, is to be connected with regions of the earth's surface much older in point of time and already long before fallen to decay.

But these are foothills whereupon we may not wander,

and only vaguely indicate by that before-quoted Egyptian phrase; the peoples of the east behaved with a piety equal to their wisdom when they ascribed to the gods their first knowledge of a civilized life. The red-hued folk of Mizraim saw in Osiris the Martyr the benefactor who had first given them laws and taught them to cultivate the soil; being prevented finally by the plotting of the crafty Set, who attacked him like a wild boar. As for the Chinese, they consider the founder of their empire to have been an imperial half-god named Fu-hsi, who introduced cattle into China and taught the priceless art of writing. This personage apparently did not consider the Chinese, at that time — some two thousand, eight hundred and fifty-two years before our era — to be ripe for astronomical instruction; for according to their annals they received it only about thirteen hundred years later, from the great foreign emperor, Tai-Ko-Fokee; whereas the astrologers of Shinar were already several hundred years earlier instructed in the signs of the zodiac; and we are told that a man who accompanied Alexander of Macedon to Babylon sent to Aristotle Chaldaean astronomical records scratched on baked clay, whose antiquity would be to-day four thousand, one hundred and sixty years. That is easily possible, for it seems likely that observation of the heavens and astronomical calculations were made in Atlantis, whose disappearance, according to Solon, dated nine thousand years before that worthy's own time; from which it follows that man attained to skill in these lofty arts some eleven and a half thousand years before our era.

It is clear that the art of writing is not younger than this, and very possibly much older. I speak of it in par-

ticular because Joseph entertained such a lively fondness for the art, and unlike his brothers early perfected himself in it; being instructed at first by Eliezer, in the Babylonian as well as in the Phoenician and Hittite scripts. He had a genuine weakness for the god or idol whom in the East they called Nabu, the writer of history, and in Tyre and Sidon Taut; in both places recognizing him as the inventor of letters and the chronicler of the beginnings of things: the Egyptian god Thoth of Her-mopolis, the letter-writer of the gods and the patron of science, whose office was regarded in those parts as higher than all others; that sincere, solicitous and reasonable god, who was sometimes a white-haired ape, of pleasing appearance, sometimes wore an ibis head, and likewise had certain tender and spiritual affiliations with the moon which were quite to young Joseph's taste. These predilections the youth would not have dared confess to his father Jacob, who set his face sternly against all such coquetting with idols, being even stricter in his attitude than were certain very high places themselves to which his austerity was dedicated. For Joseph's history proves that such little departures on his part into the impermissible were not visited very severely, at least not in the long run.

As for the art of writing, with reference to its misty origins it would be proper to paraphrase the Egyptian expression and say that it came " from the days of Thoth." The written roll is represented in the oldest Egyptian art, and we know a papyrus which belonged to Horus-Send, a king of the second dynasty, six thousand years before our era, and which even then was supposed to be so old that it was said Sendi had inherited it from Set. When Sneferu

and that Cheops reigned, sons of the sun, of the fourth dynasty, and the pyramids of Gizeh were built, knowledge of writing was so usual amongst the lower classes that we to-day can read the simple inscriptions scratched by artisans on the great building blocks. But it need not surprise us that such knowledge was common property in that distant time, when we recall the priestly account of the age of the written history of Egypt.

If, then, the days of an established language of signs are so unnumbered, where shall we seek for the beginnings of oral speech? The oldest, the primeval language, we are told, is Indo-Germanic, Indo-European, Sanscrit. But we may be sure that that is a beginning as hasty as any other; and that there existed a still older mother-tongue which included the roots of the Aryan as well as the Semitic and Hamitic tongues. Probably it was spoken on Atlantis — that land which is the last far and faint coulisse still dimly visible to our eyes, but which itself can scarcely be the original home of articulate man.

## 5

CERTAIN discoveries have caused the experts in the history of the earth to estimate the age of the human species at about five hundred thousand years. It is a scant reckoning, when we consider, first, how science to-day teaches that man in his character as animal is the oldest of all mammals and was already in the latter dawn of life existing upon this earth in various zoological modes, amphibious and reptilian, before any cerebral development took place; and second, what endless and boundless expanses of time must have been at his disposal, to

turn the crouching, dream-wandering, marsupial type, with unseparated fingers, and a sort of flickering pre-reason as his guide, such as man must have been before the time of Noah-Utnapishtim, the exceeding wise, into the inventor of bow and arrow, the fire-maker, the welder of meteoric iron, the cultivator of corn and wine, the breeder of domestic cattle — in a word, into the shrewd, skilful and in every essential respect modern human being which appears before us at the earliest grey dawn of history. A priest at the temple of Sais explained to Solon the Greek myth of Phaeton through a human experiencing of some deviation in the course of the bodies which move round the earth in space, resulting in a devastating conflagration on the earth. Certainly it becomes clearer and clearer that the dream memory of man, formless but shaping itself ever anew after the manner of sagas, reaches back to catastrophes of vast antiquity, the tradition of which, fed by recurrent but lesser similar events, established itself among various peoples and produced that formation of coulisses which forever lures and leads onwards the traveller in time.

Those verses which Joseph had heard and learned by heart related among other things the story of the great flood. He would in any case have known this story even if he had not learned of it in the Babylonian tongue and version, for it existed in his western country and especially among his own people, although not in quite the same form, but with details differing from those in the version current in the land of the rivers; just at this very time, indeed, it was in process of establishing itself in a variant upon the eastern form. Joseph well knew the **tale**: how **all that** was flesh, **the** beasts of the field not ex-

cepted, had corrupted most indescribably His way upon the earth; yes, the earth herself practised whoredom and deceivingly brought forth oats where wheat had been sown — and all this despite the warnings of Noah; so that the Lord and Creator, who saw His very angels involved in this abomination, at length after a last trial of patience, of a hundred and twenty years, could no longer bear it and be responsible for it, but must let the judgment of the flood prevail. And now He, in His majestic good-nature (which the angels in no wise shared), left open a little back door for life to escape by, in the shape of a chest, pitched and caulked, into which Noah went up with the animals. Joseph knew that too and knew the day on which the creatures entered the ark; it had been the tenth of the month Marcheswan, and on the seventeenth the fountains of the great deep were broken up, at the time of the spring thawing, when Sirius rises in the daytime and the fountains of water begin to swell. It was on this day, then — Joseph had it from old Eliezer. But how often had this day come round since then? He did not consider that, nor did old Eliezer; and here begin the foreshortenings, the confusions and the deceptive vistas which dominate the tradition.

Heaven knows when there happened that overwhelming encroachment of the Euphrates, a river at all times tending to irregular courses and sudden spate; or that startling irruption of the Persian Gulf into the solid land as the result of tornado and earthquake; that catastrophe which did not precisely create the tradition of the deluge, but gave it its final nourishment, revived it with a horrible aspect of life and reality and now stood to all later generations as *the* Deluge. Perhaps the most recent

catastrophe had not been so very long ago; and the nearer it was, the more fascinating becomes the question whether, and how, the generation which had personal experience of it succeeded in confusing their present affliction with the subject of the tradition, in other words with *the* Deluge. It came to pass, and that it did so need cause us to feel neither surprise nor contempt. The event consisted less in that something past repeated itself, than in that it became present. But that it could acquire presentness rested upon the fact that the circumstances which brought it about were at all times present. The ways of the flesh are perennially corrupt, and may be so in all god-fearingness. For do men know whether they do well or ill before God and whether that which seems to them good is not to the Heavenly One an abomination? Men in their folly know not God nor the decrees of the lower world; at any time forbearance can show itself exhausted, and judgment come into force; and there is probably always a warning voice, a knowledgeable Atrachasis who knows how to interpret signs and by taking wise precautions is one among ten thousand to escape destruction. Not without having first confided to the earth the tablets of knowledge, as the seed-corn of future wisdom, so that when the waters subside, everything can begin afresh from the written seed. "At any time": therein lies the mystery. For the mystery is timeless, but the form of timelessness is the now and the here.

The Deluge, then, had its theatre on the Euphrates River, but also in China. Round the year 1300 before our era there was a frightful flood in the Hoang-Ho, after which the course of the river was regulated; it was a repetition of the great flood of some thousand and fifty

years before, whose Noah had been the fifth Emperor, Yao, and which, chronologically speaking, was far from having been the true and original Deluge, since the tradition of the latter is common to both peoples. Just as the Babylonian account, known to Joseph, was only a reproduction of earlier and earlier accounts, so the flood itself is to be referred back to older and older prototypes; one is convinced of being on solid ground at last, when one fixes, as the original original, upon the sinking of the land Atlantis beneath the waves of the ocean — knowledge of which dread event penetrated into all the lands of the earth, previously populated from that same Atlantis, and fixed itself as a movable tradition forever in the minds of men. But it is only an apparent stop and temporary goal. According to a Chaldaean computation, a period of thirty-nine thousand, one hundred and eighty years lay between the Deluge and the first historical dynasty of the kingdom of the two rivers. It follows that the sinking of Atlantis, occurring only nine thousand years before Solon, a very recent catastrophe indeed, historically considered, certainly cannot have been *the* Deluge. It too was only a repetition, the becoming-present of something profoundly past, a frightful refresher to the memory, and the original story is to be referred back at least to that incalculable point of time when the island continent called "Lemuria," in its turn only a remnant of the old Gondwana continent, sank beneath the waves of the Indian Ocean.

What concerns us here is not calculable time. Rather it is time's abrogation and dissolution in the alternation of tradition and prophecy, which lends to the phrase "once upon a time" its double sense of past and future

and therewith its burden of potential present. Here the idea of reincarnation has its roots. The kings of Babel and the two Egypts, that curly-bearded Kurigalzu as well as Horus in the palace at Thebes, called Amun-is-satisfied, and all their predecessors and successors, were manifestations in the flesh of the sun god, that is to say the myth became in them a *mysterium*, and there was no distinction left between being and meaning. It was not until three thousand years later that men began disputing as to whether the Eucharist "was" or only "signified" the body of the Sacrifice; but even such highly supererogatory discussions as these cannot alter the fact that the essence of the mystery is and remains the timeless present. Such is the meaning of ritual, of the feast. Every Christmas the world-saving Babe is born anew and lies in the cradle, destined to suffer, to die and to arise again. And when Joseph, in midsummer, at Shechem or at Beth-Lahma, at the feast of the weeping women, the feast of the burning of lamps, the feast of Tammuz, amid much wailing of flutes and joyful shoutings relived in the explicit present the murder of the lamented Son, the youthful god, Osiris-Adonis, and his resurrection, there was occurring that phenomenon, the dissolution of time in mystery, which is of interest for us here because it makes logically unobjectionable a method of thought which quite simply recognized a deluge in every visitation by water.

PARALLEL with the story of the flood is the tale of the Great Tower. Common property like the other, it pos-

sessed local presentness in many places, and affords quite as good material for dreamy speculation and the formation of time-coulisses. For instance, it is as certain as it is excusable that Joseph confused the Great Tower itself with the temple of the sun at Babel, the so-called E-sagila or House of the Lifting of the Head. The Wanderer from Ur had doubtless done the same in his time, and it was certainly so considered not only in Joseph's sphere but above all in the land of Shinar itself. To all the Chaldaeans, E-sagila, the ancient and enormous terraced tower, built, according to their belief, by Bel, the Creator, with the help of the black men whom he created expressly for the purpose, and restored and completed by Hammurabi, the Lawgiver; the Tower, seven stories high, of whose brilliantly enamelled splendours Joseph had a lively mental picture; to all the Chaldaeans E-sagila signified the present embodiment of an abstract idea handed down from far-away antiquity; the Tower, the sky-soaring structure erected by human hands. In Joseph's particular milieu the legend of the Tower possessed other and more far-reaching associations, which did not, precisely speaking, belong to it, such as the idea of the dispersal. This is explainable only by the moon-man's own personal attitude, his taking umbrage and going hence; for the people of Shinar had no such associations whatever with the Migdals or citadels of their cities, but rather the contrary, seeing that Hammurabi, the Lawgiver, had expressly caused it to be written that he had made their summits high in order to "bring together again" the scattered and dispersing people under the sway of "him who was sent." But the moon-man was thereby affronted in his notions of the deity, and in the face of Nimrod's royal

policy of concentration had dispersed himself and his; and thus in Joseph's home the past, made present in the shape of E-sagila, had become tintured with the future and with prophecy; a judgment hung over the towering spite-monument of Nimrod's royal arrogance, not one brick was to remain upon another, and the builders thereof would be brought to confusion and scattered by the Lord God of Hosts. Thus old Eliezer taught the son of Jacob, and preserved thereby the double meaning of the "once upon a time," its mingled legend and prophecy, whose product was the timeless present, the Tower of the Chaldaeans.

To Joseph its story was the story of the Great Tower itself. But it is plain that after all E-sagila is only a time-coulisse upon our endless path toward the original Tower. One time-coulisse, like many another. Mizraim's people, too, looked upon the tower as present, in the form of King Cheops' amazing desert tomb. And in lands of whose existence neither Joseph nor old Eliezer had the faintest notion, in Central America, that is, the people had likewise their tower or their image of a tower, the great pyramid of Cholula, the ruins of which are of a size and pretentiousness calculated to have aroused great anger and envy in the breast of King Cheops. The people of Cholula have always denied that they were the authors of this mighty structure. They declared it to be the work of giants, strangers from the east, they said, a superior race who, filled with drunken longing for the sun, had reared it up in their ardour, out of clay and asphalt, in order to draw near to the worshipped planet. There is much support for the theory that these progressive foreigners were colonists from Atlantis, and it appears that

these sun-worshippers and astrologers incarnate always made it their first care, wherever they went, to set up mighty watch-towers, before the faces of the astonished natives, modelled upon the high towers of their native land, and in particular upon the lofty mountain of the gods of which Plato speaks. In Atlantis, then, we may seek the prototype of the Great Tower. In any case we cannot follow its history further, but must here bring to an end our researches upon this extraordinary theme.

## 7

BUT where was Paradise — the " garden in the East "? The place of happiness and repose, the home of man, where he ate of the tree of evil and was driven forth or actually drove himself forth and dispersed himself? Young Joseph knew this as well as he knew about the flood, and from the same source. It made him smile a little when he heard dwellers in the Syrian desert say that the great oasis of Damascus was Paradise, for that Nothing more paradisial could be dreamed of than the way it lay among fruit orchards and charmingly watered gardens nestled between majestic mountain range and spreading seas of meadow, full of bustling folk of all races and the commerce of rich wares. And for politeness' sake he shrugged his shoulders only inwardly when men of Mizraim asserted that Egypt had been the earliest home of man, being as it was the centre and navel of the world. The curly-bearded folk of Shinar, of course, they too believed that their kingly city, called by them the " gateway of God " and " bond between heaven and

earth " (*Bab-ilu, markas same u ursitim*: the boy Joseph could repeat the words glibly after them), in other words, that Babel was the sacred centre of the earth. But in this matter of the world-navel Joseph had better and more precise information, drawn from the personal experience of his good and solemn and brooding father, who, when a young man on his way from "Seven Springs," the home of his family, to his uncle at Harran in the land of Naharain, had quite unexpectedly and unconsciously come upon the real world-navel, the hill-town of Luz, with its sacred stone circle, which he had then renamed Beth-el, the House of God, because, fleeing from Esau, he had there been vouchsafed that greatest and most solemn revelation of his whole life. On that height, where Jacob had set up his stone pillow for a mark and anointed it with oil, there henceforth was for Joseph and his people the centre of the world, the umbilical cord between heaven and earth. Yet not there lay Paradise; rather in the region of the beginnings and of the home — somewhere thereabouts, in Joseph's childish conviction, which was, moreover, a conviction widely held, whence the man of the moon city had once set out, in Lower Shinar, where the river drained away and the moist soil between its branches even yet abounded in luscious fruit-bearing trees.

Theologians have long favoured the theory that Eden was situated somewhere in southern Babylonia and Adam's body formed of Babylonian soil. Yet this is only one more of the coulisse effects with which we are already so familiar; another illustration of the process of localization and back-reference — only that here it is of a kind extraordinary beyond all comparison, alluring

us out beyond the earthly in the most literal sense and the most comprehensive way; only that here the bottom of the well which is human history displays its whole, its immeasurable depth, or rather its bottomlessness, to which neither the conception of depth nor of darkness is any longer applicable, and we must introduce the conflicting idea of light and height; of those bright heights, that is, down from which the Fall could take place, the story of which is indissolubly bound up with our soul-memories of the garden of happiness.

The traditional description of Paradise is in one respect exact. There went out, it says, from Eden a river to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and came into four heads: the Pison, Gihon, Euphrates and Hiddekel. The Pison, it goes on to say, is also called the Ganges; it flows about all India and brings with it gold. The Gihon is the Nile, the greatest river of the world, that encompasseth the whole of Ethiopia. But Hiddekel, the arrow-swift river, is the Tigris, which flows towards the east of Assyria. This last is not disputed. But the identity of the Pison and the Gihon with the Ganges and the Nile is denied with considerable authority. These are thought to be rather the Araxes which flows into the Caspian Sea, and the Halys which flows into the Black Sea; and accordingly the site of Paradise would still be in the Babylonian sphere of interest, but not in Babylon itself, rather in the Armenian Alpine country north of the Mesopotamian plain, where the two rivers in question have their sources close together.

The theory seems reasonably acceptable. For if, as the most regarded tradition has it, the "Phrat," or Euphrates, rose in Paradise, then Paradise cannot be situ-

ated at the mouth of that river. But even while, with this fact in mind, we award the palm to Armenia, we have done no more than take the step to the next-following fact; in other words, we have come only one more coulisse further on.

God, so old Eliezer had instructed Joseph, gave the world four quarters: morning, evening, noon and midnight guarded at the seat of the Most High by four sacred beasts and four guardian angels, which watch over this fixed condition with unchanging eyes. Did not the pyramids of Lower Egypt exactly face with their four sides, covered with shining cement, the four quarters of the earth? And thus the arrangement of the rivers of Paradise was conceived. They are to be thought of in their course as four serpents, the tips of whose tails touch, whose mouths lie far asunder, so that they go out from each other towards the four quarters of the heavens. This now is an obvious transference. It is a geography transferred to a site in Near Asia, but familiar to us in another place, now lost; namely, in Atlantis, where, according to Plato's narrative and description, these same four streams went out from the mount of the gods towering up in the middle, and in the same way, that is, at right angles, to the four quarters of the earth. All learned strife as to the geographical meaning of the four head waters and as to the site of the garden itself has been shown to be idle and received its quietus, through the tracing backwards of the paradise-idea, from which it appears that the latter obtained in many places, founded on the popular memory of a lost land, where a wise and progressive humanity passed happy years in a frame of things as beneficent as it was blest. We have here an un-

mistakable contamination of the tradition of an actual paradise with the legend of a golden age of humanity. Memory seems to go back to that land of the Hesperides, where, if reports say truth, a great people pursued a wise and pious course under conditions never since so favourable. But no, the Garden of Eden it was not; it was not that site of the original home and of the Fall; it is only a coulisse and an apparent goal upon our paradise-seeking pilgrimage in time and space; and our archaeology of the earth's surface seeks for Adam, the first man, in times and places whose decline and fall took place before the population of Atlantis.

What a deluded pilgrimage, what an onward-luring hoax! For even if it were possible, or excusable, however misleading, to identify as Paradise the land of the golden apples, where the four great rivers flowed, how could we, even with the best will in the world to self-deception, hold with such an idea, in view of the Lemurian world which is our next and furthest time-coulisse; a scene wherein the tortured larva of the human being — our lovely and well-favoured young Joseph would have refused with pardonable irritation to recognize himself in the picture — endured the nightmare of fear and lust which made up his life, in desperate conflict with scaly mountains of flesh in the shape of flying lizards and giant newts? That was no garden of Eden, it was Hell. Or rather, it was the first accursed state after the Fall. Not here, not at the beginning of time and space was the fruit plucked from the tree of desire and death, plucked and tasted. That comes first. We have sounded the well of time to its depths, and not yet reached our goal: the history of man is older than the material world

which is the work of his will, older than life, which rests upon his will.

## 8

A VERY ancient tradition of human thought, based upon man's truest knowledge of himself and going back to exceedingly early days whence it has become incorporated into the succession of religions, prophecies and doctrines of the East, into Avesta, Islam, Manichaeism, Gnosticism and Hellenism, deals with the figure of the first or first completely human man, the Hebraic *Adam qadmon*; conceived as a youthful being made out of pure light, formed before the beginning of the world as prototype and abstract of humanity. To this conception others have attached themselves, varying to some extent, yet in essentials the same. Thus, and accordingly, primitive man was at his very beginning God's chosen champion in the struggle against that evil which penetrated into the new creation; yet harm befel him, he was fettered by demons, imprisoned in the flesh, estranged from his origins, and only freed from the darkness of earthly and fleshly existence by a second emissary of the deity, who in some mysterious way was the same as himself, his own higher self, and restored to the world of light, leaving behind him, however, some portions of his light, which then were utilized for the creation of the material world and earthly creatures. Amazing tales, these, wherein the religious element of redemption is faintly visible behind the cosmogonic frame. For we are told that the original human Son of God contained in His body of light the seven metals to which the seven planets correspond and

out of which the world is formed. Again it is said that this human light-essence, issuing from the paternal primitive source, descended through the seven planetary spheres and the lord of each partook of his essence. But then looking down he perceived his image mirrored in matter, became enamoured of it, went down unto it and thus fell in bondage to lower nature. All which explains man's double self, an indissoluble combination of godlike attributes and free essence with sore enslavement to the baser world.

In this narcissistic picture, so full of tragic charm, the meaning of the tradition begins to clarify itself; the clarification is complete at the point where the descent of the Child of God from His world of light into the world of nature loses the character of mere obedient pursuance of a higher order, hence guiltless, and becomes an independent and voluntary motion of longing, by that token guilty. And at the same time we can begin to unravel the meaning of that " second emissary " who, identical in a higher sense with the light-man, comes to free him from his involvement with the darkness and to lead him home. For the doctrine now proceeds to divide the world into the three personal elements of matter, soul and spirit, among whom, and between whom and the Deity there is woven the romance, whose real protagonist is the soul of mankind, adventurous and in adventure creative, a mythus, which, complete by reason of its combination of oldest record and newest prophecy, gives us clear leading as to the true site of Paradise and upon the story of the Fall.

It is stated that the soul, which is to say the primevally human, was, like matter, one of the principles laid down

from the beginning, and that it possessed life but no knowledge. It had, in fact, so little that, though dwelling in the nearness of God, in a lofty sphere of happiness and peace, it let itself be disturbed and confused by the inclination — in a literal sense, implying direction — towards still formless matter, avid to mingle with this and evoke forms upon which it could compass physical desires. But the yearning and pain of its passion did not diminish after the soul had let itself be betrayed to a descent from its home; they were heightened even to torment by the circumstance that matter sluggishly and obstinately preferred to remain in its original formless state, would hear nothing of taking on form to please the soul, and set up all imaginable opposition to being so formed. But now God intervened; seeing nothing for it, probably, in such a posture of affairs, but to come to the aid of the soul, His errant concomitance. He supported the soul as it wrestled in love with refractory matter. He created the world; that is to say, by way of assisting the primitive human being He brought forth solid and permanent forms, in order that the soul might gratify physical desires upon these and engender man. But immediately afterwards, in pursuance of a considered plan, He did something else. He sent, such literally are the words of the source upon which I am drawing, He sent out of the substance of His divinity spirit to man in this world, that it might rouse from its slumber the soul in the frame of man, and show it, by the Father's command, that this world was not its place, and that its sensual and passional enterprise had been a sin, as a consequence of which the creation of the world was to be regarded. What in truth the spirit ever strives to make clear to the human soul

imprisoned in matter, the constant theme of its admonitions, is precisely this: that the creation of the world came about only by reason of its folly in mingling with matter, and that once it parted therefrom the world of form would no longer have any existence. To rouse the soul to this view is the task of the reasonable spirit; all its hoping and striving are directed to the end that the passionate soul, once aware of the whole situation, will at length reacknowledge its home on high, strike out of its consciousness the lower world and strive to regain once more that lofty sphere of peace and happiness. In the very moment when that happens the lower world will be absolved; matter will win back her own sluggish will, being released from the bonds of form to rejoice once more, as she ever did and ever shall, in formlessness, and be happy in her own way.

Thus far the doctrine and the romance of the soul. And here, beyond a doubt, we have come to the very last "backward," reached the remotest human past, fixed upon Paradise and tracked down the story of the Fall, of knowledge and of death, to its pure and original form. The original human soul is the oldest thing, more correctly *an* oldest thing, for it has always been, before time and before form, just as God has always been and likewise matter. As for the intelligent spirit, in whom we recognize the "second emissary" entrusted with the task of leading the soul back home; although in some undefined way closely related to it, yet it is after all not quite the same, for it is younger: a missionary sent by God for the soul's instruction and release, and thus for accomplishing the dissolution of the world of form. If in some of its phases the dogma asserts or allegorically indicates

the higher oneness of soul and spirit, it probably does so on good ground; this, however, does not exclude the conception that the human soul is originally conceived as being God's champion against the evil in the world, and the role ascribed to it very like the one which falls to the spirit sent to effect its own release. Certainly the reason why the dogma fails to explain this matter clearly is that it has not achieved a complete portrayal of the role played by the spirit in the romance of the soul; obviously the tradition requires filling out on this point.

In this world of form and death conceived out of the marriage of soul and matter, the task of the spirit is clearly outlined and unequivocal. Its mission consists in awakening the soul, in its self-forgetful involvement with form and death, to the memory of its higher origin; to convince it that its relation with matter is a mistaken one, and finally to make it yearn for its original source with ever stronger yearning, until one day it frees itself wholly from pain and desire and wings away homewards. And therewith straightway the end of the world is come, death done away and matter restored to her ancient freedom. But as it will sometimes happen that an ambassador from one kingdom to another and hostile one, if he stay there for long, will fall a prey to corruption, from his own country's point of view, gliding unconsciously over to the other's habits of thought and favouring its interests, settling down and adapting himself and taking on colour, until at last he becomes unavailable as a representative of his own world; this or something like it must be the experience of the spirit in its mission. The longer it stops below, the longer it plies its diplomatic activities, the more they suffer from an inward breach, not

to be concealed from the higher sphere, and in all probability leading to its recall, were the problem of a substitute easier to solve than it seems is the case.

There is no doubt that its role as slayer and gravedigger of the world begins to trouble the spirit in the long run. For its point of view alters, being coloured by its sojourn below; while being, in its own mind, sent to dismiss death out of the world, it finds itself on the contrary regarded as the deathly principle, as that which brings death into the world. It is, in fact, a matter of the point of view, the angle of approach. One may look at it one way, or the other. Only one needs to know one's own proper attitude, that to which one is obligated from home; otherwise there is bound to occur the phenomenon which I objectively characterized as corruption, and one is alienated from one's natural duties. And here appears a certain weakness in the spirit's character: he does not enjoy his reputation as the principle of death and the destroyer of form — though he did largely bring it upon himself, out of his great impulse towards judgment, even when directed against himself— and it becomes a point of honour with him to get rid of it. Not that he would wilfully betray his mission. Rather against his intention, under pressure, out of that impulse and from a stimulus which one might describe as an unsanctioned infatuation for the soul and its passional activities, the words of his own mouth betray him; they speak in favour of the soul and its enterprise, and by a kind of sympathetic refinement upon his own pure motives, utter themselves on the side of life and form. It is an open question, whether such a traitorous or near-traitorous attitude does the spirit any good, and whether he cannot help serving, even by that

very conduct, the purpose for which he was sent, namely the dissolution of the material world by the releasing of the soul from it; or whether he does not know all this, and only thus conducts himself because he is at bottom certain that he may permit himself so much. At all events, this shrewd, self-denying identification of his own will with that of the soul explains the allegorical tendency of the tale, according to which the " second emissary " is another self of that light-man who was sent out to do battle with evil. Yes, it is possible that this part of the tale conceals a prophetic allusion to certain mysterious decrees of God, which were considered by the teachers and preachers as too holy and inscrutable to be uttered.

## 9

WE can, objectively considered, speak of a " Fall " of the soul of the primeval light-man, only by over-emphasizing the moral factor. The soul, certainly, has sinned against itself, frivolously sacrificing its original blissful and peaceful state — but not against God in the sense of offending any prohibition of His in its passional enterprise, for such a prohibition, at least according to the doctrine we have received, was not issued. True, pious tradition has handed down to us the command of God to the first man, not to eat of the tree of the " knowledge of good and evil "; but we must remember that we are here dealing with a secondary and already earthly event, and with human beings who had with God's own creative aid been generated out of the knowledge of matter by the soul; if God really set them this test, He undoubtedly knew beforehand how it would turn out, and the only obscurity lies in

the question, why He did not refrain from issuing a prohibition which, being disobeyed, would simply add to the malicious joy of His angelic host, whose attitude towards man was already most unfavourable. But the expression " good and evil " is a recognized and admitted gloss upon the text, and what we are really dealing with is knowledge, which has as its consequence not the ability to distinguish between good and evil, but rather death itself; so that we need scarcely doubt that the " prohibition " too is a well-meant but not very pertinent addition of the same kind.

Everything speaks for such an explanation; but principally the fact that God was not incensed at the yearning behaviour of the soul, did not expel it nor add any punishment to the measure of suffering which it voluntarily drew upon itself and which indeed was outweighed by the might of its desire. It is even clear that He was seized if not by understanding at least by pity, when He saw the passion of the soul. Unsummoned and straightway He came to its aid, and took a hand personally in the struggles of the soul to know matter in love, by making the world of form and death issue from it, that the soul might take its pleasure thereupon; and certainly this was an attitude of God in which pity and understanding are scarcely to be distinguished from one another.

Of sin in the sense of an offence to God and His expressed will we can scarcely speak in this connection, especially when we consider the peculiar immediacy of God's relation with the being which sprang from this mingling of soul and matter: this human being of whom the angels were unmistakably and with good reason jealous from the very first. It made a profound impression on

Joseph, when old Eliezer told him of these matters, speaking of them just as we read them to-day in the Hebrew commentaries upon early history. Had not God, they say, held His tongue and wisely kept silence upon the fact that not only righteous but also evil things would proceed from man, the creation of man would certainly not have been permitted by the "kingdom of the stern." The words give us an extraordinary insight into the situation. They show, above all, that "sternness" was not so much the property of God Himself as of His entourage, upon whom He seems to have been dependent, in a certain, if of course not decisive way, for He preferred not to tell them what was going on, out of fear lest they make Him difficulties, and only revealed some things and kept others to Himself. But does not this indicate that He was interested in the creation of the world, rather than that He opposed it? So that if the soul was not directly provoked and encouraged by God to its enterprise, at least it did not act against His will, but only against the angels' — and their somewhat less than friendly attitude towards man is clear from the beginning. The creation by God of that living world of good and evil, the interest He displayed in it, appeared to them in the light of a majestic caprice; it piqued them, indeed, for they saw in it, probably with some justice, a certain disgust with their own psalm-chanting purity. Astonished and reproachful questions, such as: "What is man, O Lord, that Thou art mindful of him?" are forever on their lips; and God answers indulgently, benevolently, evasively, sometimes with irritation and in a sense distinctly mortifying to their pride. The fall of Shemmel, a very great prince among the angels, having twelve pairs of

wings whereas the seraphim and sacred beasts had only six apiece, is not very easy to explain, but its immediate cause must have been these dissensions; so old Eliezer taught — the lad drank it in with strained attention. It had always been Shemrael who stirred up the other angels against man, or rather against God\*s sympathy for him, and when one day God commanded the heavenly hosts to fall down before Adam, on account of his understanding and because he could call all things by their names, they did indeed comply with the order, some scowlingly, others with ill-concealed smiles — all but Shemrael, who did not do it. He declared, with a candour born of his wrathfulness, that it was ridiculous for beings created of the effulgence of glory to bow down before those made out of the dust of the earth. And thereupon took place his fall — Eliezer described it by saying that it looked from a distance like a falling star. The other angels must have been well frightened by this event, which caused them to behave ever afterwards with great discretion on the subject of man; but it is plain that whenever sinfulness got the upper hand on earth, as in Sodom and Gomorrah and at the time of the flood, there was rejoicing among the angels and corresponding embarrassment to the Creator, who found His hand forced to scourge the offenders, though less of His own desire than under moral pressure from the heavenly host. But let us now consider once more, in the light of the foregoing, the matter of the " second emissary " of the spirit, and whether he is really sent to effect the dissolution of the material world by setting free the soul and bringing it back home.

It is possible to argue that this is not God's meaning,

and that the spirit was not, in fact, sent down expressly after the soul in order to act the part of grave-digger to the world of forms created by it with God's connivance. The mystery is perhaps a different one, residing in that part of the doctrine which says that the " second emissary " was no other than the first light-man sent out anew against evil. We have long known that these mysteries deal very freely with the tenses, and may quite readily use the past with reference to the future. It is possible that the saying, soul and spirit *were* one, really means that they are sometime to become one. This seems the more tenable in that the spirit is of its nature and essentially the principle of the future, and represents the It will be, It is to be; whereas the goodness of the form-bound soul has reference to the past and the holy It was. It remains controversial, which is life and which death; since both, the soul involved with nature and the spirit detached from the world, the principle of the past and the principle of the future, claim, each in its own way, to be the water of life, and each accuses the other of dealings with death. Neither quite wrongly, since neither nature without spirit nor spirit without nature can truly be called life. But the mystery, and the unexpressed hope of God, lie in their union, in the genuine penetration of the spirit into the world of the soul, in the inter-penetration of both principles, in a hallowing of the one through the other which should bring about a present humanity blessed with blessing from heaven above and from the depths beneath.

Such then might be considered the ultimate meaning and hidden potentiality of the doctrine — though even so there must linger a strong element of doubt whether the

bearing of the spirit, self-betraying and subservient as we have described it to be, out of all too sensitive reluctance to be considered the principle of death, is calculated to lead to the goal in view. Let him lend all his wit to the dumb passion of the soul; let him celebrate the grave, hail the past as life's unique source, and confess himself the malicious zealot and murderously life-enslaving will; whatever he says he remains that which he is, the warning emissary, the principle of contradiction, umbrage and dispersal, which stirs up emotions of disquiet and exceptional wretchedness in the breast of one single man among the blithely agreeing and accepting host, drives him forth out of the gates of the past and the known into the uncertain and the adventurous, and makes him like unto the stone which, by detaching itself and rolling, is destined to set up an ever-increasing rolling and sequence of events, of which no man can see the end.

## 10

IN such wise are formed those beginnings, those time-coulisses of the past, where memory may pause and find a hold whereon to base its personal history — as Joseph did on Ur, the city, and his forefather's exodus therefrom. It was a tradition of spiritual unrest; he had it in his blood, the world about him and his own life were conditioned by it, and he paid it the tribute of recognition when he recited aloud those verses from the tablets which ran:

Why ordainest thou unrest to my son Gilgamesh,  
Gavest him a heart that knoweth not repose?

Disquiet, questioning, hearkening and seeking, wrestling for God, a bitterly sceptical labouring over the true and the just, the whence and the whither, his own name, his own nature, the true meaning of the Highest — how all that, bequeathed down the generations from the man from Ur, found expression in Jacob's look, in his lofty brow and the peering, careworn gaze of his brown eyes; and how confidently Joseph loved this nature, of which his own was aware as a nobility and a distinction and which, precisely as a consciousness of higher concerns and anxieties, lent to his father's person all the dignity, reserve and solemnity which made it so impressive. Unrest and dignity — that is the sign of the spirit; and with childishly unabashed fondness Joseph recognized the seal of tradition upon his father's brow, so different from that upon his own, which was so much blither and freer, coming as it chiefly did from his lovely mother's side, and making him the conversable, social, communicable being he pre-eminently was. But why should he have felt abashed before that brooding and careworn father, knowing himself so greatly beloved? The habitual knowledge that he was loved and preferred conditioned and coloured his being; it was decisive likewise for his attitude towards the Highest, to Whom, in his fancy, he ascribed a form, so far as was permissible, precisely like Jacob's. A higher replica of his father, by Whom, Joseph was naively convinced, he was beloved even as he was beloved of his father. For the moment, and still afar off, I should like to characterize as "bridelike" his relation to Adon the heavenly. For Joseph knew that there were Babylonian women, sacred to Ishtar or to Mylitta, unwedded but consecrated to pious devotion, who dwelt in cells within

the temple, and were called "pure" or "holy," also "brides of God," "*enitu*" Something of this feeling was in Joseph's own nature: a sense of consecration, an austere bond, and with it a flow of fantasy which may have been the decisive ingredient in his mental inheritance, and which will give us to think when we are down below in the depths beside him.

On the other hand, despite all his own devotion, he did not quite follow or accept the form it had taken in his father's case: the care, the anxiousness, the unrest, which were expressed in Jacob's unconquerable dislike of a settled existence, such as would have befitted his dignity, and in his temporary, improvised, half-nomad mode of life. He too, without any doubt, was beloved, cherished and preferred of God — for if Joseph was that, surely it was on his father's account! The God Shaddai had made his father rich, in Mesopotamia, rich in cattle and multifarious possessions; moving among his troop of sons, his train of women, his servants and his flocks, he might have been a prince among the princes of the land, and that he was, not only in outward seeming but also by the power of the spirit, as "*nabi*," which is: the prophet; as a wise man, full of knowledge of God, "exceeding wise," as one of the spiritual leaders and elders upon whom the inheritance of the Chaldaean had come, and who had at times been thought of as his lineal descendants. No one approached Jacob save in the most respectful and ceremonious way; in dealings and trade one called him "my lord" and spoke of oneself in humble and contemptuous terms. Why did he not live with his family, as a property-owner in one of the cities, in Hebron itself, Urusalim or Shechem, in a house built of

stone and wood, beneath which he could bury his dead? Why did he live like an Ishmaelite or Bedouin, in tents outside the town, in the open country, not even in sight of the citadel of Kirjath Arba; beside the well, the caves, the oaks and the terebinths, in a camp which might be struck at any time — as though he might not stop and take root with the others, as though from hour to hour he must be awaiting the word which should make him take down huts and stalls, load poles, blankets and skins on the pack-camels, and be off? Joseph knew why, of course. Thus it must be, because one served a God whose nature was not repose and abiding comfort, but a God of designs for the future, in whose will inscrutable, great, far-reaching things were in process of becoming, who, with His brooding will and His world-planning, was Himself only in process of becoming, and thus was a God of unrest, a God of cares, who must be sought for, for whom one must at all times keep oneself free, mobile and in readiness.

In a word, it was the spirit, he that dignified and then again he that debased, who forbade Jacob to live a settled life in towns; and if little Joseph sometimes regretted the fact, having a taste for pomp and worldly circumstance, we must accept this trait of his character and let others make up for it. As for me, who now draw my narrative to a close, to plunge, voluntarily, into limitless adventure (the word "plunge" being used advisedly), I will not conceal my native and comprehensive understanding of the old man's restless unease and dislike of any fixed habitation. For do I not know the feeling? To me too has not unrest been ordained, have not I too been endowed with a heart which knoweth not repose? The

story-teller's star — is it not the moon, lord of the road, the wanderer, who moves in his stations, one after another, freeing himself from each? For the story-teller makes many a station, roving and relating, but pauses only tentwise, awaiting further directions, and soon feels his heart beating high, partly with desire, partly too from fear and anguish of the flesh, but in any case as a sign that he must take the road, towards fresh adventures which are to be painstakingly lived through, down to their remotest details, according to the restless spirit's will.

Already we are well under way, we have left far behind us the station where we briefly paused, we have forgotten it, and as is the fashion of travellers have begun to look across the distance at the world we are now to enter, in order that we may not feel too strange and awkward when we arrive. Has the journey already lasted too long? No wonder, for this time it is a descent into hell! Deep, deep down it goes, we pale as we leave the light of day and descend into the unsounded depths of the past.

Why do I turn pale, why does my heart beat high — not only since I set out, but even since the first command to do so — and not only with eagerness but still more with physical fear? Is not the past the story-teller's element and native air, does he not take to it as a fish to water? Agreed. But reasoning like this will not avail to make my heart cease throbbing with fear and curiosity, probably because the past by which I am well accustomed to let myself be carried far and far away is quite another from the past into which I now shudderingly descend: the past of life, the dead-and-gone world, to which my own life shall more and more profoundly belong, of which its beginnings are already a fairly deep

part. To die: that means actually to lose sight of time, to travel beyond it, to exchange for it eternity and presentness and therewith for the first time, life. For the essence of life is presentness, and only in a mythical sense does its mystery appear in the time-forms of past and future. They are the way, so to speak, in which life reveals itself to the folk; the mystery belongs to the initiate. Let the folk be taught that the soul wanders. But the wise know that this teaching is only the garment of the mystery of the eternal presentness of the soul, and that all life belongs to it, so soon as death shall have broken its solitary prison cell. I taste of death and knowledge when, as story-teller, I adventure into the past; hence my eagerness, hence my fear and pallor. But eagerness has the upper hand, and I do not deny that it is of the flesh, for its theme is the first and last of all our questioning and speaking and all our necessity; the nature of man. That it is which we shall seek out in the underworld and death, as Ishtar there sought Tammuz and Isis Osiris, to find it where it lies and is, in the past.

For it *is*, always *is*, however much we may say It was. Thus speaks the myth, which is only the garment of the mystery. But the holiday garment of the mystery is the feast, the recurrent feast which bestrides the tenses and makes the has-been and the to-be present to the popular sense. What wonder then, that on the day of the feast humanity is in a ferment and conducts itself with licensed abandon? For in it life and death meet and know each other. Feast of story-telling, thou art the festal garment of life's mystery, for thou conjurest up timelessness in the mind of the folk, and invokest the myth that it may be relived in the actual present. Feast of death, descent

into hell, thou art verily a feast and a revelling of the soul of the flesh, which not for nothing clings to the past and the graves and the solemn It was. But may the spirit too be with thee and enter into thee, that thou mayest be blest with a blessing from heaven above and from the depths beneath.

Down, then, and no quaking! But are we going at one fell swoop into the bottomlessness of the well? No, not at all. Not much more than three thousand years deep — and what is that, compared with the bottom? At that stage men do not wear horn armour and eyes in their foreheads and do battle with flying newts. They are men like ourselves — aside from that measure of dreamy indefiniteness in their habits of thought which we have agreed to consider pardonable. So the homekeeping man talks to himself when he sets out on a journey, and then, when the matter becomes serious, gets fever and palpitations none the less. Am I really, he asks himself, going to the ends of the earth and away from the realms of the everyday? No, not at all; I am only going there and thither, where many people have been before, only a day or so away from home. And thus we too speak, with reference to the country which awaits us. Is it the land of nowhere, the country of the moon, so different from aught that ever was on sea or land that we clutch our heads in sheer bewilderment? No, it is a country such as we have often seen, a Mediterranean land, not exactly like home, rather dusty and stony, but certainly not fantastic, and above it move the familiar stars. There it lies, mountain and valley, cities and roads and vineclad slopes, with a turbid river darting arrowy among the green thickets; there it lies stretched out in the past, like meadows and streams

in a fairy tale. Perhaps you closed your eyes, on the journey down; open them now! We have arrived. See how the moonlight-sharpened shadows lie across the peaceful, rolling landscape! Feel the mild spring freshness of the summer-starry night!

# 1

## BY THE WELL

### ISHTAR

IT was beyond the hills north of Hebron, a little east of the Jerusalem road, in the month Adar; a spring evening, so brightly moonlit that one could have seen to read, and the leaves of the single tree there standing, an ancient and mighty terebinth, short-trunked, with strong and spreading branches, stood out fine and sharp against the light, beside their clusters of blossom — highly distinct, yet shimmering in a web of moonlight. This beautiful tree was sacred. In more than one way enlightenment was to be had within its shadow: from the mouth of man, for whoever through personal experience had aught to communicate of the divine would gather hearers together under its branches; but likewise in more inspired manner. For persons who slept leaning their heads against the trunk had repeatedly been vouchsafed dispensations and commands in a dream; and at the offering of burnt sacrifices, the frequency of which was witnessed by the stone slaughtering table, where a low fire burned on the blackened slab, the behaviour of the smoke, the flight of birds, or even a sign from heaven itself had often, in the course of the years, proved that a peculiar efficacy lay in these pious doings at the foot of the tree.

There were other trees nearby, if none so venerable as this single one; even other terebinths, as well as leafy fig trees and evergreen oaks; these last sent out bare roots along the trodden ground, and their foliage, pallid in the moonlight, between needle and leaf, looked like thorny fans. Behind the trees, southwards toward the hill that shut off the town, and even mounting up its slope, stood houses and cattle-byres, whence the hollow lowing of a bullock, the snort of a camel or the anguished onset of the asses' bray sounded sometimes across the silence of the night. Now, toward midnight, the prospect was vacant; the moon, three-quarters full and shining high in the sky, lighted first the space round the oracle-tree, which was enclosed by an extended mossy wall made of two courses of roughly-hewn square stone and looked like a terrace with a low parapet; and then revealed the level land beyond stretching away to the billowing hills that closed the horizon. It was a region populous with olive trees and tamarisk thickets, traversed by many paths; in the distance it turned to treeless pastureland, where the light from a shepherd's camp fire glimmered here and there. Cyclamens bloomed along the parapet, their lilac and rose-colour bleached by the moonlight; white crocus and red anemone sprang among grass and moss at the base of the trees. Flowery and spicy scents were on the air, mingled with odours of wood-smoke and dung and moist exhalations from the trees.

The sky was glorious. A broad band of light encircled the moon; her lustre in all its mildness was so strong that it almost pained the eye, and star-seed seemed to have been scattered, flung as it were with open hand across the firmament, here sparsely, there thick and rich in ordered

patterns of twinkling light. In the south-west, Sirius-Ninurta stood out, a clear and living blue-white fire, a ray-darting gem; he formed a group with Procyon, standing higher and further south in the Little Dog. Marduk the king had soon after sunset taken the field and would shine on all night; he might have rivalled Sirius, had not the moon diminished the brightness of his rays. Nergal was there, not far from the zenith, a little south-east: the seven-named foe, the Elamite, portending plague and death — we call him Mars. But earlier than he, Saturn, the just and constant, had risen above the horizon and was glittering southwards in the meridian. And familiar Orion, with his splendid red star, a huntsman girded and armed, was declining towards the west. In the west too, only further south, Columba hovered; Regulus in Leo beckoned from on high, the Great Bear likewise had climbed to the top of the sky; while red-yellow Arcturus in Bootes still stood low in the north-east, and the yellow light of Capella and the constellation of Auriga had already sunk deep toward evening and midnight. But lovelier than all these, fierier than any portent or the whole host of the Kokabim, was Ishtar, sister, mother and wife, Astarte the queen, following the sun and low in the west. She glowed silverly and sent out fugitive rays, she glittered in points of fire and a tall flame stood up from her like the tip of a spear.

#### THE FABLE AND THE FLESH

THERE were eyes here well-skilled in the observation and interpretation of all this — dark eyes lifted up to receive the whole of this manifold shining. They sought

the causeway of the zodiac, the fixed ridge that ordered the billows of the sky, where the guardians of time kept watch; that sacred order of signs which had begun to appear in quick succession after the brief twilight of these latitudes; and first the Bull, for when these eyes were on earth, the sun stood at the beginning of spring in the sign of the Ram, and thus with the sun that sign went down into the depths. They smiled, those knowing eyes, at the Twins, as they declined at evening from the zenith; one glance to eastwards showed them the Ear in the Virgin's hand. But always as though irresistibly drawn they returned to the quarter of the sky where the moon showed her gleaming silver shield and dazzled them by the pure mild lustre of her light.

They were the eyes of a youth, who sat by the margin of a well near the sacred tree. The watery depths were enclosed by a masonry wall, with a stone arch above; the youth's bare feet rested upon broken steps that led up to the mouth all round, and both feet and step were wet from the pouring of water. In a drier spot lay his upper garment, yellow with a wide rust-red border, and his neats-leather sandals, which were almost shoes, having flexible sides wherein to thrust feet and ankles. The lad had lowered his shirt of coarse bleached linen and tied the sleeves about his hips; the brown skin of his body glistened oily in the moonlight; the torso seemed rather full and heavy in proportion to the childish head, and the high square shoulders looked Egyptian. He had washed in the very cold water from the well, showering himself again and again with the pail and dipper — a process which was both a pious duty and a much-enjoyed refreshment after the burdensome heat of the day. Then

he had suppled his limbs with scented olive oil from a salve-box of opaque iridescent glass that stood beside him, but had not removed the light myrtle wreath from his hair nor the amulet that hung round his neck from a bronzed lace, and contained a little packet stitched with root fibres of strong protective virtue.

He seemed now to be performing his devotions, his face upturned to the moonlight which shone full upon it, his elbows upon his hips but the forearms held out, palms extended; thus he sat, weaving to and fro, and words or sounds came from his lips, half spoken, half sung. He wore a ring of blue faience on his left hand, and both finger- and toe-nails showed traces of brick-red henna dye. Probably his vanity had led him to put it on, in order to dazzle the eyes of the women on the housetops, when last he had attended a feast in the town. But he needed no cosmetics and might have confided only in his own pretty face which God had given him, whose childish oval was charming indeed, particularly the gentle look in the black, somewhat slanting eyes. Beautiful people are prone to heighten the gifts of nature and to "dress the part," probably in obedience to their pleasing role and with a sense of performing service for gifts received. It is quite possible to interpret their conduct as an act of piety and so justify it; whereas for the ugly to deck themselves out is folly of a sadder kind. But even beauty is never perfect, and by that very reason clings to vanity and makes a self-imposed ideal of what she lacks — another error, since her secret power lies in the very attractiveness of the incomplete.

This youth by the well — saga and story have woven a halo of legendary loveliness about his head, at which,

seeing him now in the flesh, we may have cause to wonder — even though the moon is on his side and lends her soft enchantment to dazzle our judgment. Yes, what all, as the days multiplied, was not said and sung, in apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, in praise of his outward man — praise at which seeing him we might incline to smile! That his countenance shamed the splendour of the moon and sun is the least that was said. Literally it was written, that he was fain to wear a veil about his head and face that the hearts of the people might not melt with the fire of earthly longing for his god-given beauty; and again, that those who saw him without the veil, " deep-sunk in blissful contemplation," had no longer recognized the youth. Oriental legend does not hesitate to declare that half the available supply of beauty in the world fell to this one youth and the rest of mankind divided the other half. A Persian poet of the highest authority goes further still: he draws a fantastic picture of a single goldpiece of six half-ounces' weight, in which all the beauty of the earth was melted down, five of which then, so the poet rapturously sings, fell to the paragon, the incomparable.

A reputation like that, arrogant and immeasurable because it no longer reckons on being checked, has a bewildering and contagious effect; it is an actual hindrance to objective observation of the facts. There are many instances of the influence of such exaggeration by common consent, which then blinds the individual judgment and makes it willingly or even fanatically subservient to the prevailing view. Some twenty years before the time of which I now speak, a certain man, closely related, as you shall hear, to the youth by the well, bred sheep and sold them in the district of Harran in the land of Mesopo-

tamia, said sheep having such a reputation that people would pay fantastic prices for them, although it was plain to any eye that they were not fairy sheep but quite normal and natural ones, although of excellent breeding and quality. Such is the power of our human need to stand with the majority! But though we must not be influenced in this matter by reports which we find ourselves in a position to confront with reality, yet let us not err in the other direction with excess of tendency to carp. For the posthumous enthusiasm which threatens our judgment cannot have arisen out of nothing at all; it must have been rooted in reality, the tribute must have been paid in good part to the person when he was still alive. But to sympathize on aesthetic grounds we must adjust ourselves to the dark Arabian taste then and there current, and certainly from that point of view the youth must have been so beautiful, and so well-favoured, that at first glance he could really have been taken for a god.

Let me then pay heed to my words, and without either weak compliance or hypercritical airs venture the statement that the face of the youthful moon-worshipper by the well was lovely even in its defects. For instance, the nostrils of his rather short and very straight nose were really too thick; but the fact itself made them look dilated and imparted liveliness, passion and a fleeting pride to the face and set off the friendly expression of the eyes. The curling lips suggested a lofty sensuality which I would not censure, since it might be deceptive, and moreover in that time and place would be accounted a virtue. But I am justified in finding the space between mouth and nose too full and arched — or I should be, rather, had it not been counterbalanced by a peculiarly charming con-

tour of the corners of the mouth, from which, only by laying the lips together, without the least muscular tension, there ensued the serenest smile. The forehead above the thick and well-drawn brows was tranquil below, above it ran into bays beneath heavy black hair which was confined by a light-coloured leather thong as well as by the myrtle wreath. The hair fell like a bag in the neck behind, leaving the ears free — and with the ears all would have been well, but that the lobes had been made rather long and fleshy by the silver rings worn since early childhood.

Was the youth praying, then? Surely his pose was too easy for that, he should have been erect on his feet. The lifted hands and murmured singsong seemed more like a self-absorbed game, a soft dialogue with the planet which he addressed. He rocked and prattled:

" Abu — Hammu — Aoth — Abaoth — Abiram — Haam — mi — wa — am."

In this improvisation were mingled all sorts of remote allusions and associations: Babylonian pet names for the moon, as Abu (father) and Hammu (uncle); Abram, the name of his own supposed ancestor, but also as a variant and extension upon it, transmitted by venerable tradition, the legendary name of Hammurabi the Lawgiver, " My uncle is sublime," syllables whose meaning pursued the father-thought through the realms of primitive oriental religion, star-worship and family tradition, and made stammering efforts to express the new thing coming into being, so passionately cherished, debated and fostered in the minds of his nearest kin.

" Yao — Aoth — Abaoth — " he chanted. " Yahu, Yahu. Ya — a — we — ilu, Ya — a — um — ilu — " rocking and swaying with hands uplifted, wagging his

head and smiling up at the radiant moon. But other manifestations, strange and almost uncanny, began to creep into the posturings of the solitary figure. He seemed intoxicated by his own lyric ritual, whatever it was, rapt into a growing unconsciousness that was not quite normal. He had not given much voice to his song, probably had not much to give, for it was still undeveloped, a sharp, half childish organ, lacking fullness and resonance. But now he had lost it quite, it gave way with a gasp and his "Yahu, Yahu," was a mere panting whisper that issued from lungs empty for want of an intake of breath. At the same moment the body changed shape, the chest fell in, the abdominal muscle began a peculiar rotatory motion, neck and shoulders stretched upwards and writhed, the hands shook, the muscles of the upper arm stood out like tendons, and in a flash the black eyes turned inwards, till only the whites glittered unwholesomely in the moonlight.

I must remark here that no one could have anticipated from the youth's bearing a seizure of this kind. His attack, or whatever one might call it, would have surprised and perturbed an onlooker, it was so obviously out of tune with so attractive, not to say dandified an exterior, and with a personality which immediately impressed everyone by its air of friendly and understanding courtesy. If his behaviour was to be taken seriously, then the question was, who was responsible for the soul welfare of this young posturant, since it seemed, if not actually in danger, at least to be acting in obedience to a call. On the other hand, if it were but whim and child-play, even then it remained questionable — and that it was something of the sort at least seemed likely enough,

judging from the subsequent behaviour of the moon-struck youth.

### THE FATHER

FROM the homestead in the direction of the hill his name was called: "Joseph! Joseph!" twice or thrice, each time a little nearer at hand. At the third time he heard the call, or at least showed that he had heard it, and there came an immediate change in his bearing, while he muttered: " Here I am." His eyes returned to normal, he let fall his arms, his head drooped and a shamefaced smile played over his features. It was his father's voice that called: mild, a little plaintive, as always charged with feeling. Presently it came from close, repeating, though he had already seen his son by the well: " Joseph, where art thou? "

His garments were long; also moonlight, for all its apparent and fantastic clarity, tends to deceive; thus Jacob — or as he signed himself, Yaakow ben Yitzchak — looked majestically, almost superhumanly tall as he stood there between the well and the oracle-tree, closer to the latter, so that the leaf-shadow patterned his mantle. His figure — consciously or unconsciously — looked even more impressive by reason of his posture, for he was leaning upon a long staff which he grasped so high that one arm was raised above his head and the sleeve of his mantle or upper garment fell back from hand and forearm. The garment, a wopl and cotton mixture in narrow pale-coloured stripes, hung down in large folds; the hand above his head was that of an old man, and it had a copper band round the wrist. The twin brother of Esau,

favoured before him, was then sixty-seven years old. His beard though not heavy was long and broad; it ran up into the hair on his temples and fell from his cheeks and down upon his breast at the same width, in sparse strands that were uncurled and unrestrained and shimmered silver in the moonlight, with his thin lips showing through them. Deep furrows ran down into the beard from the nostrils of the sharp-ridged nose. His brow was half covered by a hooded shawl of dark-coloured Canaanite-woven cloth, which lay in folds on the chest and was tossed back over the shoulder; beneath it his eyes — little eyes, brown, bright, with pouches of soft skin beneath them, eyes grown weary with age and only keen from the keenness of the soul within — peered anxiously after the boy at the well. The position of his arm drew up the mantle to expose an undergarment of dyed goat's-wool hanging down to the tips of the cloth shoes; it hung in long fringing folds, so unevenly as to look like several garments coming out one beneath the other. Thus the old man's dress was heavy and multifarious, an arbitrary combination of various styles; elements from the civilizations of the orient mingling with those belonging rather to the desert world of the Bedouins and Ishmaelites.

Quite sensibly Joseph did not answer to the last call; the question was already answered, since Jacob saw his son. He contented himself with a smile that parted the full lips and showed the glistening teeth, set rather far apart and white as teeth can only be in a dark face. He accompanied the smile with easy gestures of welcome. He put up his hands in the posture with which he had saluted the moon, nodded his head and made a little smacking sound with his tongue expressive of surprise

and pleasure. Then he brought one hand to his forehead and let it glide downwards in a smooth and elegant motion; next laid both hands on his heart, closing his eyes and inclining his head; lastly he gestured outwards several times toward the old man, with hands still laid one over the other, always returning them to the position over the heart, in token, as it were, that it awaited the father's coming. Again he pointed with both index fingers to his eyes, to his knees, head and feet, falling back at intervals on the first position of greeting and worship with arms and hands. It was a pretty game, played with all the rules prescribed by good breeding, but he brought to it a personal art and charm as well — the expression of a courteous and ingratiating nature — and no little real feeling besides. It was a pantomime — which the accompanying smile relieved of formality — of filial submission before the master and progenitor, the head of the tribe; but also it was enlivened by very genuine pleasure in the opportunity thus afforded of paying homage. Joseph well knew that his father had not always played the dignified and heroic role in life. His loftiness of speech and bearing had sometimes been badly served by the gentleness and timidity of his soul; he had known hours of depression, of retreat, of pallid fear, situations in which one who loved him would not gladly imagine him, though precisely they had been most transparently bearers of the blessing. So that if Joseph's smile was not quite free from flattery or from triumphant self-consciousness, yet it was in good part called up by pleasure at the sight of his father, by the waxing beauty of the moonlit night and the advantageously regal posture of the old man as he leaned on his staff; in Joseph's childish

satisfaction at the scene there was involved much feeling for pure effect without respect to any deeper cause.

Jacob paused where he was. Perhaps he could see his son's appreciation and was willing to prolong it. His voice — I called it emotional because it always vibrated with inward stress — sounded again, half questioning, half asserting.

" It is my child sitting there by the well? "

The question was a strange one, it sounded uncertain and absent-minded, or as though the speaker found something surprising and unfitting in the fact of one so young sitting by any well — as though the conceptions child and well did not go together in the mind. What it in truth expressed was Jacob's concern lest Joseph, whom the father saw as much younger than he actually was, might fall into the well.

The boy's smile widened, so that more of the separated teeth came into view; he nodded without answering. But his expression changed at Jacob's next words, which had a sterner ring: " Cover thy nakedness," he commanded.

Joseph, his arms curved above his head, looked down with whimsical consternation at his body, and then quickly untied his sleeves and drew the linen garment over his shoulders. It seemed as though the old man had kept at a distance because his son was naked, for he now drew near. He leaned in earnest on the long staff he held, lifting it and setting it down at each step, for he limped, and had done so for the past twelve years; in fact ever since a certain adventure which had befallen him on a journey, under painful circumstances, at a time of great stress, he had halted on one thigh.

## THE MAN JEBSHE

NOT much time had elapsed since the two last met. As usual, Joseph had taken the evening meal in his father's myrrh- and musk-scented tent, together with such of his brothers as were at home — the rest were tending other flocks in the country further to the north, near a hill city and shrine overlooked by the mountains Ebal and Garizim, and called Shechem, or Sychem, the neck, also probably Mabara or the pass. Jacob had religious affiliations with the people of Shechem. True, the deity to whom they prayed was a variant of the Syrian shepherd and beautiful lord, Adonis and that Tammuz, the lovely youth whom the boar mangled, whom down in the Southland they called Osiris, the Sacrifice; but as early as the time of Abram and the priest-king Melchizedek, this divine personality had taken on a particular cast of thought which had endowed him with the name of El Elyon, Baal-Berith, the name, that is, of the Most High God, the Lord of hosts, the creator and possessor of heaven and earth. Such a conception seemed right and good to Jacob, who was accordingly inclined to see in the mangled son of Shechem the true and most high God, the God of Abraham, and in the Shechemites brothers in the bond of faith, particularly since oral tradition from generation to generation reported that the original wanderer, in a learned conversation with Melchizedek the magistrate of Sodom, had called his God El Elyon and thus put him on a par with the Baal and Adon of Melchizedek. Jacob himself, his inheritor in the faith, had years before, after his return from Mesopo-

tamia, when he set up his camp before the city of Shechem, erected an altar to this god. Also he had sunk a well and purchased pasture rights with good silver shekels.

Later there had arisen grievous misunderstandings between the people of Shechem and Jacob's people, with frightful consequences for the city. But peace had been restored and relations resumed, and a part of Jacob's flocks grazed on Shechem's ground and some of his sons and shepherds were always absent from his countenance to look after these flocks.

But two of Leah's sons had partaken of the meal with their father as well as Joseph; the raw-boned Issachar, and Zebulun, who cared nothing for the calling of a shepherd, neither desired to be a husbandman, but longed with a single longing for a sailor's life. For ever since he had been at Askalon on the sea he thought nothing finer than such a life, and drew many a long bow about strange adventures and uncanny hybrid creatures who lived across the water, to be visited by men whose life was on the seas — human beings with the heads of bulls or lions, two-headed and two-faced men, possessing at once a human countenance and that of a shepherd dog, so that they spoke and barked by turns; people with feet like sponges and other suchlike abnormalities. Then there had been Bilhah's son, the agile Naphtali, and Zilpah's two: the forthright Gad, and Asher, who as usual had taken the best pieces for himself while saying yea to all that was said. As for Joseph's own brother, the child Benjamin, he still lived in the women's quarters, being too young to share in a guest-meal, such as this evening's supper had been.

There was a man named Jebse, who said he came from Ta'anach and talked as they ate of the fish-ponds and flocks of doves in the temple there; he had been already some days on the way, with a brick which the lord of Ta'anach, Ashirat-Yashur, called by courtesy king, had inscribed on all four sides with messages for his " brother " the prince of Gaza, named Riphath-Baal, to the effect that he wished for Riphath-Baal every pleasure in life and that all the more important deities might work together for his welfare and that of his house and his children; but that he, Ashirat-Yashur, could not send him the wood and the money which the other with more or less right demanded of him, partly that he had not got it and partly that he had a pressing need of it himself, but was sending instead by the man Jebse an uncommonly efficacious clay image of his personal protectress and that of Ta'anach, namely the goddess Ashera, that it might bring him blessing and help him to pass over the difficulty about the money and wood; this Jebse then, who wore a pointed beard and was wrapped from head to foot in coloured woollens, had come to break bread with Jacob, to hear his views, and to get a night's lodgement before continuing his journey seawards. And Jacob had extended hospitality, only letting the messenger know that he was not to approach him with the image of Astarte — a female figure in trousers, crowned and veiled, holding her tiny breasts with both hands — but to keep it remote from his sight. Otherwise he had welcomed the man without prejudice, mindful of a tale that was handed down about Abraham, who had once furiously hounded a grey-haired idolater out into the wilderness, but had been rebuked by the Lord for his lack

of forbearance and fetched the foolish old man back again.

Served by two slaves in freshly washed linen smocks, old Modai and young Mahalaleel, they had squatted on cushions round the carpet mat (for Jacob held fast to the custom of his fathers and would not hear of sitting on chairs like fashionable folk in towns who aped the manners of the great kingdoms to the west and south) and partaken of the evening meal: olives, a roasted kid with the good bread *Kemach*, and afterwards a compote of plums and raisins served in copper bowls, and Syrian wine in cups of coloured glass. And between host and guest a discreet conversation went on, listened to by Joseph at least, with all his ears, upon themes public and private, the earthly and the divine, and even branching out into the political. Upon the family circumstances of the man Jebse and his official relation to Ashirat-Yashur, the lord of the city; upon the journey he had made so far, by way of the plain of Yezreel and the upland, beginning at the pass on the watershed at Esel, which Jebse thought to continue to the land of the Philistines on a camel which he would purchase next day in Hebron; upon the local prices of cattle and crops; upon the cult of the blossoming rod, the "finger" as it was called of Ashera of Ta'anach, her oracle, through which she had communicated her permission to send one of her images, to be called "Ashera of the Way," on a journey to rejoice the heart of Riphath-Baal of Gaza; upon her feast-day, which had recently been celebrated by untrammelled dancing and inordinate consumption of fish, likewise by the changing of clothes between men and women, in token of the man-woman character or double

sex of Ashera, as taught by her priests. Here Jacob stroked his beard and interposed with searching and subtle questions: as, how was the realm of Ta'anach now protected, its tutelary deity being gone a journey; and how was the understanding to deal with the matter of the travelling image and the relation it bore to the goddess, and whether she did not suffer a sensible diminution of her power by this removal of some part of her essence? To which the man Jebse had replied that it was not likely, were this the case, that Ashera's finger would have consented to the journey; and that the priests taught that the entire power of the divinity resided in each of her images, each being alike efficacious. Further, Jacob had mildly pointed out that if it were really true that Ashirta was male and female, Baal and Baalat at once, mother of the gods and king of heaven, then must one reverence her not only as equal to Ishtar, whom one heard of in Shinar, and Isis, a deity of the impure Egyptians, but also as equal to Shamash, Shalim, Addu, Adon, Lahma or Damu, in short the most high god and lord of the world; and the conclusion one came to was that we were dealing with El Elyon, the God of Abraham, Father and Creator, whom one could not send on journeys because he was always and everywhere, and whom one could not honour in the eating of fish, but only by walking before him in purity and being reverent in his sight. But these remarks of Jacob did not meet with much understanding in the man Jebse. Rather the other declared that as the sun always worked out of a certain sign and appeared in the same, as it lent its light to the planets so that each in its own way influenced the destinies of mankind, so likewise did the divine parcel itself out and

transmute itself into the various godheads, among whom the god-goddess Ashirat was well-known to be the especial representative of the divine power in the sense of the fruitfulness of all vegetation and the annual resurrection of nature out of the bondage of the lower world, in that each year she made a blossoming stalk out of a dry one, and on such an occasion a somewhat immoderate eating and dancing were surely in place, and even a more wholesale liberty and license bound up with the feast of the blossoming stalk, since purity was an attribute only of the sun and the primitive undivided god-head, not at all of its terrestrial manifestations, and the reason had to make a sharp distinction between the pure and the holy, he himself being aware that there was no necessary connection between the two. Whereat Jacob, with the utmost deliberation: he had no desire to injure anyone, least of all the guest upon his hearthstone and the bosom friend and messenger of a great king, in respect of the convictions emplant in him by parents and scribes. But the sun itself was but a work of El Elyon's hand, as such godlike indeed but not god; the understanding had to make this distinction. Indeed, it was in contravention to this fact and would call down the anger and jealousy of the Lord if one were to worship one or other of his works instead of himself, and the guest Jebshe had out of his own mouth characterized the gods of the country as idols, another name for which he, the speaker, would out of charity and politeness refrain from giving. And if that god, who had created the sun and the fixed and moving stars as well as the earth itself, was the highest god, so he was also the only one, and thus it would be better to have no talk of another, since one could then only

characterize him with the name which Jacob had suppressed, precisely on the ground that the name and symbol " highest god " was to be understood and revered as equal to " only god." Upon this point then, whether these two ideas were the same or different, there had ensued a long discussion, of which the host could never weary, and which, had it rested with him, would have gone on the half or even the whole of the night. But Jebshe had brought the conversation round to events in the world at large, to trade and traffic, about which as the friend and relative of a Canaanite city prince he knew more than most: as, that the plague was raging in Cyprus, which he called Alashia, and had killed off a great many men but not all, though the ruler of the island had so reported to the Pharaoh of the lower country, as an excuse for the almost total cessation of the copper tribute; that the king of the country of the Hittites, called Subbiluliuma, could command such military strength that he threatened to overpower King Tushratta of Mitanni and take away his gods, although Tushratta was the brother-in-law of the great ruling house of Thebes; that the Cassite of Babel had begun to tremble before the priest-prince of Assyria, who was striving to withdraw his power from the kingdom of the Lawgiver and to found a separate state on the river Tigris; that Pharaoh had greatly enriched the priesthood of his god Amun with Syrian tribute money and built this god a new temple with a thousand columns and doors with money from the same source, but that the source was soon going to dry up, not only because the Bedouins were pillaging the cities there, but because the Hittite troops were coming down from the north to dispute the overlordship of the

Ammonites in Canaan and not a few of the Amorite princes were making common cause with the foreigner against Ammon. Here Jepshe had winked one eye, probably to indicate, as among friends, that Ashirat-Yashur was of those who were pursuing this prudent diplomatic course. But his host's interest in the conversation had sensibly diminished since it ceased to centre round the deity; it began to languish, and they rose from the cushions: Jepshe to make sure that no harm had come to Astarte of the Way and then to retire, Jacob to make the round of the camp, leaning on his staff, to give an eye to the cattle byres and the women's quarters. As for his sons, Joseph had parted from the other five at the door of the tent, though he had evidently meant to remain with them, until the forthright Gad remarked:

" Away with thee, little fop and harlot, we need thee not! "

To which Joseph, after a brief pause to order his thoughts, had responded:

" Thou'rt like a wooden beam, Gad, over which the plane hath not passed, and like a butting goat in the flock. If I repeat thy words to our father he will rebuke thee;; if I bring them to the ears of Reuben our brother he will chastise thee in his righteousness. But be it as thou sayst\* go ye to the right and I will go left, or the other way round. For I love you all, but alas, I am an abomination in your sight, and to-day especially, because our father gave me of the kid from his dish and smiled upon me. Therefore be it so, that there be no cause for your anger and ye fall not unaware into sinning. Farewell."

To all which Gad listened over his shoulder, with a contemptuous expression, yet curious to hear what the

creature would think of to say this time. Then he made a coarse gesture and went off with the others, Joseph by himself.

He had taken a pleasant little evening stroll — in so far as there could be any talk of pleasure, that is, for Gad's coarseness had cast him into a depression which his own skill at repartee only partly assuaged. He had sauntered eastward, uphill, where the slope was easiest, and soon reached the crest, which commanded a view towards the south, so that he could look down on his left into the valley and the town lying white in the moonlight, at its thick wall with foursquare corner towers and gates, at the columned court of the palace and the bulk of the temple, surrounded by a broad terrace. He liked to look at the town, in which so many people dwelt. And from this point too he could have seen signs of the burial place of his people, the double cave which Abraham had solemnly bought aforetime of the Hittite man, where rested the bones of his ancestors, the Babylonian first mother and later heads of the tribe. The pediments of the stone gate towers of the double rock grave were plain to be seen at the left by the surrounding wall; and feelings of piety, whose source is death, mingled in his breast with the lively sympathy aroused there at the sight of the populous city. Then he had turned back to the well, where he washed, refreshed, and anointed himself and then performed with the moon that somewhat decadent ritual of wooing at which his ever-anxious father had surprised him.

## THE INFORMER

THE OLD man stood beside him now, and passing his staff over into his left hand, laid the right on Joseph's head and gazed with penetrating old eyes into the youth's lovely black ones; who first looked up at him, his lips parting in a smile that showed again the gleaming enamel of his separated teeth, then dropped his eyes, partly in simple reverence, but also from a flickering sense of guilt that rose from his father's command to cover himself. Truly it was not alone the pleasant coolness of the evening air that had made him slow to resume his garment; and he suspected his father of reading his mind and the impulses that had led to his addressing his half-nude observances to the moon. It was true that he had found it sweet and of good omen to display his young body to her, with whom he felt himself connected through his horoscope and by all sorts of intuitions and imaginings; convinced that she must take pleasure in it, and of set purpose to charm her — or the powers above in general — and prejudice them in his favour. The sensation of cool brightness that touched his shoulders with the evening air had confirmed to him the success of his childish enterprise — which we must not consider shameless, because it was really tantamount to a sacrifice of shame. We must remember that the rite of circumcision, taken over as outward practice from the Egyptians, had in Joseph's family and tribe long ago acquired a peculiar mystic significance. It was the marriage commanded and appointed by God between man and the deity, performed upon that part of the flesh which seemed to form the focus

of his being, and upon which every physical vow was taken. Many a man bore the name of God on his organ of generation, or wrote it there before he possessed a woman. The bond of faith with God was sexual in its nature, and thus, contracted with a jealous creator and lord, insistent upon sole possession, it inflicted upon the human male a kind of civilizing weakening into the female. The bloody sacrifice of circumcision has more than a physical connection with emasculation. The sanctifying of the flesh signified both being made chaste and the offering up of chastity as a sacrifice; in other words, a female significance. Joseph, moreover, as he knew himself, and as everybody told him, was both beautiful and well-favoured — a condition which certainly embraces a consciousness of femininity; and " beautiful " was an adjective always and by everybody used to describe the moon, in particular the full, unshrouded and unclouded moon, a moon-word, in short, belonging by rights to the heavenly sphere and only applicable by transference among men; so that in Joseph's mind the idea beautiful and the idea nude flowed together and were interchangeable almost at will, and it seemed to him the part both of wisdom and piety to respond to the unshrouded loveliness of the planet with his own, that the pleasure and admiration might be mutual.

How much connection there was between these vague sentiments and a certain degeneracy betrayed in his behaviour, I should not like to say. At all events, the sentiments had their origin in the primitive meaning of a ritual uncovering which was still customary and often practised before his eyes; just for that very reason it was that he felt a vague sense of shame in his father's pres-

ence and correction. For he both loved and feared the old man's spiritual side, and was aware that he repudiated as sinful a good share of the thought-world to which Joseph clung, if only in fancy and child's play; putting it behind him as pre-Abramite, applying to it his swiftest and most frightful condemnation, the word "idolatrour." The youth prepared himself for an express and downright admonition in this sense. But Jacob, from among the cares that as always weighed him down in connection with this son of his, produced a different one. He began:

" Verily it had been better did my child sleep now, after his devotions, in the shelter of the house. Unwillingly I behold him alone in the oncoming night, beneath the stars which shine alike upon the good and the evil doer. Why has he not kept with the sons of Leah, or gone whither the sons of Bilhah went? "

He was well aware why Joseph, once again, had not gone with them, and Joseph knew that only Jacob's distress over the long-standing situation could have driven him to the question. He answered, with his lips stuck out:

" My brethren and I discussed the matter and resolved it in peace."

Jacob went on:

" It may come about that the lion of the desert, and he who has his dwelling in the cane-brake of the outlet, where it flows into the salt sea, comes when he is hungry and falls upon the flocks, when he thirsts after blood and seeks his prey. It is five days since Almodad the shepherd lay before me on his belly and confessed that a ravening beast had struck down two ewes in the night and dragged one away to devour it. Almodad was pure in my sight without an oath, for he showed to me the one ewe in her

blood so that it was plain to the understanding that the lion had stolen the other, and so the loss came upon my own head."

"It is little loss," said Joseph wheedlingly, "verily it is as nothing compared with the riches the Lord hath vouchsafed out of His love to my lord in Mesopotamia."

Jacob bowed his head, letting it droop a little toward the right shoulder, in token that he did not vaunt himself over the blessing, though even so it had scarcely been effective without some shrewd assistance on his own part. He answered:

"To whom much is given from him can much be taken away. The Lord hath made me silver, yet can He make me clay and poor as the potsherds on the dungheap; for His spirit is mighty and we know not the ways of His righteousness. Silver hath a pale light," he went on, keeping his eyes away from the moon, to which Joseph straightway sent up a sideways glance. "Silver is affliction, and the bitterest fear of the fearful is the folly of those for whom his heart is heavy."

The boy looked entreatingly at him and made a caressing and soothing gesture.

Jacob did not let him finish; he went on:

"It was where the shepherds keep their flocks, a hundred or two hundred paces from here, that the lion crept up and stole the ewe lambs away from their dam. But my child sits alone by the well at night, naked and without a weapon, careless and forgetful of the father-heart. Art thou made for danger and armed for strife? Art thou like Simeon and Levi, thy brothers, may God keep them, who fall upon the enemy with clamour, sword in hand, and who burned the city of the Amorites? Or art

thou like Esau, thy uncle, at Seir in the deserts of the south — a hunter and man of the field, red of skin and hairy like a he-goat? No, thou art gentle and a dweller in tents, for thou art flesh of my flesh, and when Esau came to the ford with four hundred men and my soul knew not the issue before the Lord, I put the handmaids and their children, thy brothers, foremost, and Leah with her children after, and lo, thee I put hindermost, with Rachel, thy mother. . . ."

His eyes had already filled with tears. He could not name, dry-eyed, the name of her whom he had loved beyond all else, although it was eight years since God had so incomprehensibly taken her from him; his voice, always full of feeling, faltered and broke.

The boy stretched out his arms to his father, then carried the clasped hands to his lips.

"How idly troubleth itself," he said in tender reproach, "the heart of my father and dear lord! And how extravagant is his concern! When our guest wished us good health and went to see after his precious image," he smiled maliciously to please Jacob, and added, "which seemed to me poor and impotent indeed and worthless as coarse earthenware in the market —"

"Thou sawest it?" broke in Jacob. Even this vexed and misgave him.

"I besought the guest to show it me before the evening meal," answered Joseph, curling his lip and shrugging his shoulder. "It is mediocre work and feebleness stands written on its brow. . . . As the talk between thee and thy guest came to an end, I went out with my brothers; but one of Leah's maid's sons, I think it was Gad, whose manner is blunt and downright, told me not

to set my feet in his steps nor the steps of the others, and somewhat bruised me in my soul for he called me not by my name but with false and evil ones to which I do not listen gladly. . . ."

He had launched into his tale without thinking and against his own will, for he was aware of a certain tendency in himself; it detracted from his own self-satisfaction, and he honourably desired to conquer it, in fact had already struggled with it the moment before. He could never check his need to communicate his thoughts, and it here operated in a vicious circle with the bad relations to his brethren; by estranging him from them and thus driving him closer to his father, there was created for him an intermediate position which lent itself easily to tale-bearing. And the tale-bearing in its turn increased the estrangement and so on, so that one could not say with whom the wrong had begun, and at least the oldest ones among his brothers could hardly catch sight of Rachel's son without making a face. But the original source was no doubt Jacob's love for this son of his — an actual fact with which one would not wish to reproach the too-much-feeling man. Feeling, however, of its own nature inclines to unrestraint and an enervating cult of itself; it will not be hidden, it knows no reserves, it behaves so as to draw attention upon itself, it flies in the face of the world that the world may be driven to take notice. Such is the intemperance of the feelingful; and Jacob was encouraged in his by the tradition handed down in his tribe, of God's own intemperateness and majestic caprice in matters of sympathy and preference. El Elyon's way of preferring this and that one, without, or at least over and above, merit on their part, was very

highhanded, hard to understand and humanly speaking often unjust; it was a fixed and lofty state of feeling which was not to be interpreted but simply to be honoured with fear and ecstasy, in the dust; and Jacob, himself a conscious — if also a humble and fearful — object of one among these predilections, imitated his God in that he wantonly insisted upon his own and gave them free rein.

The soft unrestraint of the man of feeling was Joseph's heritage from his father. Later I shall have to tell of his powerlessness to set limits to his fullness; of the lack of tact which brought him into extreme danger. At nine years old, still quite a child, it had been he who complained to his father of Reuben, a good if impetuous youth, who seeing that Jacob, after Rachel's death, had made his bed with Bilhah the maid, and taken her for his favourite, while Leah crouched neglected and red-eyed in her tent, had torn his father's cot from the new place and mishandled it with curses. It was a rash act, committed out of offended filial pride, committed for Leah's sake and early rued. The bed might have been quietly set up again, Jacob needed to hear naught of the occurrence. But Joseph had seen and had nothing better to do than to tell the father. And it was since that time that Jacob, himself the first-born not in the way of nature, but only nominally and legally, conceived the plan of divesting Reuben of his right, depriving him of the blessing, to confer it not on Simeon, Leah's second, the next in order, but with the most arbitrary exercise of authority, on Joseph.

His brethren did the youth wrong in saying that his prattle was deliberately directing the parental resolve

towards such a goal. It was the simple truth that he could not keep still. But that he could not hold his tongue even after he knew of the plan and his brothers' accusation was harder to forgive and was like fuel to the flames of their suspicion.

It is not generally known how Reuben's "sporting" with Bilhah came to Jacob's ears. That was a much worse affair than the one with the bed; it had happened before they settled at Hebron, at a place between Hebron and Beth-el. Reuben, then twenty-one, in the full tide of his strength and instincts, had not been able to refrain from his father's wife — the very same Bilhah toward whom he cherished so bitter a grudge because she had dispossessed Leah, his mother. He had spied upon her in the bath, first by chance, then for the pleasure of humiliating her without her knowledge — until desire took the upper hand. A rash and sensual passion for Bilhah's mature and artfully preserved charms — for her still firm breasts and soft belly — had seized on the hardy youth, and was not to be stilled by any of the maids, any yielding and submissive Shechemite slave. He slipped in to his father's concubine and present favourite, he took her unawares, and if he did her no violence, yet the woman, who before Jacob did but tremble, was seduced by the overmastering pride of his youthful virility.

Joseph, lounging idly about the camp, if not precisely with intent to spy, had learned enough of this scene of passion to make simple and zealous report to the father that Reuben had "sported" and "laughed" with Bilhah. The words conveyed less than he really knew, yet in the local parlance they insinuated everything. Jacob turned pale and gasped. Not many minutes after the boy

had told all his tale, Bilhah lay whimpering before the master, tearing with her nails those breasts which Reuben had thrown in confusion, now for ever bespotted and un-touchable by her lawful lord. The evil doer lay there too, girt only in sackcloth, in token of his abasement and surrender, with his hands lifted up above his dishevelled and dust-strewn head, in utter abandonment, letting pass over him the formal fury of his father's wrath. Jacob called him Ham, the shamer of his sire, the dragon of the prime, Behemoth and shameless hippopotamus — the last with reference to an Egyptian legend that this animal has the devastating habit of killing its father and mating with its mother by violence. That was to assume that Bilhah, because he himself slept with her, was really Reuben's mother; in his words of thunder rumbled the sinister old idea that Reuben, by lying with his mother, had betrayed his wish to be lord over all — and Jacob met the assumption by making him lord over nothing. He stretched forth his arm and took away from the groaning sinner his firstborn rights — took them indeed only unto himself, without for the moment bestowing the title further; so that from then on the matter was undecided, save as the majestic partiality of the father's heart took the place for the time being of legal fact.

It was remarkable that Reuben bore the boy Joseph no grudge, but of all the brothers behaved most forbearingly towards him. Justly enough, he did not attribute the boy's behaviour to pure malice, but in his heart gave him right for cherishing the honour of so loving a father and making known to him events the shocking character of which Reuben was far from denying. Conscious of his own frailty, Reuben was good-natured and just. In his person

rather ill-favoured, though of great strength like all of Leah's sons, having his mother's stupid eyes, with the constitutionally suppurating lids, on which he spent much ointment to little end, he was more accessible than the others to Joseph's admitted charms; was dumbly moved by them and could feel it right that that inheritance from the wandering fathers of his race, the blessing and the election, should fall upon the lad rather than upon him or any other of the twelve. However sorely smitten by the parental wishes and designs concerning the blessing of the firstborn, he consented to them with his mind.

Joseph had known very well what he was about when he threatened with Reuben's wrath the son of Zilpah, who, moreover, in his downrightness, was by no means the worst of the lot. For Reuben had often — even if contemptuously — stood up for Joseph, often protected him with the strength of his arm and rebuked the brothers when, enraged at his tattling ways, they were provoked to fall foul of him. For the simpleton learned nothing from the early and serious occurrences with Reuben; made no amendment through the latter's magnanimity and as he grew up became a more dangerous eavesdropper and talebearer than he had been as a child. Dangerous to himself too, and in particular, for the role he had taught himself to play daily heightened both his observation and his isolated state; prejudiced his happiness, drew down upon him a hatred which it was not in the power of his nature to bear and gave him every ground to fear his brothers — the which then supplied fresh temptation to flatter the father and secure himself against them — all this despite oft-taken resolves to let his tongue refrain from poison and thus to heal his relations

with the ten, of whom none was actually a scoundrel, and with whom he felt a secret and sacred bond on the score of the number of the signs of the zodiac, whose circle he and his little brother helped to complete.

In vain. Whenever Simeon and Levi, always swift in anger, had brawled with strange shepherds or even with people in the town and brought shame upon the tribe; whenever Judah, a proud and afflicted man, whom Ishtar plagued, so that he found cause for tears in matters where others found cause for laughing, had become secretly involved with the daughters of the countryside, displeasingly to Jacob; whenever one among the brothers had sinned before the only and most high God by privily burning incense to an idol, thus imperilling the fruitfulness of the flocks and threatening to bring down pox or scab or staggers upon them; or whenever the sons, either at home or at Shechem, had tried to make a little extra profit from the sale of the fallow cattle and quietly to divide it among themselves — the father heard of it from his favourite child. He even heard things without truth or reason, and was prone to believe them for the sake of Joseph's beautiful eyes. The lad asserted that some of the brothers had repeatedly cut steaks from the flesh of living sheep and rams and eaten them, and that this had been done by the sons of the two concubines, but to excess by Asher, who was in fact a good deal of a glutton. This appetite of Asher was the only evidence in support of a charge which on its face looked incredible and which could never have been established against the four. Objectively speaking, it was a slander; from Joseph's point of view, perhaps, it did not quite deserve that name. He may have dreamed it; or more precisely, had let him-

self dream it, at some time when he deserved and was expecting a beating, in order to seek shelter behind it with his father, and afterwards could or would not distinguish between truth and barefaced lie. In this instance, of course, the fury of the brothers found more than usually extravagant vent. They declared their innocence of the charge, with such vehemence as almost to render them suspect, as almost to make one think some small grain of truth lay at the bottom of it. We are usually bitterest over accusations which are false, of course — and yet perhaps not utterly without ground after all.

#### THE NAME

JACOB was about to start up at mention of the evil names which Gad had applied to Joseph, and which the old man was at once ready to regard as a culpable disrespect to his holiest feelings. But Joseph had such a charming way and plausible tongue, he knew so well how to speak with sudden vivacity, to pacify and pass on, that Jacob's anger died down before it had mounted, and he could do nothing but gaze with a rapt smile into the speaker's black and somewhat slanting eyes, narrowed by guile unspeakably sweet.

"It was nothing," he heard his son say, in the thin sharp voice which he loved because it had much of Rachel's quality in it. "I spoke to him like a brother for his rudeness, and he took the reproof with mildness, so it shall be counted to him as a virtue that we parted kindly. I went to the top of the hill to look down upon the town and Ephron's double house; I purified myself here with washing and prayer; as for the lion with which

my father thought to frighten me, the ravager of the lower world, the breed of the black moon, he came not out of the thicket of the Jarden " (he pronounced the word with other vowels than ours, forming the r on the palate indeed, but not rolling it, and giving the e an open sound), " but found his evening meal in the gulleys and the cliffs, and the eyes of thy child have not seen him, neither near nor far off."

He called himself child because he knew that the remainder of his babyhood was especially moving to the father. He went on:

" But if he had come, with lashing tail, and roared after his prey, like the voice of the chanting seraphim, yet thy child would have been little affrighted or not at all before his rage. For of a certainty he had sought again the lambs, robber that he is, if Almodad had not driven him off with fire and clattering, and would wisely have avoided the child of man. For knoweth not my father that the beasts fear and avoid man, for that God gave him the spirit of understanding and taught him the orders into which the single things fall; doth he not know how Shem-mael shrieked when the man of earth knew how to name the creation as though he were its master and framer, and how all the fiery servants of the Lord were amazed and cast down their eyes, because they may know how to cry Holy, holy, holy in part choruses, but have absolutely no understanding of upper and lower orders? And the beasts too they are ashamed and put the tail between their legs because we know them and have power over their names and can thus render powerless the roaring might of the single one, by naming him. If now he had come, with long slinking tread, with his hateful nose,

mewing and spitting, terror would not have robbed me of my senses, nor made me pale before his riddle. 'Is thy name Blood-thirst?' I would have asked of him, making merry at his expense. 'Or Springing Murder?' But then I would have sat upright and cried out: 'Lion! Lo, Lion art thou, by nature and species, and thy riddle lieth bare before me, so that I speak it out and with a laugh it is plain.'<sup>9</sup> And he would have blinked before the name and gone meekly away before the word, powerless to answer unto me. For he is quite unlearned and knows nought of writing tools. . . ."

He went on punning, which he loved at all times to do, but did so now as with the previous boasting, in order to divert his father. It was a constant gratification to him that the word *sefer* — book, also writing tools — played upon his own name; for in contrast to all his brothers, not one of whom could write, he loved occupation with the stilus, and displayed so much skill that he might have served as scribal apprentice at one of the places where documents were kept, Kirjath Sefer or Gebal, if Jacob could conceivably have consented to such a career.

"If," he went on, "the father would come here and sit down in ease and comfort beside the son at the well, for instance here upon its rim, while the book-learned child slipped down to sit at his feet, it would be well and charmingly done. For then he would entertain his master and lord, telling him a little fable of names and naming which he has learnt and knows how to recite with good effect. For it was at the time of the generations of the flood that the angel Senhazai saw upon the earth a damsel named Ishchara, and was enamoured of her beauty so that he said: 'Hear me!' But she answered and said:

\* There will be no thought of hearing thee, unless thou first teach me the true and unfeigned name of God, by the might of which thou springest up in pronouncing it.<sup>9</sup> Then the messenger, Senhazai, in his folly taught her the true name, and out of his burning desire that she should hearken unto him. But hardly did Ishchara see herself in the possession of it, what thinkest my father that she did, but out of a clear sky snap her fingers in the face of the importunate messenger! This is the climax of the story — but alas, I see that the father hearkeneth not, but that his ears are sealed up by his thoughts, and he is in deep musing."

And truly Jacob was not listening, but "mused." It was a vastly expressive musing, in the truest sense of the word, it was the highest degree of emotionally absorbed absence of mind, for less he did not do. When he mused it had to be a proper musing, recognizable at a hundred paces, so that not alone it was evident to everybody that Jacob was plunged in a muse, but everybody then first found out what a proper musing really was, and was seized with awe at state and picture: the old man leaning on his staff which he grasped with both hands, the head bowed over the arm; the deep, dreamy bitterness of the lips in the silver beard; the old brown eyes, boring and burrowing into the depths of memory and thought — eyes whose gaze was cast up so much from below that it almost got caught in the overhanging brows. . . . Men of feeling are expressive, for expression comes from the need of bringing to proof the feelings that well up un-silenced and unrestrained; it springs from a lofty and sensitive nature, in which shyness and austerity, high-mindedness and sensuality, straightforwardness and pose

all appear on the stage in one single dignified role; producing in the beholder a sense of respect together with a slight inclination to smile. Jacob was very expressive — to Joseph's great joy, for he loved his father's high-pitched emotional key and took pride in it; but it troubled and agitated others who had daily business with him, and in particular his other sons, who in every disagreement between him and them feared nothing so much as just his power of expression. Thus Reuben, when after the wretched affair with Bilhah he had to confront his father. Fear and awe before the high-flung phrase were deeper and darker then than they are now; but under such a visitation then as now the ordinary man would feel like expressing his superstitious avoidance in some such words as our "God forbid." But Jacob's power of expression, the vibration in his voice, the elevation of his language, the solemnity of his nature in general, were linked with a disposition and tendency which was likewise the reason why one so often saw him powerfully and picturesquely musing. He so inclined to association of thought, that it characterized and controlled his whole inner life, and in such thoughts his whole nature almost literally exhausted itself. Wherever he went, his soul was played upon by chords and correspondences, diverted and led away into far-reaching considerations which mingled past and to come in the present moment, and made his gaze blurred and broken as in deep introspection. It was almost painful, but by no means peculiar to him alone, for many people suffer from it in varying degrees; it might almost be said that in Jacob's world intellectual value and significance — the words taken in their most actual sense — depended upon the copious

flow of mythical association of ideas and their power to permeate the moment. But why had it sounded so strange, so strained and charged with meaning when the old man in his broken sentence had given voice to his fear that Joseph might fall into the well? Because Jacob could not think of those depths without connecting them in his thought, to their enrichment and consecration, with the idea of the lower world and the kingdom of the dead — that idea which played an important part, not indeed in his religious convictions, but probably in the depths of his soul and in the power of his imagination: that primitive mythical inheritance of all peoples, the conception of the underworld, the realm of Osiris the dismembered one, where he ruled, the place of Namtar, the god of plagues, the kingdom of terrors, whence came all evil spirits and pestilences. It was the world whereinto the constellations descended at their setting, to rise again at the appointed hour, whereas no mortal who trod the path to this abode ever found the way back. It was the place of filth and excrement, but also of gold and riches; the womb in which one buried the seed corn, out of which it sprouted again as nourishing grain; the land of the black moon, of winter and the parching summer, whither Tammuz the shepherd in his spring sank down and would sink each year, when the boar killed him, and all creation ceased and the weeping world lay sere, until Ishtar, goddess and mother, made pilgrimage to hell to seek him, broke the dust-covered bolts of his prison, and mid laughter and rejoicing, brought forth the beautiful and beloved out of the pit and the grave, to reign over the new season and the fresh-flowering fields.

Why then should Jacob's voice not shake with emotion

and his question wake strange, significant echoes, since to him — not with his mind but with his feeling — the mouth of the well was an entrance to the lower world, so that the mere word called up all this and yet more within him? A man of dull and untrained sense, void of imagination, could utter it and have only the most immediate and practical reaction. As for Jacob, it imparted dignity and solemn spirituality to his whole being, made it expressive to the point of painfulness. The effect upon the erring Reuben, when Jacob hurled at him the opprobrious name of Ham, is impossible to measure. For Jacob was not the man to use such an epithet in the sense of a mere pale allusion. His spirit had frightful power to dissolve the present in the past, to bring back into force the consummated event, and his, Jacob's, personal identity with Noah, the father who was spied upon, reviled and dishonoured at the hand of his son. And Reuben too knew beforehand that it would be so and that he would quite literally lie as Ham before Noah — that was why his flesh had crept when he went in.

The old man's present mood of deep and manifest musing was due to memories called up by his son's prattle about names and naming: remote and anxious memories that weighed on his spirit like a dream, of the old days, when in actual bodily fear he had awaited the meeting with the brother from the plains, whom he had cheated and who was doubtless still thirsting for revenge; and then, aspiring so fervently after the power of the spirit, had wrestled for the sake of the name with the strange man who had fallen upon him. A frightful, heavy, highly sensual dream, yet with a certain wild sweetness; no light and fleeting vision that passes and is

gone, but a dream of such physical warmth, so dense with actuality, that it left a double legacy of life behind it as the tide leaves the fruits of the sea on the strand at the ebb: the breaking of Jacob's hip, the hollow of the thigh, from which he halted ever since the unknown had put it out of joint in wrestling; and then the name — but not the stranger's name, for that had been denied up to the last, until the dawn, until it was almost too late, however Jacob demanded it of him, hot and panting and with resistless strength — not the stranger's name but Jacob's own other and second name, the surname, which the strange man left him in the struggle, that he might let him go before the sun rose and save him from the painful danger of being late: the title of honour which since that time had been bestowed upon Jacob when one would flatter him and make him smile — Israel, " God doeth battle." . . . Again he saw the ford of Jabbok before him, where he had remained alone in the shrubbery, having sent on ahead his sons and his women and the flocks and herds which he had set apart as a present for his brother Esau to find favour in his eyes, saw the unquiet and cloudy night, when he, unquiet as the sky, had roved about between two efforts after slumber, still shaken from the encounter with Rachel's father — which by God's help had gone off well and the father been successfully overreached — but already in torment before the approach of yet another whom he had defrauded and betrayed. How he had exhorted the Elohim in prayer, and fairly conjured Him to stand by him! He saw the man too, with whom so unwittingly he had been involved in a life-and-death struggle; for the moon had suddenly glared out of the cloud and he has seen him breast to

breast: the wide-apart, unwinking ox-eyes, the face and shoulders glistening like polished stone; and in his heart he felt again the fury of desire with which in agonized whispers he had demanded the Name. . . . How strong he had been! With the desperate strength of a dream, and enduring with unsuspected reserves of power in the depth of his soul! He had held out all night, until the dawn, until he had seen that the man would be too late and the latter had prayed him Let me go! Neither had prevailed over the other — but did not that mean the victory was Jacob's, he being no extraordinary man, but a man from hereabouts, and of the seed of mankind? Yet it seemed as though the wide-eyed one had doubted that. The painful thrust and grip upon the thigh had seemed like an examination. Perhaps it was meant to find out whether there was a socket there, whether it was movable and not, like the strange man's own, fixed and not adapted to sitting down. And then the man had known how to turn the thing so that he did not utter his own name, but gave Jacob another in place of it. He could hear in his musing — as clearly as then with his mortal ears — the man's high and brazen voice, speaking to him: "Thy name shall henceforth be called Israel," whereupon he had loosened his arms and let the owner of the strange voice go, so that there was still some hope he might arrive in time. . . .

#### THE MONKEY LAND OF EGYPT

THE STATELY old man's way of coming out of his reverie was no less expressive than his absorption in it. With a deep sigh, with weighty dignity, he straightened up and

shook it from him and with lifted head looked about him widely in space as one who wakes; plainly collecting himself and finding his way back to the present. He seemed not to have heard Joseph's suggestion that he sit down at his side; the lad realized to his embarrassment that this was no moment for historiettes, however pleasing. The old man had still things to say of serious import; the lion had not been his sole concern, for Joseph had given cause for others, and his father spared him nothing. He heard:

" There is a country far to the south, the land of Hagar the maid, called Ham's country, or the Black, the monkey land of Egypt. For its people are black of soul, though red of face, they come old out of the womb, their nurslings are like little old men, and in their cradles lisp of death. I have heard that they carry the manhood of their god, three ells long, through their streets with playing of lutes and trumpets, and cohabit with painted corpses in the graves. They are all swollen with conceit, lustful and melancholy. They clothe themselves after the curse that lighted on Ham, who was to go naked with his shame exposed; for their garments are linen thin as spider-web, which covers their nakedness without hiding it — and on this they pride themselves, saying that they wear woven air. For they have no shame of their flesh and neither word nor understanding for that which is sin. The bellies of their dead they stop with spices, and on the place of the heart they lay as is most fit the image of a dung beetle. They are rich and lustful like the folk of Sodom and Gomorrah. It pleasureth them to make their beds together and to exchange their wives one with another, and when a woman goeth in the street and seeth a young

man after whom she lusteth, so lieth she with him. They are like the beasts, and they bow down to beasts in the innermost of their ancient temples; and I have heard that a virgin, and whom no man had known until that time, let herself be covered before all the people in the temple by a ram named Banebdedu. Doth my son approve these ways *i*

Joseph saw to what offending of his these words had reference, and his head and lower lip hung down like a chidden child's. But a smile hid behind his expression of half-pouting repentance, for he was aware that Jacob's description of the customs of Mizraim was full of prejudice, exaggeration and easy generalities. He waited in humility, but seeing his father insisted on an answer, he lifted up his eyes appealingly, seeking in the old man's face the first sign of a smile, trying to lure one out by cautious overtures, by alternate advance and retreat, by gravity and gaiety in turn.

" If these be indeed the ways of Mizraim, my dear lord, then God forbid that this ignorant child of thine should call them good. But indeed to me it seemeth that the skill of those old dung beetles in weaving linen so that it is like air for fineness, might speak for them provisionally, on the other side. And in that they have no shame of their flesh it might be said to their excusing by one ready in indulgence that they are mostly spare of habit and lean in body, fat flesh having more occasion to feel shame than dry, and indeed. . . ."

But now it was Jacob's turn to be serious. He interposed in a voice wherein impatient chiding strove with tenderness:

" Thou speakest as a child! Thou knowest how to set

thy words together and thy speech is beguiling like a camel dealer's when he would bargain to his profit — but its sense is utterly childish. I would not believe that thou mockest my anxiety, that maketh me to tremble lest thou displease our God and stir up His anger against thee and Abraham's seed. Mine eyes have seen how thou sattest naked beneath the moon, as though the Highest had not given us in our hearts the knowledge of sin, and as though the nights of spring were not cool upon these heights after the heat of the day, so that an evil flux might fall upon thee overnight and fever take away thy sense before cockcrow. Therefore will I that thou puttst straightway thy upper garment about thee, according to the religion of the children of Shem. For it is woollen and a wind goeth from Gilead. And I will that thou shouldst grieve me not, for mine eyes have seen more than this, and I am in great fear that they saw thee kiss thy hand at the stars. . . ."

" By no means! " cried Joseph aghast. He had sprung up from the margin of the well to put on the knee-length brown and yellow smock which his father had taken and held out to him; but the sudden movement and erect posture seemed to express his repudiation of the old man's charge, which must be refuted at all costs — and with all means. Let us take careful note, for everything here was highly significant. Jacob's habit of thinking in many layers and involved associations was shown in the way he included three reproaches in one: lack of care for the health, lack of modesty, and religious backsliding. The last was the deepest and worst layer of the combined anxieties, and Joseph, his arms in the sleeves of his smock, the opening of which, in his excitement, he could

not find, took on the battle as he did his garment, as if to illustrate the importance in his eyes of denying a course of conduct which at the same time he went about most cunningly to justify.

"Never! By no means!" he asseverated, while his beautiful and well-favoured head found its way through the opening in the smock. And with intent to convince still more by the choiceness of his phrases, he added:

"My father's mind is, I assure him, most grievously darkened by error."

He twitched his shoulders to settle his smock and pulled it down with both hands, snatched the dishevelled myrtle wreath from his head and cast it aside, then began without looking to pull at the strings that tied the garment below the neck. "Kiss my hand? I know nothing of it; how could I think of committing so evil a deed? Let my dear lord but consider my failings, he will see that they do not tally. I gazed upwards, certainly, that is the truth. I saw the light shining, the splendid rays streaming, and mine eyes, wounded by the fiery darts of the sun, bathed in the mild radiance of the frame of the night. For thus sayeth the song, and passeth from mouth to mouth among men:

**"Thee, Sin, made He to shine. The times to establish,  
The changes of season, to night thee He wedded  
And with splendour He crowned thy high consummation."**

He chanted the words, standing one step higher than his father, with upraised hands; at each half verse he bent his body, first to one side and then to the other.

"*Shapattu*," said he. "That is the day of the solemn consummation, the day of beauty. It is not far off, by

one or **two** morrows it will be here. Yet not even on the holy Sabbath day would it occur to me to send the time-decider even the smallest and most secret kiss, for it is not said that it shines by its own light, but that He made it to shine and gave it the crown. . . ."

"Who?" asked Jacob in a low voice. "Who made it to shine?"

"Marduk-Bel," cried Joseph rashly, but followed up the word by a long drawn out "Eh-h-h!" and an expiatory headshake. He went on:

"As they call him in the tales. But it is — as my lord needs not to learn from his foolish child — the Lord of all Gods, stronger than the Anunnaki and Baals of all the peoples, the God of Abraham, who slew the dragon and created the threefold world. When He turns away in His wrath He turns not his face again, and when He is wroth no other god goeth up against His fury. Magnanimous is He, and all-wise, sinners and blasphemers are a stench unto His nostrils, but to him who went up out of the land of Ur unto him He hath inclined and made a bond with him that he will be the God of him and his seed. And His blessing is come upon Jacob, my lord, to whom also the beautiful name and title of Israel belong, and who is a great harbinger of the Lord and full of insight and far from so ill instructing his children that they would take it on themselves to throw kisses to the stars, since such should appertain unto the Lord alone, always supposing it were fitting to throw kisses to Him, whereas that is so little the case that one might almost say it were better by comparison to throw them to the bright stars. But though this might be said, yet do I not say it, and if I have even carried a finger to my mouth

in the way of hand-kissing, then may I never carry it there again, rather let me starve. And indeed I will eat no more but rather choose to hunger, if my father doth not at once sit down comfortably on the ledge beside his son. For my lord standeth much too long upon his feet, seeing that he hath a holy weakness of his thigh, come by in so high and strange a way, as is well known unto all — "

He ventured to step down to the old man and cautiously put an arm about his shoulder, convinced that he had charmed and soothed him by his prattle; and Jacob, who had stood plunged in meditation on the divine, lingering the little cylindrical seal which hung down on his breast, yielded to the gentle pressure, put his foot upon the step and let himself down on the margin of the well, resting his staff in the hollow of his arm, smoothing his garment and in his turn looking up at the moon, as it lighted his aging majesty and mirrored itself in the shrewd and anxious chestnut-brown eyes. Joseph sat down at his feet, by way of completing the picture he had already drawn. He felt his father's hand upon his hair, moving slowly to and fro in a stroking movement of which the old man was probably unconscious, and in a lower voice he went on:

" Behold, it is lovely and pleasant thus, and I could sit through all the watches of the night, as indeed I have often longed to do. My lord gazeth up into the countenance of his Lord, and I in my turn with the liveliest pleasure into his, that I behold as a countenance of a god and that is illuminated by the reflected light. But hast thou not seen the face of my hairy uncle Esau like the face of the moon, when all unhopd he met thee so

gentle and brotherly by the ford, as thou hast reported unto me? But that too was but a mild reflection on his hot and hairy face, the reflection of thy countenance which is like the moon's to look upon and the shepherd Abel's, whose sacrifice was pleasing unto the Lord, and not like Cain's and Esau's, whose faces are like the ploughed field when the sun breaks it up and like the clod when it gathers size from the drought. Yea, thou art Abel, the moon and the shepherd, and all thine we are shepherds and people of the sheep, not people of the sun, the husbandmen, like the peasants who sweat behind the plough and behind the ox of the plough, and pray to the Baal of their land. But we look up to the Lord of the way, the Wanderer, who rises there in garment of shining white. But tell me," he went on, hardly stopping to draw breath, "did not Abraham our father depart in anger from Ur in Chaldaea and leave behind him in his wrath the moon citadel of his city because the Lawgiver mightily exalted his god Marduk, who is the burning fiery sun, and set him up above all the gods of Shinar, to the vexation of the people of Sin? And tell me likewise do not his people out there call him Shem, when they would exalt him — the same as Noah's son was called, whose children are black but comely, as Rachel was, and abide at Elam, Asshur, Arpaxad, Lud and Edom? Listen and hear, for a thought cometh unto thy child: was not the wife of Abraham called Sahar, which is the moon? For lo, I will make thee a little reckoning: seven times fifty days are the days of the year, and four over. But in every month are four days when men do not see the moon. Let my lord take away then, if it please him, those three times twelve from those

three hundred and fifty-four, leaving three hundred and eighteen days of the visible moon. Now there were three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in Abram's own house, with whom Abram smote the kings of the East and pursued them beyond Damascus and brought again his brother Lot out of the hand of Chedorlaomer, the Elamite. Lo, so hath Abiram our father loved the moon, and so sacred to him was its shining that he counted his servants for the battle precisely according to the days of its giving light. Then supposing I had kissed my hand three hundred and eighteen times, whereas I did so not even once, would that have been so great a sinning? "

#### THE TESTING

" THOU art shrewd," said Jacob, and the hand that had stood still during the reckoning began to move again, less absently, over Joseph's head, " thou art shrewd, Yashub, my son. Thy head is outwardly beautiful, and well-favoured, as Mami's was " (he used the pet name which Joseph had given Rachel, the earthly and familiar name of Ishtar, of Babylonian origin), " and within it is godly and wise. So lively was mine too when I counted no more than thy years, but it is weary from the events, not only from the new but from the old which have come upon us, and which give it cause to ponder. And from the troubles, and the inheritance, for the words of the Lord are not clear. For His countenance may be mild to look upon but also it is like the burning fiery brand, and it destroyed Sodom with fire, and man goeth through the fire of the Lord to purify himself. The devouring flame is

He, that consumeth the feast of the first of the flock at the feast of the equinox, outside of the tent, when it grows dark and we sit within with trembling and eat of the lamb, whose blood stains the door-posts, because the Avenger passeth over. . . ."

He broke off, and his hand slipped down from Joseph's head. The lad looked up, and saw that his father's face was covered with his hands and that he was shaking.

"What hath come to my lord?" he cried, dismayed, and flinging himself round he put up his hands to his father's hands without daring to touch them. He had to wait, and to speak again. Only with hesitation did Jacob change his posture. When he uncovered his face it looked lined and consumed with grief and the woeful eyes stared past the boy into space.

"I thought upon the Lord with trembling," he said, and his lips seemed scarcely able to move. "It was as though my hand were the hand of Abraham and lay upon Yitzchak's head. And as though His voice went out upon me, and His command. . . ."

"His command?" Joseph asked, challenging him with a quick, birdlike motion of the head.

"The command and the precept, thou knowest it, since thou knowest the tales," answered Jacob in a resigned tone, sitting bowed over with his forehead against the hand that held the staff. "And I hearkened; for is He less than Melech, the Bull-king of Baalim to whom they bring the firstborn of men in their need and in a secret feast give the child into his arms? And shall He not demand from His own what Melech demands from those who believe on him? Then demanded He it and I heard His voice and spoke: Behold, here I am! And my heart

stood still and my breath went from me. . . . And I saddled an ass early in the morning and took thee with me. For thou wast Isaac, my late-born and first-born, and the Lord smiled upon us when thou wast announced, and wast my one and all, and upon thy head lay all the future. And now He demanded thee of me, as was His right but contrary to the future. Then I clave wood for the burnt offering and laid it upon the ass and set the child thereon, and rose up with two young men three days distant from Beersheba far down towards Edom and the land of Muzri and towards Horeb His mountain. And when I saw the mountain of the Lord from afar and the peak of the mountain, I sent the ass back with the young men and took the fire in my hand and a knife, and we went alone. And when thou spakest to me and said: 'My father,' then I could not say 'Here am I, my son,' but instead moaned in my throat. And when thou in thy voice saidest: 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' then could I not answer as I should that the Lord would provide himself a lamb, for I was sick within me, so that I could have spat out my soul with tears, and moaned again so that thou lookedst at me as thou wentest beside me. And when we came to the place I builded an altar of stone and laid the wood in order and bound the child and laid him upon it. And took the knife with my left hand and covered thy two eyes. And when I drew the knife and the edge of the knife against thy throat, lo, then I did deny the Lord, and my arm fell from my shoulder, and the knife fell down, and I fell down upon my face on the ground and bit the earth and the grass of the earth and struck at it with my feet and my fists and cried: 'Slay him, slay him, Thou,

O Lord and Destroyer, for he is my one and only, and I am not Abraham and my soul fails before Thee.' And as I thrust about me and shrieked, lo, thunder rolled from the place along the heaven far and wide. And I had the child and had the Lord no more, for I could not do it for Him, no, no, no, I could not," he groaned, and shook his head against the hand on the staff.

"At the last moment," asked Joseph with lifted brows, "did thy soul give way? For in the next," he went on, as his father only turned his head a little without speaking, "in the very next would have sounded the voice and called unto thee: 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him,' and thou wouldest have seen the ram in the thicket."

"I did not know," said the old man, "for I was as Abraham and the tale had not yet been told."

"Ah, but saidest thou not thou hast cried out<sup>6</sup> I am not Abraham!" responded Joseph, smiling. "But if thou wast not he, then wast thou Jacob my father, and the tale was old and thou knewest the issue. And also it was not the boy Yitzchak whom thou boundedst and wouldst slay," he added, with the same airy movement of the head. "But that is the profit of these later days, that we know already the course in which the world rolls on, and the tales in which it is fulfilled and which were founded by the fathers. So mightest thou have trusted in the voice and the ram."

"Thy words are full of wit but not of wisdom," countered the old man, forgetting in the argument his previous pain. "For firstly, if I was Jacob and not Abraham, then was it uncertain whether it would fall out as before, and I could not know if the Lord would not let it come

to pass to the end, whereas once he had stayed his hand. But secondly, what had my strength been before the Lord, had it come to me out of foreknowledge of the angel and the ram and not rather from my great submission and the faith that God can make the future go through the fire unsinged and spring the bolts of death and is Lord of the resurrection? But thirdly, hath then God tried me? No, he hath tried Abraham, who was steadfast. But I have tried myself with the trial of Abram, and my soul hath refused, for my love was stronger than my faith and I could not," he lamented afresh and leaned his head against his staff — giving himself again to grief now that he had justified his understanding.

"Surely I have uttered much folly," said Joseph humbly. "My lack of wisdom is greater beyond doubt than that of many sheep, and a camel is like to Noah in prudence compared with this senseless child of thine. Doubtless my answer to thy just rebuke will be no more enlightened, but to this foolish one it seemeth that thou wast neither Abram nor Jacob, but — awful to utter — that thou wast the Lord, who tried Jacob with the trial of Abram, and thou hadst the wisdom of the Lord and knewest what trial He was minded to lay upon Jacob, namely that one which He was not minded to let Abram endure to the end. For He spoke to him: <sup>6</sup>1 am Melech, the Bull god of Baalim. Bring me thy firstborn!' But when Abram hastened to bring him, then spake the Lord, 'Am I Melech the Bull king? No, for I am the God of Abraham, whose face is not like the ploughed field when the sun breaks it up, but rather like the face of the moon, and that which I commanded I did not command that thou mightest fulfil, but that thou mightest learn that thou

shouldst not do it because it is an abomination in My sight, and moreover, lo, here is a ram.' My father then did but divert himself with trying whether he could do that which the Lord forbade unto Abraham, and now he grieveth because he found that he could never do it."

"Like an angel," said Jacob, as he rose, shaking his head in the greatness of his emotion, "like an angel near to the throne of God so speakest thou, Jehosiph, my child of God. Would that Mami could hear thee. She would clap her hands, and her eyes, which are thy eyes, would shine with laughter. But only half of the truth is in thy words, the other half remaineth in mine, for I shewed myself weak in self-confidence. But thy part of the truth hast thou adorned with the ornament of graciousness and anointed it with the oil of wit, so that it was a delight to the understanding and a balsam unto my heart. How cometh it now that the words of my child are a stream full of wisdom and fall blithely over the rocks of truth and drop plashing into the heart, making it leap for joy?"

#### OF OIL, WINE, AND FIGS

"THUS it is then," Joseph replied. "Wit is of the nature of a messenger to and fro, and of a go-between 'twixt sun and moon and 'twixt the power of Shamash and of Sin over men's bodies and understandings. Such was the teaching of Eliezer, thy man of wisdom, when he taught me the knowledge of the stars and their conjunctions and their power over the hour according to their aspects. And when he put the hour-hand of my birth in Harran in Mesopotamia, at midday in the month of Tammuz, when Shamash stood in midheaven and in the sign of the

Twins and in the East the sign of the Virgin was rising." He pointed to the constellations, one of which was declining westwards, the other just coming up in the eastern sky, and went on: " That is a sign of Nabu, may it please my father to know, a sign of Thoth the writer of tablets, a light and versatile god, as which he speaketh between things for their good and promoteth intercourse. And the sun too, standing in a sign of Nabu, was lord of the hour, and was in conjunction with the moon, favourable to him according to the learning of priests and interpreters, for his wisdom receiveth mildness therefrom and his heart clemency. But Nabu, the go-between, was in opposition to Nergal, the fox and mischief-maker, giving hardness to his dominion and stamping it with the seal of fate. Ishtar as well — whose part is moderation and sweetness, love and mercy — who culminated at that hour, and was in good aspect to Sin and Nabu. She too was in the sign of the Bull, and instructed it to give tranquillity and abiding valour and shaped the understanding for delight. But likewise, so said Eliezer, she had a trine aspect of Nergal in Capricorn, whereat Eliezer rejoiced, for her sweetness would not be savourless but like honey spiced with the herbs of the field. The moon stood in the sign of Cancer, its own sign, and all indicators stood, if not in their own, at least in benefic signs. But if Nabu, the judicious, is united with the powerfully placed moon, then will the man go far in the earth. And if, as at that hour, the sun hath a trine aspect to Ninurta, warrior and huntsman, that is a sign of a share in the events of the kingdoms of the earth and the administration of authority. Indeed it had been no evil nativity, if the folly of thy ill-begotten child bring not all to naught."

" H'm," said the old man, looking aside as he lightly smoothed the lad's hair. " It resteth with the Lord who ruleth the stars. But what He sheweth with them cannot mean the same each time. Wert thou the son of the great and of a man of power in the world, then might one read that thou shouldest partake of government and authority. But since thou art a shepherd and a shepherd's son, then it is clear to the understanding that it must mean something of a lesser import. But what of wit as a messenger to and fro? "

" I am returning to that now," quoth Joseph, " and guiding my thoughts in that direction. For my father's blessing was his birth with the sun in the zenith with its aspect to Marduk in Libra and Ninurta in the eleventh sign, and added to that the aspect between two paternal indicators, the king and the warrior exchanged with each other. That is a powerful blessing. But my lord knoweth how powerful likewise was the maternal too and the blessing of the moon, from the powerful configurations of Sin and Ishtar. There, then, was probably the understanding that was displayed, for instance in the opposition of Nabu to Nergal, from the ruling writer of tablets and the hard light of the retrograde blackguard in Capricorn, displayed that he might play the go-between 'twixt paternal and maternal inheritance, keep the balance between father- and mother-power, and blithely reconcile the blessing of the day with the blessing of the night. . . ."

He broke off with a somewhat wry smile, which Jacob, sitting above and behind him, did not see. The father said:

" The old man Eliezer hath much experience and hath

gathered together wisdom and as it were hath read the stones of the time before the flood. And he hath taught thee manifold truths and values from the beginnings, the origins and relations of things, and much that is of use to be used in the world. But of many a thing can it not be said with certainty whether it is to be counted with the true and useful, and my heart is swayed by doubt whether he did well to show thee the arts of the star-gazers and magicians of Shinar. For indeed I hold the head of my son to be worthy all wisdom, but I knew not that our fathers had read in the stars or that God had commanded Adam to do so, and I am careful and in doubt whether it may not come close to worship of the stars and perhaps it may be an abomination before the Lord and a doubtful and devilish middle-thing between worship and idolatry." He shook his head anxiously, attacked at his most vulnerable point between distress over the right course and brooding affliction over God's unclarity.

"Much is in doubt," answered Joseph — if what he said may be called an answer. "For instance, is it the night that conceals the day, or the day the night? For it would be important to distinguish this, and often in field and hut have I considered it, hoping, if I could decide, to draw from the decision conclusions as to the virtue of the blessing of the sun and of the moon, as well as of the beauty of the father- and the mother-inheritance. For my little mother, whose cheeks smelt of rose-leaves, went down into the night in childbed with my brother who still dwells in the women's tents, and dying she gave him the name Ben-oni, and it is well known that at On in the land of Egypt, Osiris has his place, who is the king of

the underworld. But thou calledst the boy Ben-jamin, as much as to say the son of the true and favourite wife, and that is a beautiful name. Yet not always do I obey thee, but sometimes name my brother Ben-oni, and he heareth it gladly, for he knoweth that Mami, at the moment when she parted, would have it so. She is now gone into the night and loveth us from out of it, the little one and me, and her blessing is the blessing of the moon and the depths. Doth my lord not know of the two trees in the garden of the world? From the one cometh oil, with which they anoint the kings of the earth that they may live. From the other come forth figs, green and rosy and full of sweet seeds, and whoever eats of them shall die. Out of its broad leaves Adam and Eve made themselves aprons to hide their shame, since knowledge became their portion beneath the full moon of the summer equinox, when he passeth through his marriage point to decline and die. Oil and wine are sacred to the sun, and well for him whose brow drippeth with oil and his eyes are drunken with the shining of red wine! For his words will be a brightness and a laughing and a consolation to the peoples, and will shew them the ram in the thicket for a sacrifice unto the Lord instead of the firstborn son, so that they are healed of tormenting fear. But the sweet fruit of the fig is sacred to the moon, and well for him whom the little mother nourisheth out of the night with its flesh. For he will grow as though beside a stream, and his soul have roots whence the streams arise, and his word be made flesh and living as a body of earth, and with him shall be the spirit of prophecy. . . ."

How was he speaking? In a whisper. It was as it had been before his father found him, it was not quite canny.

His shoulders shook, his hands trembled on his knees, he smiled, his eyeballs rolled inwards to show the whites. Jacob saw it not, but he had listened. He bent towards the child, lifting his hands above his head protectingly yet not touching it. But then he laid his left hand on Joseph's hair, and at the touch the boy at once relaxed; at the same time with the other he sought his son's right hand that lay on his knee, and he said, with deliberate homeliness of speech:

" Hearken, Yashub, my son, to what I will ask thee, since my heart misgiveth me for the cattle and for the prospering of the flocks. The early rains were comforting, and they fell before winter came on, with no bursting of the cloud to flood the meadows and fill only the wells of the unsettled, rather a gentle drizzling doing good unto the fields. But winter was dry, and the sea would not send the air of its mildness, rather came the wind from desert and plain, and the heavens were clear, a delight to the eye but care unto the heart. Woe unto us if the latter rains delay and come not for there would be no harvest for the husbandman and the sowing of the farmer would be vain, and the grass would wither before its time so that the cattle found nought to eat and the udders of the kine would hang down empty. Let then my child say what he thinketh of wind and weather and what hope may be ours, and what is in his mind concerning the latter rains, whether they will set in betimes."

He bent lower over his son, turning his head aside to listen above him.

" Thou listest," said Joseph at once without seeing, " and thy child listeth too, both without and within, and bringeth to thy listening knowledge and the word. For

there is a dropping in mine ear from the branches and a sound of trickling over the plains, although the moon's shining is overbright and a wind goeth from Gilead. For these sounds are not yet in time but near to time, and my nose smelleth them out securely, that, before the moon of Nisan hath declined another quarter, the earth will be pregnant from the male water of the sky and will smoke and steam with delight, for I can smell it, and the pastures will be full of sheep and the meadows of the stream stand thick with corn, so that we shall exult and sing aloud. I listed and learned that in the beginning the earth was watered by the river Tawi that went out from Babel and watered it once in forty years. But then the Lord decreed that it should be watered from heaven, for four reasons, of which one was, that all eyes should look upwards. So look we up in thanks to the heavens and the throne, where are all the contrivances of the weather and all the chambers of the tempests and the whirlwinds, as I saw them in a dream when I slumbered yesterday beneath the tree of wisdom. For a cherub named Jophiel led me thither in his kindness by the hand, that I might look about me and take cognizance. And I saw the caves full of steam, whose towers were of fire, and I saw the busyness of the workers, and heard them saying each to the other: 'Orders have gone forth with respect to the firmament and the cloudy heavens. For lo, there is a drought in the western land and the plains and meadows of the upland are parched. There shall be taken measures that rain shall fall early upon the country of the Amorites, the Ammonites and Perizzites, the Midianites, Hivites and Jebusites, but in especial upon the district of Hebron upon the height of the watershed, where my very son Jacob,

whose name shall be called Israel, pastures his countless flocks,' This I dreamed with such a liveliness that it must not be mocked, and since moreover I lay under the tree, my lord may rest assured and joyful that all will be well in the matter of the rains."

" Praised be Elohim," said the old man. " But even so will we choose out cattle for the burnt offerings and hold a feast before Him and burn the entrails with incense and honey, that it may come to pass as thou sayest. For I am fearful lest the townspeople and the countryfolk may bring all to nought, in that they deal after their own fashion, to the honour of Baalat and with a feast of pairing, with cymbals and shouting, for the sake of the fruitfulness. It is good that my child is blest with visions — which come from his being the firstborn of my true and dearest wife. Also unto me was much revealed in my youth — and what I saw as I came from Beersheba, and against my will and without my knowledge fell upon the place and the entrance — that may be set against this which has been shown to thee. I love thee for what thou hast said to reassure me in respect of the moisture, but say it not abroad, that thou dreamest under the tree, say it not to the children of Leah and speak it not to the sons of the maids, for that they might be angry at thy gift."

" I swear it and put my hand beneath thy thigh," responded Joseph, " thy word is a seal unto my mouth. I know well that I am a prattler, but when reason commands I can master my tongue, so much the easier that my humble visions are not worthy of mention compared with that which was vouchsafed my lord at the place of Luz, when the messengers went up and down from the earth to the gates, and Elohim was revealed to him."

## DUET

" A H , my dear father and most dear lord , " said he , turning round with a happy smile to embrace his parent with one arm — which delighted no little the good old man . " How glorious it is , that the Lord loveth us and hath desire unto us , and the smoke of our sacrifice is a pleasure in His nostrils ! For though Abel had not time to beget children , being slain upon the fields by Cain , for the sake of their sister Noemah , yet are we of the breed of Abel the tent-dweller and from the tribe of Isaac , the younger , to whom fell the blessing . And therefore have we both reason and dreams and they are a great delight the one and the other . For it is of great worth to possess knowledge and tongues so that one knoweth how to speak and to answer and to name all things by their names . And equally it is of great worth to be an innocent before the Lord , so that one may strike unawares upon the place which is the bond between heaven and earth , and in sleep be seized of counsel and know how to interpret dreams and visions , that they give knowledge what may happen from moon to moon . Thus was it with Noah , wisest of all men , to whom the Lord gave foreknowledge of the flood that he might save his life . And thus was it with Enoch the son of Jared , who was of unblemished life and washed himself in living water . And thus with the boy Hanoeh , knowest thou of him , for I know well how it was with him and how God's love to Abel and Yitzchak was lukewarm in comparison to His love to him . For Hanoeh was wise and pious and had read in the secret tablets , and set himself apart from men and the

Lord took him hence so that he was no more seen. And made him an angel in His sight, Metatron the great scribe and prince of the world. . . ."

He stopped and went pale. His breath had grown shorter and shorter, and now he hid his face on his father's breast, who received it gladly, speaking into the silvery airs above it:

" Well know I of Hanoch, who was of the first tribe of men, son of Jared, who was son of Mahalaleel, who was son of Cainan, who was son of Enos, who was son of Seth, who was son of Adam. Such was Hanoch's birth and tribe back to the beginnings. But the son of his son's son was Noah, the second first man, and he begot Shem, whose children are black but comely, of whom Eber came in the fourth remove, so that he was the father of all the children of Eber and of all the Hebrews, and our father. . . ."

This was all well-known fact, there was nothing new in what he said. Every member of the tribe and race had the succession at his tongue's end from early childhood, and the old man was only taking occasion to repeat it and bear witness to it in conversation. Joseph understood that the talk was now to turn " fine "; that they were now to indulge in " fine language " — in other words, in conversation which no longer served the purpose of a practical exchange of ideas or of intellectual discussion, but consisted in the mere relation and utterance of matters well known to both speakers: in recollection, confirmation, and edification, a kind of spoken antiphony, such as the shepherds in the fields exchanged round their evening fires, beginning: " Knowest thou? Well I know." He sat up and chimed in:

" And lo, from Eber came Peleg, and begot Serug, whose son was Nahor, the father of Terach, Hosannah! Who begot Abram at Ur in Chaldaea and departed with Abram his son and his son's wife Sarah, like the moon, and who was unfruitful, and with Lot the son of his brother's son. And took them and led them out of Ur and died at Harran. And then befell the command of the Lord to Abram that he go on further with the souls which he had won for the Lord across the plain and across the river Euphrates on the road that runs between Shinar and Amurruland."

" Well I know," said Jacob, taking up the tale afresh. " It was the country which the Lord would show him. For Abram was the friend of God, and with his spirit he had in truth discovered the highest god among the gods. And came towards Damascus and begot Eliezer there with a maidservant. Then went he on through the land with his people who were the people of God, and with his spirit he consecrated anew the places of worship of the people of the land and the altars and circles of stone and instructed the people under the trees and taught them the coming of the time of the blessing, so that he had increase out of the neighbourhood and the Egyptian maiden came to him, Hagar, the mother of Ishmael. And came towards Shechem."

" That know I as thou knowest it," chanted Joseph, " for our forefather came upwards out of the valley and came towards the place that is known of all, and which Jacob found and builded to Yahu, the Highest, an altar table between Bethel and the refuge Ai. And went thence southwards to the Negeb, and that is here, where the mountains run down towards Edom. Then went he en-

tirely down and into the filthy land of Egypt and the country of Amenemhet the king, and there he became silver and gilden that he was very rich in treasures and flocks. And went up again towards the Negeb, and there parted from Lot."

" And knowest thou wherefore? " Jacob feigned to inquire. " For that Lot too was very heavy with sheep and cattle and huts and the land was not able to bear them both. But lo, then, how mild was the father, for there was strife between the herdsmen over the pasturage, and then it was not as it is with the robbers of the deserts who come and slay the people whose wells and pastures they covet, but he spoke to Lot, his brother's son: ' Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thine and mine! Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me, so that one go right and the other left, without anger.' Then Lot chose and journeyed east and beheld all the plain of Jordan."

" Thus was it in truth," began Joseph in his turn. " And Abram dwelled by Hebron the city of the four, and made holy the tree that giveth us shade and dreams and was a refuge to the wanderer and a shelter to the shelterless. He gave water to the thirsty and brought the strayed upon their way, and defended from robbers. And took neither reward nor pay, but lived to worship his god El Elyon, the Lord of the House, the merciful Father."

" Thou sayest rightly," Jacob intoned. " And it happened that the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, as he was sacrificing at sunset. For he took an heifer, a she-goat and a ram, all of three years' age, and a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. **And** cut into pieces all that had four

feet and separated the halves and put a bird on each side and left open the way of the covenant between the parts, and looked after the eagles which swoop down upon the pieces. Then fell there a sleep upon him that was not as other sleep, and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. For the Lord spoke to him in sleep and shewed him the far spaces of the world and the kingdom that went out out of the seed of his spirit and spread itself out, out of the carefulness and truth of his spirit, and great things of which the princes of the empires knew nothing nor the kings of Babel, Asshur, Elam, and the land of the Hittites. And passed through in the night like a burning fiery flame upon the way of the covenant between the pieces of the sacrifice."

" All that thou knowest beyond praise," Joseph lifted his voice anew, " yet know I more. For that is the inheritance of Abram, that came upon the heads, upon Isaac and upon Jacob my lord: the promise and the covenant. And it was not so with all the children of Eber and was not given unto the Ammonites, the Moabites and the Edomites, but he alone was of the seed chosen of the Lord, and in whom he chose himself the firstborn, not according to the flesh and the womb, but according to the spirit. And it was the mild and the wise that He chose."

" Yea, thou sayest it as it was," uttered Jacob. " For what happened unto Abram and Lot, that they parted, that happened again and the peoples went asunder. For in Lot's pastures those he had begotten of his own flesh remained not together, Moab and Ammon, rather the latter adhered to the desert and to the life of the desert. But in the pastures of Isaac Esau did not remain, but went forth with wives, sons and daughters and all the

souls of his house and with goods and cattle into another land, and became Edom on the mountains of Seir. And what did not become Edom, that was Israel, and is a peculiar people, unlike to the wanderers from the land of Sinai and ragged robbers from the land of Arabaia, but also unlike the peasants of the fields and the town-dwellers in the citadels, but instead shepherds and lords and free men, who drive their herds by stages and keep their wells and are mindful of the Lord."

" And the Lord is mindful of us and our peculiarity," cried Joseph, flinging back his head and stretching out his arms in his father's arm. " The heart of the child is full of jubilation in the arms of the father, it is enraptured of the known and drunken with edification exchanged. Knowest thou the sweetest dream of all, that I dream many thousand times? It is the dream of childhood and of the blessing. For to the child of God will much be vouchsafed, that which he undertaketh will prosper, he will find favour in the eyes of all and kings shall praise him. Lo, I have lust to sing unto the Lord of Hosts with a fluent tongue, ready as the writer's stilus. For they sent to me according to their hate and have laid snares about my feet, they digged a pit before my feet and thrust me alive into the grave so that the darkness became my dwelling. But I cried His name out of the darkness of the pit, and He healed me and snatched me away out of the underworld. He made me great among strangers and a strange people knelt to me upon their faces. The sons of strangers spoke flattering words unto me, for without me they would perish. . . ."

His breast heaved. Jacob looked at him wide-eyed.

" Joseph, what seest thou? " he asked in disquiet." My

child's words are full of persuasion, but they speak not to the understanding. For what meaneth he by saying that folk of a strange land will serve him upon their faces? "

" That was only making speeches," answered Joseph, " to say something great unto my lord. And the moon — the moon is bewitching to the senses."

" Keep thy heart and thy senses and be wise," said Jacob impressively. " So will it be with thee as thou hast said, that thou wilt find favour in all eyes. And I purpose to give thee that over which thy heart will rejoice and that will be fitting unto thee. For God hath poured out grace upon thy lips and I pray that He make thee holy forever, my lamb! "

The moon, shining with a light so pure as to transform matter into essence, had continued as they talked to hold her path up the sky, the constellations changed their places after the laws of their hour. The night spread a web of peace, of mystery and of the future far and wide. The old man sat a while yet with Rachel's son at the edge of the well. He called him " Damu " — little child — and " Dumuzi " — the true son; names which the people of Shinar gave to Tammuz. Also he called him Nezer, a word from the Canaanitish language, meaning shoot and blossoming twig, and caressed him. As they sought the dwelling-place, he besought him not to vaunt himself before his brothers and not to tell the sons of Leah nor those of the maids that he had sat so long with the father in familiar talk — and that too Joseph promised. But even the next day he told them not only this but prattled recklessly of his dream about the weather, and it vexed them the more when the dream was fulfilled, for the latter rains came down in grateful abundance.

# 2

## JACOB AND ESAU

### LUNAR SYNTAX

IN the " fine language " which we have heard, the evening antiphony between Jacob and his volatile favourite at the well, the old man had mentioned Eliezer, who was borne to their forefather by a slave woman during the family's sojourn at Damascus. Nothing is clearer than that Jacob's words could not have referred to the learned old man of that name, himself the manumitted son of a slave woman, and probably Jacob's own half-brother, who lived in Jacob's camp, with two sons named Damasek and Elinos, and used to instruct Joseph in much useful and much superfluous knowledge under the tree of wisdom. It is clear as daylight that the man Jacob meant was the Eliezer whose firstborn son Abram, the wanderer from Ur, or Harran, had long been obliged to regard as his heir, until first Ishmael, and then — fantastically enough, though it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women and Abram himself was so old that you might say he had lived a hundred years — Yitzchak, or Isaac, the true son, saw the light of day. But daylight is one thing and moonlight another, and it was moonlight that had presided over the bestowing of all that superfluous knowledge. Things look differently under the moon

and under the sun, and it might be the clearness of the moon which would appeal to the spirit as the truer clarity. Therefore let us agree and admit among ourselves that when Jacob spoke of Eliezer he did mean his own steward and first servant — him too, that is; both at once, and not only both but *the* Eliezer altogether; for since the time of the oldest Eliezer, Eliezer the freedman had often been in existence in the camp of the head of the tribe, and often had had sons named Damasek and Elinos.

And Jacob might be certain that his view of this matter would also be the view of Joseph — who was far enough from distinguishing clearly between his old mentor and the original Eliezer, and had the less reason to do so, in that the old man himself did not, who in referring to himself as often as not had in mind Eliezer the servant of Abraham. For instance he had more than once told Joseph the tale of how he, among the kin of the family in Mesopotamia, had wooed Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel and Laban's sister, for Isaac; told it down to the smallest detail, down to the little moons and crescents that tinkled on the necks of his ten dromedaries, and the precise value of the nose rings, arm bands, festal garments and spices which had been the dowry of the maiden Rebecca — just as though it had been his own experience. He could not say enough about Rebecca's gentleness and charm, on that evening when she had let down her pitcher upon her hand at the well by the city of Nahor, and held it for the thirsty man to drink. Particularly he treasured it in his memory that she had called him lord. He told of the good breeding and propriety with which she had sprung from her camel and veiled herself at the first sight of Isaac, who had gone

into the field to meditate upon the death of his mother. Joseph listened with a pleasure in no way marred by Eliezer's syntactical idiosyncrasies, and certainly not by the fact that the old man's ego was not quite clearly demarcated, that it opened at the back, as it were, and overflowed into spheres external to his own individuality both in space and in time; embodying in his own experience events which, remembered and related in the clear light of day, ought actually to have been put into the third person. But then, just what do we mean by actually? And is man's ego a thing imprisoned in itself and sternly shut up in its boundaries of flesh and time? Do not many of the elements which make it up belong to a world before it and outside of it? The notion that each person is himself and can be no other, is that anything more than a convention, which arbitrarily leaves out of account all the transitions which bind the individual consciousness to the general? The conception of individuality belongs after all to the same category of conceptions as that of unity and entirety, the whole and the all; and in the days of which I am writing the distinction between spirit in general and individual spirit possessed not nearly so much power over the mind as in our world of to-day which we have left behind us to tell of the other. It is highly significant that in those days there were no words for conceptions dealing with personality and individuality, other than such external ones as confession, religion.

#### WHO JACOB WAS

IT is entirely in this connection that I am led to tell the tale of the origin of Abram's riches. When he came into

Lower Egypt — it must have been under **the** twelfth dynasty — he was by no means so full of this world's goods as when he parted from Lot. His extraordinary increase came about in this wise:

From the first he had cherished the profoundest mistrust of the morals of the people; rightly or wrongly, he considered them to be a marsh and a quagmire, like one of the mouths of the river Nile. He was fearful with respect to Sarah his wife, who was with him and very beautiful to look upon. He was affrighted at the lust of the people, who would surely covet Sarah straightway and kill him in order to take her to themselves; and the tradition has come down that when they came into the country he commanded her in that sense, out of fear for his own safety, and told her to speak of herself as his sister, in order that the shameless people should not leer at her; this she might do, without actually uttering falsehood, for it was the custom, especially in the land of Egypt, to use the word " sister " in referring to the beloved. And moreover Sarai was a sister of Lot, whom Abram was used to regard as his nephew and brother; so that he might think of her as his niece and give her the name of sister in the usual extended sense — which he accordingly did, for the purpose of misleading the stranger and protecting himself. What he expected came to pass — and more. Sarai's dusky loveliness was marked by high and low, news of it reached even to the throne of the ruler of the land, and the hot-eyed oriental was taken from her " brother's " side — not by force or robbery but for a high price — purchased of him, that is, she being found worthy of admission to the choice society **of Pharaoh's house of women. Thither she was conveyed,**

and her " brother " — whom one does not understand to have been in the least affronted by the arrangement, rather in the common view was considered a lucky fellow — was not only allowed to remain in her nearness, but was loaded down with favours, presents and benefits from the court, which he calmly accepted, so that he was presently very rich in sheep, oxen, he-asses, men-servants, and maid-servants, she-asses and camels. But meanwhile, though hidden from the ears of the common people, an extraordinary scandal had taken place at court. Amenemhet (or Sensusret, it is not easy to be quite certain which conqueror of Nubia it was who was just then bestowing upon both countries the blessing of his overlordship), His Majesty then, a deity in the flower of his youth, was stricken with impotence — not once but repeatedly — when he was about to taste the novelty; it seems, moreover, that his entire court were stricken likewise — the highest dignitaries and administrators of the realm — with this same mortifying, and — when one takes into consideration the higher cosmic significance of the gift of virility — calamitous visitation. It was clear that something had gone wrong, that there was some mistake, possibly an evil spell or the opposition of higher powers. The brother of the Jewess was brought before the throne, questioned and pressed and confessed the truth. The conduct of His Sanctity was reasonable and dignified beyond all praise. " What is this," he asks, " that thou hast done unto me? Why hast thou exposed me to unpleasantness through thy double speaking? " And without a thought of depriving Abraham of any of the presents which he had so freely heaped upon him, he hands his wife over to him and tells them to go their

ways in the name of the gods, giving the party safe conduct to the borders of the kingdom. Thus the father, not only in possession of an undefiled Sarah, but also so very much richer than before in worldly goods, might flatter himself that the simple shepherd had turned a very successful trick. One likes to think that he counted from the beginning on God being able in one way or another to prevent the defilement of Sarah; that he had pocketed all the gifts in this definite conviction, and felt certain that his method of going at the work would result in dealing the lustful Egyptian a blow in the eye. For only thus is his conduct — the denial of his marriage and the sacrifice of Sarah — set in the proper light and seen for the masterly performance which it really was.

This is the tale; for whose truth tradition expressly vouches, by repeating it a second time, when the scene is not Egypt but the land of the Philistines and the capital city of Gerar, at the court of King Abimelech — whither the Chaldaean had come from Hebron with Sarai — and where everything fell out precisely as before, from Abraham's command to his wife, to the lucky outcome of the stratagem. This repetition of a narrative by way of emphasizing its truth is unusual, without being very startling. It is far more remarkable that, according to tradition — the evidence for which, of course, in written form comes from a later time, but must have always existed *as* tradition and thus goes back to the statements and utterances of the fathers themselves — the selfsame experience, told for the third time, is ascribed to Isaac; from which it follows that he had committed it to memory as his experience — or the same as his. For Isaac too (some time after the birth of his twins) on account of a dearth

of corn came into the land of the Philistines and the court at Gerar with his lovely and clever wife. He too, on the same ground as Abraham Sarai, gave out that Rebecca was his sister — not quite falsely, since she was the daughter of his cousin Bethuel — and the story goes on to say that in this case King Abimelech "looked out at a window" — that is, as a secret spy and eavesdropper — and saw Isaac "sporting" with Rebecca, his wife, and was as shocked and disillusioned as only a lover can be, when he learns that the object of his desires, whom he has supposed to be free, is in firm possession by another man. His words betray him, for Yitzchak, on being questioned, told the truth, whereupon the Philistine cried out reproachfully: "What is this that thou hast done unto us? For one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us!" The phrase "one of the people" is unmistakable. But the end of it was that the pair found themselves under the peculiar and personal protection of the god-fearing if luxurious king, and that under this protection Isaac increased in the land of the Philistines just as Abraham had once done either there or in Egypt, and grew so heavy with flocks and herds that it was finally too much even for the Philistines and they discreetly got rid of him.

Assuming that the scene of Abraham's adventure was Gerar, then it is not credible that the Abimelech of Yitzchak's adventure was the same as he who found himself prevented from defiling the purity of Sarah's married state. The characters are distinguished; Sarah's princely lover simply took her into his harem without more ado, whereas Isaac's Abimelech behaved with much more

caution and reserve, so that we could only imagine them to be the same person on the assumption that the king's more careful behaviour in the case of Rebecca was due to his having grown much older since Sarah's day, also to his being already warned by what had happened the other time. But what interests us here is the personality not of Abimelech but of Isaac, and the question of his relation to the story about the women. And even with this we are concerned only indirectly, and on account of the further question of who Jacob was: that Jacob, that is, whom we have heard talking with his little son, Joseph, Yashub or Jehosiph, in the moonlight.

Let us weigh the possibilities. Either Yitzchak did himself in Gerar undergo with slight variations the same experience that had befallen his father either there or in Egypt, and in this case we have a phenomenon which might be called imitation or succession: a conception, that is, which envisages the task of the individual person as the filling out in present time and again making flesh certain given forms, a mythical frame that was established by the fathers. Or else Rebecca's husband did not have the experience "himself," not in the narrower fleshly limits of his ego, but regarded it, as it were, as belonging to his life-history, and handed it down as such to his descendants, because he distinguished less sharply between the I and the not-I than we — with how little justification has been already shown — are in the habit of doing (or were in the habit of doing until we embarked upon this narrative). For him the life of the individual was more superficially separated from that of the tribe, birth and death represented a less radical shock to existence; in short he had the attitude of the latter Eliezer, to which

ve have already referred, when he related to Joseph in the first person stories about the original Eliezer, and displayed the phenomenon of the open identity, which accompanies that of imitation or succession and alternately with it determines the consciousness of self.

I do not conceal from myself the difficulty of writing about people who do not precisely know who they are. But also I make no question of the necessity of reckoning with these vacillating states of consciousness, and if the Isaac who relived Abraham's Egyptian adventure took himself for the Isaac whom the original wanderer would have offered up, the fact affords me no ground for the conviction that he did not deceive himself, and that the sacrifice-temptation did not in fact belong to the scheme and recur repeatedly. The Chaldaean wanderer was the father of the Isaac whom he would slay; but though it is impossible that this Isaac was the father of Joseph's father whom we have seen by the well, yet it is quite conceivable that the Isaac who either imitated Abraham's simple shepherd's game or else wove it into his own personal life confused himself, at least in part, with the Isaac who so narrowly escaped slaughter, although actually he was a much later Isaac and generations removed from the original Abraham. Indeed it is evident — so evident that a simple statement carries conviction, without need of proof — that the history of Joseph's ancestors, as transmitted by tradition, is a pious abbreviation of the original facts, that is of the succession of generations which must have filled up the centuries between the Jacob whom we have met and the original Abraham. Again, just as Abraham's house-steward and natural son, Eliezer, must often have recurred in the flesh

since the day when he wooed Rebecca for his young master, must often have wooed a Rebecca across the Euphrates, and now, in the person of Joseph's mentor, rejoiced once more in the light of day; just so since then had many an Abraham, Isaac and Jacob beheld the birth of day out of the night, without having any exaggeratedly precise ideas about time and the flesh, without making any very clear distinctions between their present and the present of aforetime, or delimiting their own individualities with reference to the individualities of earlier Abrahams, Isaacs and Jacobs.

These names were handed on from generation to generation — if the word be accurate or comprehensive enough to apply to the community in which they recurred. For it was a community whose growth was not that of a family tree, but rather of a group of trees, resting as it did moreover in good part upon the propagation of the faith and the winning of souls. The tribal headship of the original Abraham must be understood as largely spiritual; whether Joseph was actually related to him in the flesh, whether he was indeed his forefather, and in such a direct line as is assumed, is open to question. Open to question it was even for themselves; though the twilight of their own and the general consciousness permitted them to question it in a hazy and vaguely pious way, taking words for actuality and actuality more than half for a word. They could call Abraham the Chaldaean their grandfather and great-grandfather, more or less in the spirit in which he himself called Lot of Harran his " brother " and Sarah his " sister " — that too being both true and untrue at once.

But not even in a dream could the people of El Elyon

assert that their community possessed racial purity. Babylonian and Sumerian — that is, not entirely Semitic — stock had been crossed with seed from the desert of Arabia; from Gerar, Muzriland, Egypt itself other elements had come in — for instance in the person of the slave woman Hagar, who had been found not unworthy to share the bed of the head of the tribe and whose son in turn had married an Egyptian — and it has always been too well known for me to waste more words upon it here, what vexation Rebecca suffered hourly from the Hittite wives of her Esau, daughters of a stock whose progenitor was not Shem, and which had come into Syria sometime or other out of Asia Minor, and the Ural-Altai region. Many a branch dropped off by the way. We know that Abraham begot children after the death of Sarah, having taken to wife Keturah, a Canaanite woman; not too nice a choice, considering his objection to the marriage of Isaac with a Canaanite. One of Keturah's sons was Midian, whose descendants dwelt south of Edom-Seir, Esau's country, at the edge of the Arabian desert, like the children of Ishmael before Egypt. For Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac, the true son, and put the children of the concubines off with gifts and shoved them away eastwards where they quite lost touch with El Elyon, if they had really ever had it, and worshipped their own gods. But godly was the bond of continual effort wreaked from generation to generation upon the idea of God; and in all the admixture of blood it united the spiritual community, which — among the other Hebrews, the sons of Moab, Ammon and Edom — particularly assumed this name unto itself, and precisely at the time to which we have arrived, began to

associate it with another name, the name of Israel, which was destined to affect the common history.

For the name and title which Jacob had wrested for himself had not been an invention of his strange adversary. Israel, God fighteth, had always been the name of a warlike robber tribe of the desert, of highly primitive manners and customs; small groups of these people had, at the time of the changing of pastures, driven their flocks among the settlements of the cornland, had exchanged their purely nomadic existence for a more or less settled state, and by conversion and agreement had become part of Abraham's communion of faith. Back in the wilderness their god had been a fire-breathing and storm-breeding warrior named Yahu, a troublesome sort of hobgoblin, with more demonic than godlike traits, spiteful, tyrannical and incalculable. His dusky people, though proud of his prowess, went in terror of their lives, ever seeking by means of spells and blood rites to harness their hairbrained divinity and lead him into ways profitable to themselves. Yahu might without any clear provocation fall by night upon a man whom he had every reason to treat with favour, and kill him; but also he might be moved to abandon his purpose if the man's wife made haste to circumcize her son with a stone knife and touch the devil's genitals with the foreskin, at the same time incanting a mystic formula, the rendering of which into any kind of sensible English has so far encountered unsurmountable difficulties, but which had power to soothe the demon and turn away his wrath. All this by way of giving an idea of what Yahu was like. For there was reserved for this sinister deity, entirely unknown to the civilized world, an extraordinary theological career,

merely by dint of the fact that some of his followers had penetrated into the sphere of influence occupied by Abraham's thoughts about God. Thus drawn into the orbit of the wanderer's spiritual speculations, these shepherd folk not only strengthened the physical basis of the Chaldaean's religious tradition, but also contributed elements of their own devastating deity to nourish the conception of the divine essence which was struggling towards realization through the spirit of mankind; to which indeed Osiris of the East, Tammuz, as well as Adonai, the mutilated son and shepherd of Melchizedek and his Shechemites, had also given colour and substance. The very name Yahu, once a war-cry — we have just heard it chanted by certain lovely lips — in the form in which the god's dusky worshippers brought it out of the desert, as well as in abbreviations and variants which made it conform to the Canaanite dialect, was among the words used to make experiments in the inexpressible. For ages there had existed a village called Be-ti-ya, the house of Ya, that is to say Beth-el, or house of God; and there is evidence for the fact that before the days of the Law-giver, there were Amurru people who had immigrated into Shinar and brought their names with them, among them a name for God, which was Ya-we. Yes, the original Abraham had given to the tree by the shrine of " Seven Springs " the name of Ya-we el-Olam, which is to say, Ya-we is the god of all the ages. But the name which Yahu's Bedouin warriors gave themselves was to become the name of Abraham's spiritual seed, and the distinctive badge of a purer and higher Hebraism, precisely because Jacob had had it whispered to him, in that pregnant night by Jabbok ford.

## ELIPHAZ

FOR people like Simeon and Levi, Leah's stout sons, it was a matter for private mirth that just this bold and lawless-sounding title was what their father had as it were wrung from the heavenly powers. For Jacob was no fighter. He would never have been the man to do what the original Abraham did, when eastern hirelings, the mercenary troops of Elam and Shinar and Larsa and beyond the Tigris, harried the land of the Jordan on account of tribute overdue, plundered the cities and took away Lot of Sodom and his goods. For Abraham, with bold and loyal resolution, got together a few hundred of servants born in his own house, together with neighbours of near faith, people of El-Berith the most high god, set out with them by forced marches from Hebron, overtook the retiring Elamites and Gojim, and brought such confusion to their rear that he freed many of the prisoners, among them his brother Lot, and carried back in triumph much of the stolen goods. No, that would have been no place for Jacob, he would not have stood up to it, he admitted as much to himself when Joseph began to tell the oft-told tale. He " could not do it " — as little as, by his own confession, he could have done to his son what the Lord demanded of him. He would have left it to Simeon and Levi to free Lot. But if these two had instituted a massacre among the moon-worshippers and set up that hair-raising yell which they had at their command on such occasions, he would have veiled his countenance and said: " My soul may not come in your counsel! " For that soul was soft and fearful, abhorring the

use of force, trembling lest force be its portion; mindful of many occasions on which its virile courage had known defeat. But no violence was ever done by these memories to the dignity or solemnity of the soul; for always and regularly in such states of physical depression there came a ray of light, an influx of the spirit, a powerfully consoling and freshly confirmatory revelation of grace, so that it might lift its head, secure in the knowledge that it had wrestled and overcome out of its own undefeated depths.

There was the case of the encounter with Eliphaz, Esau's splendid son. Eliphaz had been borne to Esau by one of his Hittite or Canaanite women, worshippers of Baal, whom he had early brought home to Beersheba, and of whom Rebecca, Bethuel's daughter, used to say: "It is a vexation to me to live among the daughters of Heth." Jacob was no longer certain which one of them Eliphaz called his mother, probably it was Adah, daughter of Elon. At all events, this thirteen-year-old grandson of Yitzchak was an uncommonly winning youth; simple in spirit but brave, generous and high-thinking, upright in body and mind, and holding his dispossessed father, Esau, in great love and respect. In more than one way life was made hard to him, in the involved nature of the family relations and in matters of faith. For no less than three creeds laid hold on his soul: the god of his grandparents, El Elyon, the Baalim of the mother's side, and a lowering, arrow-shooting deity named Kusakh, honoured by the mountain folk in the south, the Seirim or people of Edom, with whom Esau had early had relations, and to whom he later went over altogether. The great affliction and powerless rage of the shaggy man over the event, in-

stigated by Rebecca, which had come to pass in the tent where his grandfather sat in darkness on account of his sore eyes, an event which drove Jacob out of house and home and into foreign lands, had been a frightful blow to the lad Eliphaz. The hatred he conceived for his young uncle, who had received the blessing under false pretences, had a galling intensity beyond his years and almost mortal. At home, under the eye of the watchful Rebecca, nothing could be done against the thief of the blessing. But when he learned that Jacob had escaped, Eliphaz rushed to Esau and urged him to set out after the traitor to slay him.

Esau had fled to the desert; he was too much crushed, too much weakened by bitter weeping over his lower-worldly fate, to be equal to the deed. He wept because it was in his nature, because that was his role in life. His way of looking at things, and at himself, was conditioned by inborn habits of thought, which held him in bondage, as they do all the world, and the character of which had been fixed by the cosmic images of the circling year. By his father's blessing Jacob had definitely become the man of the full and " beautiful " moon, and Esau the man of darkness, that is, the man of the sun, or of the lower world; and in the lower world one wept, although, quite possibly, one became very rich in treasure. When later he entirely cast in his lot with the people of the mountains on the south and with their god, he did it because it seemed fitting, for one thought of the south as the lower world, as one did of the wilderness into which Ishmael, the corresponding brother of Isaac, had been driven out. But long before this time, long before the receiving of the curse, Esau had, from Beersheba, established rela-

tions with the people of Seir; from which we gather that blessing and curse alike had only been a confirmation of established facts, and that Esau's character, his role upon earth, had long ago been fixed and he long ago perfectly aware that this was so. He had become a hunter, a rover of the steppes, in contrast to Jacob, who was a tent-dweller and shepherd of the moon; become so certainly according to his nature, on the basis of his strongly masculine disposition. But it would be a mistake and do small justice to the traditional and established mythology in which his character was rooted, to suppose that his calling alone had imbued him with the feeling and the consciousness of himself and his role as the sun-scorched son of the lower world. On the contrary — at least quite as much on the contrary — he had chosen the calling because of its suitability; that is, out of obedience to the programme and knowledge of the myth. Regarding in a cultural light his relation to Jacob — and that Esau, despite all his shagginess, was always ready to do — it was nothing else than the return and the reliving, the rendering into timeless presentness of the relation between Cain and Abel, in which Esau took the part of Cain; to begin with in his capacity as elder brother, which indeed was honoured by the newer world order, but also probably feeling and knowing that since the times of the matriarchy the deepest preference of the human heart is for the younger and the youngest. If we are to take as representing an actual occurrence the story of the mess of pottage (it may be a later addition designed to justify the deception, and Jacob still might easily have believed in its truth) then Esau's apparent folly is explainable on the ground of these sentiments; he may have been so ready to surrender

his rights as the firstborn because he hoped to win for himself in exchange at least the sympathies which are traditionally accorded to the younger.

In short, the shaggy Esau wept, and showed himself definitely disinclined to any enterprise of pursuit and revenge. He had no desire to kill his Abel-brother and thus to accentuate the parallel on which the parents had played from the beginning. But when Eliphaz implored or rather hotly demanded that he himself might pursue and slay the bearer of the blessing, Esau made no objection, but nodded his permission amid tears. For the nephew to kill the uncle would mean for him a pleasing break with a wretched tradition and the establishment of a new historical foundation which should serve as a pattern to later Eliphazes and relieve him, Esau, at last from the role of Cain.

So Eliphaz got together a few of his father's people, five or six, who usually accompanied him on his expeditions to the land of Edom; armed them from the household stock with long cane lances, tipped with equally long, sharp points above their gay tufts of hair, and abstracted some camels from Yitzchak's stables in the grey of the dawn. Before it broke, Jacob, riding on a camel between two mounted slaves and well provided, thanks to Rebecca, with food and presents, had the avenging troop close at his heels.

All his life long Jacob never forgot the fright he got when he understood the significance of the approaching riders. When he first caught sight of them he flattered himself that Yitzchak had had too early wind of his departure and sent to summon him back. But when he recognized Esau's son, he saw the whole state of affairs and

shook in his shoes. A life-and-death race began; the dromedaries grunting as they strode with their long necks stretched straight out, all the little moons and tassels flying. But Eliphaz and his men were riding lighter than Jacob, who saw his lead melting moment by moment; when he was overtaken by the first flying lances he gave signal of surrender, dismounted with his men and awaited his pursuer with face in the dust and hands over his head.

What happened then had touched Jacob's pride and honour more sorely than anything else in all his life; it was calculated to undermine and would have undermined forever the dignity and self-confidence of another man. He was obliged — if he wanted to live, and that he did at all costs; not, we must remember, out of common cowardice but because he was consecrated, because the promise and the blessing handed down from Abraham lay upon him — to try to soften by entreaties the heart of this lad, his nephew, so much younger than himself and so much lower in station, who in the heat of his anger already and more than once had lifted the sword above his head; to reach him through self-abasement and tears, and flatteries, through whining appeals to his magnanimity, with a thousand pleas and excuses; in a word by thoroughly demonstrating the fact that it was not worth Eliphaz's while to turn his sword against such a groveling suppliant. He did it. He kissed the lad's feet like one frenzied, he flung whole handfuls of dust in the air to fall back upon his head; his tongue ran without stint — imploring, conjuring, in a fluency urged on by fear, designed and calculated to daze the boy's astonished senses

and prevent him from the rash commission of a fatal deed.

Had he intended the deception? Had he urged it, was it his idea? Might his entrails be consumed in sacrifice, if that were even remotely the truth. It was the mother and aunt who had conceived and willed the whole, in the weakness of her excessive and undeserved love for him, and he, Jacob, had done his utmost against the plan, telling her how great was the danger that Isaac might discover all, and curse not only him but the all too ingenious Rebecca as well. Eliphaz must know how desperately he had urged upon her his position in the eyes of the noble firstborn son, even if the plan should succeed. Not blithely, not lightly and audaciously, but with fear and trembling had he entered, bearing the wine and savoury meat, with the skins on his hands and his neck, arrayed in Esau's festal garment, into the beloved father's and grandfather's tent. The sweat had run down his joints for fear, his voice had died in his throat when Isaac asked him who he was, and touched him, and smelt him — but Eliphaz's aunt had even remembered to anoint him with the scent of the flowers of the field. He a deceiver? He was much more a victim of the guile of womankind, Adam, tempted by Eve, the friend of the serpent! Let Eliphaz his life long — and might he live several hundred years and longer! — beware of the advice of woman and avoid by wisdom the snare of her deceitfulness! He, Jacob, was entangled therein, and was destroyed. He the bearer of a blessing? But how could it be said that his father had blessed him — a mistaken blessing like **that**, bestowed against **the** wish and will of

the recipient? Had it any worth or weight? Could it avail? (He was perfectly well aware that a blessing was a blessing, having its full value and efficacy, and only asked to confuse the mind of Eliphaz.) And again, had he, Jacob, taken advantage by word or deed of the error, spreading himself in the house and crowding out Esau, his rightful superior? Not in the least — quite the contrary. He willingly left the field to his brother, Rebecca herself had remorsefully urged him forth, he was going out into the unknown, never to return, into exile, into the underworld, and his part would be weeping for evermore! Let Eliphaz slay him with the edge of his sword — he, the cock pigeon with the bright pinions, the young mountain bull in all his pride, the beautiful buck antelope! But since the Lord had said to Noah that he would require the blood that was shed of man, and since to-day it was no longer as it had been in the days of Cain and Abel, but there were laws in the land, the violation of which might become highly dangerous to Eliphaz's noble young person — all that on account of his uncle if he were slain; whereas if he were set down and made nought of, sent empty forth to wander in a land where he would be a stranger and a servant, then might the heart of Eliphaz be heavy with joy and his mother blest among the daughters of Heth, for that he had held back his hand from the shedding of blood and turned away his soul from wrong-doing. . . .

Thus Jacob rattled on, pouring out pleas in the urgency of his fear until young Eliphaz was amazed and his head fairly swam. He had expected to find a defiant thief, instead here was a repentant sinner whose humility seemed fully to re-establish his father's lost dignity.

**Eliphaz** was a good-natured soul, like his father. A warm rush of magnanimity replaced the fire of anger in his soul, and he cried out that he would spare his uncle's life — whereat Jacob wept for joy, covering with kisses Eliphaz's hands and feet and the hem of his garment; slight disgust and some little embarrassment came to mingle with loftier sentiments in the breast of the youth. He felt angered at his own wavering, and harshly told his uncle that all the valuables must go back, everything that Rebecca had given him, it belonged to Esau, the injured party. Jacob tried to soften the decision, but Eliphaz simply shouted at him to be quiet, and had him plucked so thoroughly that nothing was left but his life. All the gold and silver vessels, the jars of finest oil and wine, the neck and arm bands of malachite and cornelian, the incense, the sweetmeats made of honey, all the embroidered and woven stuffs which Rebecca had packed in his saddle-bags — it all had to be disgorged. Even the two slaves who had stolen from the court, one of them now bleeding from a lance wound in the shoulder, had to turn back with the animals they led; and then Jacob with nothing but a couple of earthen water jugs at his saddle-bow, might continue his dark way eastwards — who can say in what a frame of mind?

### HIS HEAD LIFTED UP

HE had saved his life, his precious, covenanted life, for God and the future — what were gold and cornelian to set against that? For life is all; and young Eliphaz had been even more brilliantly swindled than his parent — but at what a price! Above and beyond the valuables, it

had meant the loss of the man's whole honour; for how could one be more shamed than Jacob was, having bowed his head in the dust before a stripling, whining, his face smeared with dust and tears? And then? What had happened straightway after the degradation?

Almost immediately, at most a few hours later, by starlight, he reached the town of Luz, lying on one of the terraced and vineclad slopes of that undulating countryside; a place unfamiliar to him, as indeed was all the region. A few square houses huddled together at half the height of the path-marked hill; an inward voice exhorting him to take shelter here for the night, he guided his camel up the road — the beast was still frightened and unruly from the late lamentable episode, and he felt ashamed before it. He watered the animal at the fountain outside the wall, and washed the traces of his shame from his own face — whereby he felt his heart sensibly lightened. Yet in his beggared state he avoided asking hospitality of the people of Luz, but led his camel, now his sole possession, uphill beyond the settlement and as far as the flattened summit, the sight of which made him poignantly regret that he had not reached it sooner — for the place had a stone circle — a Gilgal — which marked it as a sanctuary, and here young Eliphaz, the highway robber, durst not have touched him.

In the midst of the Gilgal a peculiar stone was set upright, coal-black and cone-shaped — obviously fallen from heaven, and possessing heavenly powers. Its form suggested the organ of generation, therefore Jacob piously saluted it with lifted eyes and hands and felt greatly strengthened thereby. Here he would spend the

night, to the rising of the day. He chose for a headrest one of the stones of the circle, and addressing it: "Come," he said, "faithful old stone, lift up for a night the head of the persecuted." He spread his headcloth upon it and lay down with his head toward the phallic emissary from the skies; blinked a little at the stars and fell asleep.

Then it was high matters came to pass; then truly, toward midnight, after some hours of profound slumber, his head was lifted up from every ignominy, even to the countenance of the Most High, wherein mingled all of the royal and of the divine which his soul had ever compassed in its imaginings; which that soul then, humbled, yet smiling privily in its abasement, erected for its own strengthening and consolation in the space of its dream. . . . Yet he dreamed himself not away from the place. For in his dream, too, he lay there with his head propped up and slept. But his eyelids were pervious to a plenitude of brilliant light. He saw through them: saw Babel, saw the navel cord of heaven and earth, the stair up to the palace of the Lord, the wide and fiery unnumbered steps, beset with astral watchers, whose mighty slope led up to the uppermost temple and dwelling-place of the Most High. They were not stone nor wood, nor any earthly substance; they seemed of molten bronze and built of the stuff that is of the stars; and their starry brilliance lost itself in measureless breadth upon the earth and mounted upwards so high and wide and blinding as to be unbearable to the open eye, so that one saw them through the lids alone. Winged creatures, half man, half beast, cherubim, cows with crowns and virgins<sup>9</sup> faces, their pinions folded, stood motionless on both sides and gazed

straight ahead of them; their striding legs, first forward and then back, left spaces that were filled in with bronze tablets inscribed with holy writings. Bull-gods with hands of pearl across the brow and earlocks that hung down as long as the fringe-shaped beards ending in rows of curls, crouched with their heads turned outwards so that they gazed at the sleeper with quiet, long-lashed eyes; with these alternated lionlike forms that sat upon their tails, their arching chests covered with fiery manes. They seemed to hiss from square wide-open jaws, the hairs stood out fiercely beneath their flat noses. But the whole width of the stair, between these animals, was alive with messengers and servants pacing up and down in measured tread, like a slow movement of a dance, as in joyous conformity to heaven's law. The lower half of their bodies was shrouded in garments covered with pointed script, their bosoms seemed too soft for those of youths, too flat for those of maidens. With arms uplifted they bore basins on their heads, or else a tablet in the crook of one arm, pointing at it with the finger of the other hand; but many played on harps and flutes, or struck on lutes and drums; behind them stood singers, who filled all space with high, metallic, sibilant voices and kept time with clapping hands. Thus the whole breadth of this stair between the worlds was one mighty wave of harmonious sound, downwards and upwards as far as the narrow flaming fiery arch that was the gateway of the palace with pillars and lofty pinnacles. The pillars were of golden bricks, from which projected scaly beasts with forefeet of leopards and behind the feet of eagles; and the jambs of the fiery gate on either side had the feet of bulls, and crowns with fourfold horns, and eyes of pre-

cious stones, and curled beards bound up in clusters on their cheeks. But in front stood the golden seat of the kingly power and the golden footstool, and behind it a man with bow and quiver, who held a long-handled fan over the mitre crown of the Power. And it was adorned with a drapery woven out of moonlight and had fringes of tiny flames. And the arms of God were full of the nerves of power, and in one hand he held the sign of life and in the other a drinking vessel. His beard was blue and held together with bronze bands, and beneath his high-arched brows his countenance was frightful in sternness and in kindness. Before him was another man with a wide band round his head, like to a vizier and a servant closest to the throne, who looked into the Face of the Power and motioned with his open hand towards Jacob sleeping on the earth. Then the Lord inclined His head and stood up on His sinewy foot and the servant hastened to stoop and take away the footstool that the Lord might stand. And God stood up before the throne and held out towards Jacob the sign of life and breathed in the air into his lungs so that his breast rose high. And the splendour of His voice accorded with the psaltery and the star-music of those that moved up and down upon the stair, and was taken up into mild and mighty harmony. But He spake: " I am! I am the Lord of Abraham and the Lord of Isaac and thy Lord. My eye looks upon thee, Jacob, with far-seeing favour, for I will make thy seed unnumbered as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt be to Me blessed before all and keep the gates of thine enemies. And behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and bring thee again rich unto this land where thou sleepest, and never forsake thee. I

am and I will!" Thus thundered in harmony the voice of the King, and Jacob awaked.

What a dream and a vision had that been, what a lifting up of the head! Jacob wept for joy, laughing the while at the thought of Eliphaz, as he walked about under the stars, within the circle of stones, and saw that one whereon his head had rested while he gazed. What place is this, he thought, upon which I am fallen by chance? He was cold from the freshness of the night, and shivered to his depths from excitement as he spoke: "Surely it is right that I so shiver! For the people of Luz know naught of this place, though indeed they have made a sanctuary here and a Gilgal, yet surely they know as little as I knew that it is a place of the presence and the gate of splendour, and a bond between heaven and earth." Later he slept again, a few hours of deep and prideful sleep, full of privy laughter, but at dawn he arose and went down to Luz, and sought the bazaar. For he had in the folds of his girdle a seal ring with a deep blue lazuli stone, which the servants of Eliphaz had missed in their search. This he sold for a price, for dry food to eat and two jars of oil — which latter he particularly needed for a purpose which he had in mind and conceived to be his duty. Before he went on eastwards and towards the river Naharina, he climbed the hill once more to the place of his dream, lifted up the stone against which he had slept, set it erect as a monument, and poured oil lavishly upon it, saying: "Beth-el, Beth-el shall be the name of this place and not Luz, for it is a house of the presence, and God, the King, hath revealed Himself here to His humble servant and strengthened his heart above all measure. **For** surely it was beyond

bounds and an exaggeration, that which He called out to me amid the music of the harps, that my seed should be countless as the dust, and my name be high in honour. But if He will be with me, as He promised, and keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and I will give Him a tenth of all that He giveth me. And if all this be fulfilled, with which He hath so boundlessly strengthened my heart, then shall this stone which I have set up for a pillar be God's house, wherein nourishment shall be brought to Him without end, and moreover smoked and salted flesh burned for His nostrils. This is my vow and my promise against the other promise, and may God the King now do as seemeth to Him in His interest."

## ESAU

THUS, then, had it been with Eliphaz, the splendid youth, who after all was but a poor stripling compared with Jacob, whom he had humbled as a sacrifice to his pride. For Jacob, thanks to resources of spiritual strength unknown to Eliphaz, had triumphed with ease over such humiliations as a boy could force upon him, and it was precisely out of the depth of the abasement that the revelation had come. And how had it been with the father — had his experience differed from that of the son? I mean in that meeting with Esau to which we have heard Jacob refer. In this case the exaltation and strengthening had come first, at Pen-iel, in that night of fear, when he had wrestled for the name that made Simeon and Levi smile. And in possession of the Name, already triumphant, he

had gone to meet his brother, armed beforehand against any humiliation which might prove unavoidable; armed as well against the indignity of his own fear of an encounter that was to display once more to the full the unlikeness between the twin brothers.

He had himself, convinced that the situation was no longer tenable and must be cleared up, sent messages to his brother; but he could not tell in what spirit Esau was approaching. He knew through spies that his brother had put himself at the head of four hundred men; which might be interpreted as an honour due to the meek and flattering messages he had sent, or equally might represent an actual danger. He had made his preparations. His nearest and dearest, Rachel and her five-year-old son, he had hidden behind the laden camels, and laid Dinah, his daughter by Leah, as dead in a coffin, where she nearly smothered; the other children he had ranged with their mothers, the concubines and their offspring in the lead. He had the herdsmen draw up the present of cattle, the two hundred he-goats and she-goats, the same number of rams and ewes, the thirty camel mares in suck, the forty cows and ten bull-calves, the twenty she-asses with their foals; all these he arranged in echelon, and had them driven in single herds with space between each two, so that Esau might ask of each in turn and learn that they were for him, a present from his servant Jacob. Thus it came to pass. And though when Esau left the mountains of Seir to meet the returned wanderer, his mood may still have been very vacillating, unclear even to himself, by the time he once more after the lapse of twenty-five years met his brother face to face, his spirits were of the highest.

However much Jacob may have set himself to effect it, he found this blitheness quite out of place; no sooner had he grasped the fact that for the moment at least he had nothing to fear, than he found it hard to conceal his disgust at Esau's brainless good-heartedness. Never did he forget the scene of his brother's approach. Rebecca's twin sons were at this time fifty-five years old: the sweet-smelling grass and the prickly plant, as they had been known in all the countryside between Hebron and Beer-sheba. But the sweet-smelling grass, the smooth man, Jacob, had never behaved very youthful, a tent-dweller, thoughtful and timid, he had shown himself even as a boy. And now he was a ripe man, with much experience, heavy with goods that had accrued unto him, preoccupied in spirit, bearing with dignity the weight of events. And on the other hand Esau, though like his brother grey-haired, seemed still to be as of yore, the same feckless insignificant child of nature, always either wailing in grief or bursting with animal spirits; nor did he look to have altered in face — for in fact most of the changes we see in our boyhood companions consist in their having grown beards and added a wrinkle or so to a physiognomy which remains as boyish as ever!

What Jacob first heard of the oncoming Esau was the sound of the pipes — the well-remembered high and hollow trilling on a bundle of reeds of different lengths, held together by crosswise bands. It was an instrument beloved of the dwellers in the mountains of Seir, and perhaps invented by them; Esau had early acquired one and taught his thick lips to draw out therefrom most pleasing music. Jacob knew of old and hated the foolish and abandoned tunefulness of the sounds, the irresponsi-

ble tra la la that was native to the underworld of the south — scorn rose in his soul as his ears caught the first notes. And Esau was dancing. His pipe at his lips, his bow at his back, a flutter of goatskin round his loins, but otherwise no clothing, for he was so hairy that he really did not need it, and the fleece hung down in reddish grizzled tangles from his shoulders; with his pointed ears, and his nose lying flat on his upper lip, he danced and sprang across the open meadow towards his brother and his brother's train; blowing, becking, laughing and weeping, until Jacob, between shame and scorn, and pity and disgust, could only think to himself something like " For Heaven's sake! "

At all events he got down from his beast, as fast as his swollen thigh permitted, and holding up his garment hastened to drag himself towards the musical goat and on the way to give all the evidence of submission and self-abasement which he had set himself to perform — they came much easier to his self-esteem after the triumph of the night before. Some seven times he flung himself down, despite his pain, with the palms of his hands above his bent head, and thus he arrived at Esau's feet, and pressed his forehead to them, while his hands reached up to his brother's fleecy knees, and his lips repeated the words which despite the blessing and the curse were to put the whole situation in a light completely favourable to Esau and thus to disarm and reconcile him: " My lord! Thy servant! " But Esau's attitude was not only one of appeasement, it was actually friendly and tender beyond all expectation — even, most likely, his own. For his feeling upon having news of his brother's return had been merely a vague and general excitement,

which even up to just before the meeting might quite as easily have turned to rage as to tenderness. He seized Jacob up from the dust, pressed him with audible sobs to his hairy bosom, and kissed him with loud smacks on lips and cheeks — the caresses were almost more than Jacob could stand. Yet he wept himself — partly because, his fears proving groundless, the tension was relaxed, partly out of his own nervous sensibility, but largely in general, over life, and time, and the destiny of human kind. "O my brother, my brother!" babbled Esau, between his kisses. "All is forgotten, all the knavishness of aforetime, all!" So painfully explicit a forgiveness was calculated to dry Jacob's tears at once rather than to make them flow more freely, and Esau passed on to speak of things of moment, leaving, however, to the last, the question which interested him most, namely the meaning of the herds that had been driven up in advance of Jacob's party. And first, with lifted brows, he enquired about the women and children on the camels behind his brother. These then dismounted and advanced to be presented: first the concubines with their four children bowed before the hairy one, then Leah with her six, and last the sweet-eyed Rachel, with Joseph, was fetched up from the rear. As each name was mentioned Esau gave a little flourish on his pipes, praised the women's bosoms and the sturdiness of the offspring. He commented loudly upon Leah's weak eyesight and gave her an Edomite herb balsam for her chronically inflamed lids, at which she kissed the tips of his toes and thanked him with rage in her heart.

Even the outward forms of the reconciliation made some difficulty: both brothers tried to speak in the Ian-

guage of their common childhood, but found it hard. Esau spoke the harsh dialect of Seir, which differed from his native tongue by the addition of Midianitic words and elements from the desert of Sinai; whereas Jacob had learned in Naharina to speak Akkadian. They helped each other out with gestures, but Esau found words for his curiosity in the matter of the fat herds, and his off-hand manner of receiving the splendid present, when Jacob indicated that by its means he hoped to find favour in his brother's eyes, showed that he was not without a knowledge of good breeding. He affected a blithe indifference to property and riches and all suchlike burdens. " By no means, O my brother! " he cried out. " It were exceeding folly! Take it and keep it, I return it thee back, I have no need of it to forget the disgraceful old tale and to forgive it. I have come to terms with my lot and am content. Dost thou imagine that we of the lower world go about all our days with our tails between our legs? That were to believe most mistakenly, praise be to God. We do not swagger, indeed, or roll our eyes, because of the blessing on our head, but in our own way we are of good cheer. To us too it is sweet to lie with a woman, we too cherish love for the children we breed. Thinkest thou the curse I owe thee, rascally brother that I love, made me a scurvy beggar and starveling in Edom? Not so! For there I am a lord, and great among the sons of Seir. I have more wine than water, abundance of honey, oil and fruits, and wheat and barley more than I can eat. My underlings bring me fowls, they send me bread and flesh meat every day, and game ready prepared for the meal, and venison that they hunt in the wild with their dogs and also that I myself kill; and

milk dishes have I to make me lie awake half the night with belching. Presents? Flocks and herds as sin-offering and eyewash, to make me forget the ancient filthy wrong done upon me by the woman and by thee? Fie upon it, fie " — here he gave a flourish on his pipes. " What need of presents betwixt thee and me? For the heart is all, and I have forgiven and forgotten the ancient baseness nor think any more how thou mockedst me and my hairiness before oirr father with skins upon thy thigh and thy wrist, thou rascal, so that I laugh even in my old age as I remember it, though then I wept bloody tears and sent after thee Eliphaz, and made thee to grow pale with fear, thou woman's man! "

And he embraced his brother afresh and smeared kisses all over his face, Jacob simply enduring without showing any response. For he was disgusted to his very core with Esau's words, finding them brainless and lewd and utterly painful, and thinking of nothing save how to get free with utmost despatch of this strangelike relative — only not without having regulated the situation and quit him once more for the birthright with tribute paid down on the spot, for of course Esau only wanted to be urged. So there was further exchange of courtesies, more self-abasements, more pressing offers — until at last when Esau let himself be persuaded to take the gift from his brother's hand and be grateful for it, the poor devil's heart was really won over and he was far more sincerely reconciled with Jacob than Jacob by any means found it in his heart to be with him.

" And now, my brother," Esau cried, " not another thought of that shabby old affair! For came we not out of the same womb, thou and I, one after the other, and

as good as at the same time? For thou heldest my ankle as thou knowest, and I the stronger dragged thee behind me into the light of day. We had fought with each other in the womb, forsooth, and outside it too — but let there be an end to all that! Let us live brotherly with one another and like twins before the Lord, and dip the hand in the same dish and depart not each from the side of the other for the rest of our lives! Up, then, and let us take our journey toward Seir and let us dwell together."

" Thanks very much," was Jacob's thought to himself. " I shall go to Edom, and be a piping he-goat like thee and live forever with thee, thou fool? But that is not the meaning of God nor of my soul. All that thou speakest is but empty and idle words in my ear, for that which happened between us will not be buried, thou thyself bringest it into every word that thou utterest, while thinking in thy feeble wits it can be forgiven and forgotten." Aloud he said:

" The words of my lord are an enchantment, and each one singly has hearkened to the inmost wishes of his servant's heart. But my lord seeth that with me are my half-grown children, likewise little ones of five like this one here named Jehosiph, a weakling on a journey. And then, alas, a dead child in the coffin, whom it were impious to harry over stock and stone; not to speak of my sucking calves and lambs. All these would die were I to hasten. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant; and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that go before me and the children are able to endure, until I come unto my lord at Seir to dwell fondly together."

It was a polite refusal, and Esau, rather gloweringly,

understood it as such. He made, indeed, another trial, suggesting to his brother that he should leave some of his people with him to lead the train and to cover its rear. But Jacob thanked him and said there was no need, if only he found grace in the sight of his lord — so that the emptiness of his words stood revealed. Esau shrugged his shaggy shoulders, turned his back on the fine and false one, and went hence into his mountains with cattle and train. Jacob, behind him, lingered a little, then at the first turning took another way and disappeared.

# 3

## THE STORY OF DINAH

### THE LITTLE MAID

SINCE he came next to Shechem, it is here in place to tell the tale of the grievous complications that ensued from his sojourn there — and to tell them, moreover, as they really came to pass, with some correction of those little adornments and improvements which crept in later into the " fine language " beginning with " Knowest thou? Well I know," and were then handed down to posterity as the history of the seed and of the world. For if I unfold the story of the evil and in the end bloody doings of that time, a story inscribed in Jacob's lined and weary old lineaments along with other events that made up the burden of his ancient memories, it is because it forms part of the man's spiritual history, the character of his soul; and because nothing is better calculated than his attitude in this episode to explain why Simeon and Levi secretly poked each other in the ribs when their father made use of the title and honour bestowed upon him by divine grace.

The hapless heroine of the adventure at Shechem was Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, who was born of Leah at the beginning of her second period of fruitfulness; at the beginning and not at the end, and thus before Is-

sachar and Zebulun, and not after them, as later tradition would have it. This tradition must be wrong; for according to it Dinah would have been still unripe and physically too young for the misfortune which befell her; she would have been still a mere child. Actually she was four years older than Joseph, which would make her nine at the time of Jacob's arrival at Shechem and thirteen at the time of the catastrophe. Two important years older, that is, than the tradition would have her, for in those two years she flowered, became a woman, and as attractive as it was given to any child of Leah to be, yes, for a brief space more attractive than might have been expected from this strong but unlovely stock. She was a true child of the Mesopotamian steppe, where no living summer follows the early-burgeoning and flowery spring; for even in May all the enchanting loveliness is burnt black as a coal by a pitiless sun. Such were Dinah's natural parts; to which events added their share to make of her before her time a weary and a wasted woman. As for her place in the list of Jacob's descendants, it is of no great importance what the scribes have set down. It was haste, or indifference, that guided their pens, when they simply entered her name at the end of the list of Leah's children instead of in its right place — they would not interrupt the tale of sons by anything at once so petty and so annoying as a girl's name — it did not matter about a girl. There was not much to choose between actual barrenness and the birth of a female; and Dinah's name in the place where it belongs forms as it were a transition between Leah's brief period of sterility and the ensuing period of fruitfulness which began in earnest and properly with the advent of Issachar. Every

schoolboy knows to-day that Jacob had twelve sons, some even know their names by heart — whereas large circles of the population are unaware that the unhappy little Dinah ever existed, and when she is mentioned display surprise. But she was dear to Jacob — as dear as a child of the unchosen one could be; he hid her from Esau in a coffin, and when her time came, his heart bled for her.

#### B E S E T

ISRAEL, then, the blessed of the Lord, with all his goods and possessions, his flocks, of which the sheep alone were five and a half thousand head, with his women and their increase, with male and female slaves, shepherds and drovers, with asses and goats and pack- and riding-camels; in good spirits at having left behind the heat of the river valley and the dangers from the wild boars and leopards hidden in its poplar and willow thickets — Jacob, the father, found himself in a moderately mountainous region, where rushing streams watered the blooming and fruitful valleys, and barley was growing wild. In one such valley he happened upon the city of Shechem, a pleasant place, shaded by the rock Garizim. It was centuries old, with a ring wall of unmortised blocks of stone, enclosing two cities, a lower one to the south-west, an upper to the north-east. The upper one was so called because it stood upon an artificial mound five double ells in height, but likewise in a figurative sense, because it consisted almost entirely of the palace of Hamor, prince of the city, together with the square massif of the temple of Baal-Berith. These two towering structures were the first things to meet the eyes of Jacob

and his train as they entered the valley and approached the eastern gate. Shechem had some fifteen hundred inhabitants, not counting the twenty men who formed the Egyptian garrison, and whose commander, an officer in the heyday of youth, came from the Delta region and was set here for the sole purpose of collecting each year certain bars of gold in ring form, from the hands of Hamor, but indirectly from the large merchants of the lower city. This gold had then to take its way down to the city of Amun, and its failure to arrive would have been attended by great personal inconvenience to the young Weser-ke-bastet, such being the name of the captain.

One can imagine the mixed feelings with which the people of Shechem regarded the approach of that straggling train, having been informed of it by the guards on the walls and by homecoming citizens. Who could tell whether it was for good or evil the wanderers came? And if the latter, the people of Shechem had already enough experience of wars and plundering expeditions on their own side to make them feel misgivings for the safety of their city despite the thick wall that went round it. These were not martial spirits, but rather peaceful, trading, comfortable souls; Hamor, the prince, was a peevish old man with painfully enlarged joints, and his son, Sichem, a pampered young gentleman, an elegant drone who lay upon rugs and ate sweetmeats. Under such conditions the reliance of the population upon the soldierly valour of the occupying garrison would have been warm and joyous, had there been any ground whatsoever for such confidence to rest upon. But this little troop of men under a falcon standard decorated with peacock feathers,

though it called itself the division " refulgent as the solar disk," did not awaken any hopes of reliance in the hour of need — and least of all their captain, the aforementioned Weser-ke-bastet, who had as good as nothing of the soldier about him. He was a bosom friend of young Sichem, and he had himself two passions in life: flowers and cats. He came from the city of Pi-beseth in Lower Egypt, and in fact was known to the Shechemites simply as Beset. The local divinity of his city was the cat-headed goddess, Bastet; and Beset's devotion to the feline species knew no bounds. Wherever he went he was surrounded by these animals — not only living ones of all colours and ages, but dead ones as well; for several mummies stood against the walls of his quarters, and he wept as he laid before them offerings of mice and milk. With this softness of disposition went his love of flowers; as a counterpose to masculine traits it might have been thought of as a pleasing characteristic, but in the absence of these it did not inspire confidence. He went about always wearing a wide collar of fresh flowers, and however humble the article of his daily use, all must have fresh garlands — in short, the whole thing was absurd. His clothing was entirely civilian: a white batiste skirt through which the loincloth was visible, swathings round his arms and waist — no one had ever seen him in a cuirass or armed with anything more warlike than a little cane. Simply on the score of a certain skill at writing he had been made an officer.

As to his men, about whom he troubled himself hardly at all, they had forever on their lips in polished sentences praises of the warlike deeds of an early king of their country, Thothmes the Third, and of the Egyptian army,

who in seven campaigns under his leadership had conquered the whole land to the Euphrates river. But for themselves, they showed their prowess chiefly in the destruction of roast goose and beer; on other occasions, as for instance an outbreak of fire or an attack by Bedouins upon the outlying villages belonging to the town, they had shown themselves arrant cowards — and particularly the born Egyptians among them, for there were also some yellow Libyans and a few Moors from Nubia. Sometimes they would show themselves in the narrow lanes of Shechem, with their wooden shields, their lances, sickles and three-cornered leather aprons, and run in crouching quickstep as though in flight, through the press of donkey and camel riders, of melon- and water-sellers and peddlers before the bazaar, and the citizens would make faces at them behind their backs. As for the rest, these warriors of Pharaoh amused themselves with games of " How many fingers? " or " Who hit you? " and songs about the hardships of the soldier's life, particularly of those who were condemned to live in this miserable Amunland, instead of flourishing on the shores of the many-barked life-giver and beneath the gaily coloured columns of No, the city of cities, the city incomparable, No Amun, the city of God. That they cared no more for the fate or the protection of Shechem than a grain of corn admits of no doubt whatever.

#### THE ADMONISHING

BUT the good citizens of Shechem would have felt even worse had they heard the conversation which the older sons of the head of the tribe were having among them-

selves as they came on: discussion of plans concerning Shechem all too nearly, which these dusty but energetic young people were concocting among themselves before bringing them to the ears of their father — who indeed, when he heard them, vetoed them decisively. Ruben, or Reuben, as the eldest was really named, was then seventeen, Simeon and Levi counted sixteen and fifteen years, Bilhah's Dan, a sly and ingenious youth, was likewise fifteen, and the swift, slim Naphtali of like age with the strong but brooding Judah, namely fourteen. These were the sons of Jacob who took part in the conspiracy; Gad and Asher, eleven and twelve, though already sturdy youths and mentally ripe, had no share at this time, nor, of course, the three youngest sons.

What were they discussing? Well, it was the same theme as gave the Shechemites food for discussion inside the wall. These were stout fellows who put their heads together outside: burnt nearly black with Naharina's sun, their hair stiff with grease, clad in shaggy belted smocks. Shepherds and sons of the steppe they were, running almost wild since infancy; ready with bow and knife, used to encounters with lions and wild bulls and also to wholesale brawling with strange herdsmen over pasture rights. Very little of Jacob's mild and pensive piety had come down to them — their concerns were strictly practical, their minds full of the youthful spirit of defiance which forever looks for insults and seeks out quarrels. They were arrogantly proud of their race, though knowing nought of the spiritual nobility upon which its true greatness rested. It was long since they had been under a roof or had settled habitation, and their attitude towards the inhabitants of the fertile

land they were now entering was that of nomads conscious of superior freedom and audacity, and occupied with visions of booty. It was Dan who first, out of the corner of his mouth, made the suggestion that they should take Shechem by guile and plunder it. Reuben, a high-minded lad but prey to rash enthusiasms, was quickly won, while Simeon and Levi, biggest brawlers of the lot, danced and shouted in their zeal to begin. The younger ones came in out of pride at being asked.

The idea was, after all, not so fantastic. It had happened before, that towns in the region had been besieged by desert marauders, Kabiri or Bedouins, and even temporarily occupied; it was not precisely an everyday occurrence, yet not a rare one. Tradition, however, the sources of which are not the cities but the Kabiri, the 'Ibrim in the narrower sense of the word, the ben Yisrael, keeps silence with the best conscience in the world, and convinced of the permissibility of such epic purifications of reality, upon the fact that a settlement with Shechem by force of arms was always contemplated by those in Jacob's camp, and was only delayed for a few years by the opposition of the head of the tribe — delayed, that is, until the tragic events in connection with Dinah.

In any case, Jacob opposed and his opposition was majestic and impregnable. His mood at the time was a particularly lofty one, the combined product of his traditional culture, the singular importance of his soul-life, and his inclination to far-reaching associations of ideas. In his solemn musings, the course of his life for the past twenty-five years appeared to him in the light of his relation to the cosmos, as a symbol of the circle: as an up

and down of ascension, descent into hell and resurrection, as an exceedingly happy fulfilment of the mystical schema of growth. Journeying from Beersheba, he had arrived at Beth-el, the place of the great vision of the ladder — that was the ascension. Thence into the valleys of the underworld, where he had had to serve twice seven years, sweating and freezing; afterwards growing very rich by out-witting a sly and silly devil called Laban — Jacob's associational habit of thought drove him to see in his Mesopotamian father-in-law a black moon-demon and evil dragon, who had betrayed him and whom he had then consummately betrayed and plundered and in particular freed from his spell his Ishtar, the sweet-eyed Rachel — breaking the bolts of the lower world and mounting with her and all his riches, his heart bursting with godly laughter, out of the lower world and journeying towards Shechem. The vale of Shechem had no need to be so full of blossom as it actually was, for Jacob's eyes to greet it as a new spring and station of renewal on the course of his life; thoughts of Abraham standing in this very place did their part towards filling him with tender and reverent feeling as he drew near. His sons, perchance, might dwell upon Abraham's warlike deeds, his bold assault upon the armies of the East, and how he had blunted the teeth of the star-gazers, but he, Jacob, was thinking of his forefather's friendship with Milchizedek, high priest of Shechem; of the blessing he had from him, the sympathy and recognition he had paid to Abraham's god. And thus the reception which Jacob gave his older sons when tentatively and in almost poetic language they hinted at their unseemly intentions, was of the most unfavourable.

" Depart from me," he cried, " and straightway! Sons of Leah and of Bilhah, shame upon your heads! Are we thieves of the desert, who come like grasshoppers over the land and like a plague from God and devour the husbandman's harvest? Are we rabble and a nameless tribe, sons of nobody, whose only choice is to beg or to steal? Was not Abraham a prince among the princes of the land and a brother of mighty powers? If ye set yourselves with dripping swords against the lords of the cities and live among wars and alarms, how then shall ye pasture our lambs on hostile ground and our goats among the hills that resound with hatred? Away, fools! Submit yourselves! Look to the flocks, and see that the three-week-olds take to their fodder that the milk of the mothers may be saved. Go gather camel-hair that we may have frieze for the garments of slaves and under-shepherds, for now is the time of shedding. Go, I say, and try the cords of the tents and the eyelets of the tent roofs that nothing be rotted and a mischance come about and pull down the house of Israel about our heads. But know ye, that I now gird myself up and go forth and enter the gate of the city and speak in peace and wisdom with the people and with Hamor their shepherd, that we may make covenant with them, lawfully and in writing, and have land of them and trade to our profit and to the harm of none."

#### THE COMPACT

So it came to pass. Jacob had set up his camp not far from the city near a group of ancient terebinth and mulberry trees, which seemed to him sacred, in a rolling

stretch of meadow and ploughland out of which the rock Garizim arose, bare above but fertile below; in the distance one saw the bald cliffs of Mount Ebal. From here he sent three men to Shechem with presents for Hamor the shepherd: a basket of pigeons, bread made of pressed fruits, a lamp shaped like a duck and some beautiful jars painted with fish and birds. And he sent word that Jacob, the mighty traveller, would treat with the heads of the city under the gate concerning sojourn and rights. In Shechem they were relieved and delighted. The hour of meeting was appointed, and when it arrived Hamor the gouty man came out of the east gate with his household train and Sicheim his son, a fidgety youth, and also Weser-ke-bastet came in a fresh garland of flowers, out of curiosity, accompanied by several cats. And Yaakow ben Yitzchak in all his dignity placed himself on the other side, attended by his oldest servant, Eliezer, and his older sons, upon whom he had enjoined perfect courtesy for the occasion; and so they met under the city gate and held speech together, there and before it, for the gate was a heavy structure, projecting both outside and inside in hall-shaped bays and the inside was the market square and place of judgment, and a press of people had come hither behind the heads of council, to look on and listen at the business, which proceeded with all due and proper forms and got to the heart of the matter only with difficulty, so that the sitting lasted six hours and the merchants in the market place drove a thriving business. After the first salutations the two groups sat down opposite each other on camp stools, mats and carpets, and refreshments were handed: spiced wine and curds with honey. For a long time the conver-

sation was confined to the health of the heads and their families; then passed to the state of communications on both sides of the "outlet," and thence to matters even more remote. But by slow degrees, reluctantly and with shoulder-shruggings, they got round to the object of the meeting, casually at first, each side seeming to dissuade the other from talking of it, and treating it with contempt on grounds of their higher humanity, precisely because it was the one and only topic of discussion and the actual reason for the meeting. For after all it is just this indulgence in the superfluous, this submission to artificial hierarchies, and the unashamed wasting of time on their account, which differentiates the civilized from the natural and makes up the sum of human values.

The impression which Jacob's personality made upon the inhabitants was of the best. They realized — if not at first sight, then after only a little conversation — whom they had before them. This was a man of God and prince of men, aristocrat by his possession of gifts of the spirit, in virtue of which likewise his person was ennobled. It was the working of that same nobility which had been from time immemorial the mark of the successor or reincarnation of Abraham in the eyes of the people; quite independently of birth, basing itself upon form and spirit, it had conferred upon this race the gift of spiritual leadership. The moving mildness and profundity of Jacob's gaze, his consummate propriety, his fastidious gestures, the quaver in his voice, his cultured and florid speech, moving in strophe and antistrophe, rhythmical thought and mythical allusion, so charmed them all, in particular the gouty Hamor, that early in the proceedings he stood up and crossed over to kiss the

sheikh, amid loud applause from the populace in the inner hall. The stranger's actual business, which as they all knew had to do with permanent and legal settlement among them, that was indeed a matter of some difficulty for the head of the city; since if it became known higher up that he, Hamor, was parcelling out the country to the Kabirites, it might get him into trouble in his old age. But reassured by an exchange of looks with the head of the garrison, who was as much taken with Jacob as was Hamor himself, he opened the negotiations with a sweeping courtesy and the too sweeping proposal that Jacob should quite simply take land and rights as a present — following it up with a thumping price: a hundred silver shekels for twelve and a half acres of cornland; and adding in expectation of much tough haggling to ensue, that money had no meaning between such a purchaser and himself. But Jacob did not bargain. He was moved in his soul, exalted by thoughts of recurrence, duplication and the past made present. He was Abraham, come from the east, buying from Ephron the ploughed land and the field of the double cave for a burying place. Had the Founder haggled over the price with the head of Hebron and with the children of Heth? The centuries were as though they were not. What had been was again. The wealthy Abraham, the wealthy Jacob, out of the east, they struck bargains in dignity, without more ado. Chaldaean slaves brought up the weighing scales and the stone weights, old Eliezer advanced with an earthen jar full of ring silver; Hamor's clerks rushed up, squatted down and began to write out the articles of peace and agreement according to justice and the law. The money was weighed out for ploughland and pasture, legal and

sacred the contract, accursed might he be who broke the bond. Jacob's people became duly accredited citizens of Shechem. They might go in and out at will through the city gates. They might go abroad through the land and trade in it. Shechem's sons might take their daughters to wife and the daughters of Shechem their sons as husbands. It was established by law — and he who opposed it should be bare of honour for his whole life long. Likewise the trees should be his on the fields Jacob had bought, and who brought it in question was an enemy to the law. In witness whereof Weser-ke-bastet pressed his seal ring with the scarab into the clay, Hamor his stone and Jacob the cylindrical seal that hung round his neck. So it was done. They exchanged kisses and flatteries. And thus it was that Jacob settled in the land of Canaan and near the city of Shechem.

#### JACOB DWELLS BEFORE SHECHEM

" KNOWEST thou? " " Well I know it." But when Israel's shepherds later gathered round their fires and exchanged " fine language " they were far enough from knowing it well. They suppressed some of the facts and rearranged others all for the sake of the story and with perfectly clear consciences. They said nothing at all of the wry faces that were made by the sons of Jacob, particularly by Simeon and Levi, even while the contract was being drawn up; and they would have it that the bargain was signed after the affair between Sichem and Dinah had already begun — and begun, in fact, quite otherwise than as they " knew " it. They would have it that a certain condition made to Sichem with refer-

ence to the daughter of Jacob had actually been part of the compact — whereas that condition had been quite another matter and had come up at quite another time than the time and the connection they pretended to "know" so well. Let me explain. The contract was the beginning. Without it the settlement at Shechem could not have taken place nor the other events have followed on. They had lived in their tents before the city, at the entrance to the valley, for almost four years before the complications ensued. They planted their wheat in the fields and their barley on the loam of the fields, they gathered the fruit of their olive trees, pastured their flocks and traded with them in the countryside; they dug a well where they had settled, fourteen ells deep and very wide, and lined it with masonry, Jacob's well. But why such a deep and wide well — when the whole valley abounded in springs and the city possessed a well before its gate, what need had the children of Israel to dig themselves one? Good, and they did not need it at first, they did not dig it at once when they had settled down, but somewhat later, when it became clear that it was a necessity of existence for them, the Ibrim, to be independent in the matter of a water supply and to have on their own ground a source that would not run dry even in the greatest drought. The compact had been made and the brotherhood sealed; and whoever misconstrued it, his entrails should be the price. But it had been made and sealed by the chiefs, even though with the applause of the populace; and in the eyes of the people of Shechem, the people of Jacob still remained strangers and wanderers — not such very agreeable or harmless ones either, rather vain and dictatorial, indeed, boasting of their su-

perior spirituality, and at the same time capable of looking after their own interest in the wool and cattle trade in a way that made one's self-esteem suffer in comparison. In other words, the brotherhood did not go very deep. There were certain shallow spots, one of these being in respect of the water supply: it had not been explicitly mentioned in the contract, and before very long the Hebrews were refused the use of the available sources. Hence the great well, the well of Jacob, the existence of which is a witness to the fact that even before the more serious troubles things stood between the seed of Israel and the people of Shechem much as they were in the habit of standing between nomad Kabirites and the settled owners of the land, and not at all as they should have stood in virtue of the contract signed before the gate of the city.

Jacob knew this, and did not know it; that is to say, he looked the other way, and directed his mild gaze upon everyday things and spiritual matters. At that time his sweet-eyed Rachel was still with him, whom he had so toilsomely wooed and so hardly won and rescued and brought to the land of his fathers; his one true and beloved wife, delight of his eyes, a balm to his heart and refreshment to his senses. Joseph, her offspring, the one true son, grew apace, being at that charming age between childhood and boyhood, and turning, indeed, into so lovely, clever, bewitching and beguiling a lad that the father's heart swelled with pride at sight of him, and the older sons had already begun to exchange glances over the follies their father committed in his doting on the sharp-tongued brat. Moreover, Jacob was often away on journeys. He got into touch with those of the faith in city

and country, visited the spots sacred to the God of Abraham in the valleys and on the heights, and in many a discussion expounded the essence of the Only and Most High. It is certain that he first of all went southwards to embrace his father, from whom he had been separated for a lifetime, and to confirm himself in a blessing by which he had so obviously profited. For Yitzchak was still living, a very old man and long since wholly blind, whereas Rebecca years before had descended into the kingdom of the shades. Her death had been the cause of Isaac removing the place of his burnt offering from the tree Yahwe el olam at Beersheba to the oracle-terebinth by Hebron, in the immediate neighbourhood of the "double cave," where he had buried his cousin's daughter and sister-bride, and where after a little while he too, Yitzchak, the rescued sacrifice, after long and eventful life would be laid to rest and be mourned by his sons Jacob and Esau. But that was later, when Jacob came down broken in spirit after Rachel's death, with her infant slayer, the newborn Ben-oni, Ben-jamin. . . .

#### THE VINTAGE

FOUR times the wheat and barley were green and golden on Shechem fields, four times the anemones in the valley blossomed and died, and eight times the people of Jacob had held sheep-shearing; for the fleece of his spotted yearlings grew again in the turning of a hand, and he had a rich yield of wool from them twice a year, in Sivan as well as in the autumn month of Tisri. Then the feast of the vintage was held in the city and on the vineclad terraces of Garizim, at the full moon of the autumn equi-

nox, when the year renewed itself. Everywhere was shouting, processions were on every hand and harvest offerings in town and valley; for they had plucked the grapes with singing, and trodden them with naked feet in the stone wine-press, and their legs were purple to the thighs and the sweet blood flowed through a trough into the vat and they kneeled down with laughter and let it run into their jars and wineskins to ferment. And when the wine was racked there began the seven-day feast, and they sacrificed a tenth of the firstlings of cattle and sheep, of corn, oil, and must, feasted and drank. They brought to Adonai, the great god, lesser gods for attendants in his house, and himself they carried in his ship in procession on their shoulders, with drums and cymbals, and bore him through all the land, to bless anew the fields and the vineyards. But in the midst of the feast, on the third day, they held music and dancing before the city and the castle and in the presence of all who cared to come thither. Women and children not excepted. Old Hamor was carried out in a chair, and the fidgety Sicheu, also in a chair with a train of women and eunuchs; officials, merchants, and smaller folk were there; and Jacob came from his tents with wives and sons and servants, and they all sat down together where the music was and the dancing should be performed. This was beneath the olive trees in a broad part of the valley made by the falling away of the sacred mount, where it stood up rocky on top and smiling below; in the gorges of the mount of cursing goats were clambering in search of dry grass. The afternoon was warm and blue, the waning light kind to all men and things; gilding the figures of the dancers who, with embroidered bands about their

heads and hips and metallic dust in their lashes, their eyes lengthened out by painting the corners, postured with rolling bellies before the musicians and turned their heads away from the tambours on which they played. The musicians squatted and struck their lutes and lyres and filled the air with the high whining of their pipes. Those behind the musicians beat time with their hands, and others sang, squeezing their throats with their hands to make a plaintive sound. There were men dancers as well, bearded and naked, with the tails of animals bound round them; they leaped like goats, and tried to catch the maidens who escaped them by sudden swerving of their lithe young forms. There was playing at ball, at which the females were very clever, folding their arms while keeping several balls in the air at a time, or while one of them perched herself on another's hip. Great was the satisfaction of town-dwellers and tent-dwellers, and if Jacob did not care for the hubbub and the drumming still he put a good face on it for the sake of the people and even courteously beat time with his hand now and then.

And now it was that Sichem, the son of the castle, saw Dinah, the daughter of the Ibrim, when she was thirteen years old, and first looked on her with longing and could never cease to desire her. She sat with her mother, Leah, on their mat near the musicians, opposite Sichem's seat, and he looked at her and could not turn away his dazzled eyes. She was not beautiful, no child of Leah's was; but the charm of youth went out from her, and she drew him with a clinging sweetness like the threads of date honey until Sichem was like the fly in the honey-pot, who draws up his sticky legs to see if he can get free if he wishes,

does not seriously wish, for the honey is so sweet, yet is frightened to death seeing that he cannot, however much he tries; so it was with Sichem, who squirmed about on his little camp stool and was covered with blushes. She had a dark little face with fringes of black hair under the head-cloth, and long, narrow eyes of sticky black and a fatal sweetness; they kept going cross-eyed under the gaze of the sore-smitten youth. Her nose had wide nostrils, with a gold ring swinging from the partition between them; the mouth was a red cavity, with wide and painfully twisted lips, and as good as no chin. Her un-girdled smock of blue and red wool covered only one shoulder, and the bare one was extremely charming, in its slenderness, loveliness itself; matters were not improved when she raised her arm to put her hand to the back of her head, exposing to Sichem's gaze the damp curls in the little arm-pit, and the delicate small breasts standing out firm under shift and smock. Very damaging too was the effect of the little dark feet with copper anklets, and rings of soft gold on all the toes save the big ones. But almost worst of all were the little golden-brown hands with painted nails, the fingers covered with rings as well; she played with them in her lap, looking wise and childlike at once, and when Sichem thought of how these hands might caress him at their nuptials, his head swam and he gasped for breath.

But it was of the nuptials, the wedding night, he thought at once, and thought of nothing else. To speak with Dinah herself and pay court to her otherwise than with his eyes was forbidden him by custom. But even on the way home, and after they had reached the castle, he dinned in his father's ears that he could not live, that he

would fade away and die without the Kabirite girl, and that the old man must go out and buy her for his couch, otherwise his life was a matter of days. What was there for the gouty Hamor to do save to be carried by two men and taken to Jacob's house of skins, to bow before him, to call him brother and with much circumlocution speak to him of the heart's desire of Sichem, his son, offering rich morning-presents in the hope that Dinah's father might consent to the match? Jacob was surprised and dismayed. He was embarrassed by conflicting feelings. From a worldly point of view he had ambitions towards establishing relations with a princely house of the land — they would be useful to him and to his seed. And he was moved too by memories of distant days, of his own wooing of Rachel from the devil Laban, and how Laban had put him off, exploited and betrayed him. Now he himself was in the role of Laban, it was his daughter on whom a youth cast eyes of desire, and he was not minded to behave as Laban had done. On the other hand he had lively doubts of the propriety of such a union. As for Dinah, he had never taken much notice of the little minx, all his affection being centred on the captivating Joseph; nor had he ever received from on high any guidance regarding her. Still, she was his only daughter, the wooing of Sichem enhanced her value in his eyes, and he bethought him that he must take care not to throw away this hitherto unprized possession. Had not Abraham made Eliezer put his hand beneath his thigh to swear that he would choose no wife for Yitzchak, the chosen son, from the daughters of Canaan, among whom he lived, but would find him one from their own seed, and among their kindred in the east? And had not Yitzchak passed

on the prohibition, saying to himself, the chosen one: "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan"? Dinah was but a girl, and a child of the unchosen to boot, and it was probably not so important as in the case of the bearer of the blessing how she should be bestowed in marriage. Yet it was also written that one should keep the vows made before the Lord.

#### THE CONDITION

JACOB sent for all his sons down to Zebulun and called them to council; they all sat before Hamor, lifting their hands and shaking their heads. The eldest among them, who set the key for the rest, were not the men to take up the idea as though they had no thought of anything better. They were at one in saying that the matter must be taken under advisement. Dinah, their sister, daughter of Leah, this priceless and lovely creature, only just ripened? And to be given to Sichem, the son of Hamor? Certainly such a matter required the maturest consideration, and they asked for time to think. They were prompted in this by their commercial instinct in general; but Simeon and Levi had other, ulterior ideas, and cherished certain vague hopes. For they had never given up their former plan, and though the refusal of the water rights had never brought it to fruition, they thought that it might be forwarded by this wooing of Sichem.

Three days' time for consideration. Hamor was borne away, rather testy. But at the end of the time it was Sichem who came riding into camp on a white ass; his father had told him to attend to the affair himself, as indeed was most fitting to the impatience of his desire.

He did not bargain nor disguise the feelings of his heart, he made no concealment of the fact that he was consumed by a fire of longing for Dinah the maid. " Ask what you like," said he, " make bold your demands in presents and morning gifts. For I am Sichem, son of the castle, I am splendid in the house of my father, and Baal is my witness that I will grant you your demands." So then they told him the condition that they had fixed among themselves which must be fulfilled before any further discussion.

We must pay close attention to the order of events, for it was not that later recorded in the " fine language." According to it, Sichem had at once and straightway committed the evil deed and called down the stratagem and the violence of the brothers upon his head. But in actual fact, he only resolved upon deeds after Jacob's people had put themselves in the wrong towards him, and he saw himself fobbed off if not cheated. They told him that first of all he must be circumcised. It was indispensable. For such as they were, and according to their beliefs, it would be a scandal and abomination to give their daughter and sister to an uncircumcised man. It was the brothers who had suggested this stipulation to the father, and Jacob, satisfied to have gained a little time by it, found nothing in principle to object to, although something wondering at his sons' sudden piety.

Sichem laughed aloud, and begged pardon, covering his mouth with his hand. " Is that all? " cried he. Was that all they required? But, my lords! When he was ready to give one eye, or his right hand to possess Dinah, what to him was the loss of anything so insignificant as his foreskin? By Sutekh, there was no difficulty here, not

the smallest! His friend Beset was circumcised, and thought nothing of it. Not one of Sichem's little sisters in his house of delights would take the least offence at the loss! It was as good as done — it should be performed by the hand of one of the priests of the temple of the Highest, a man skilled in healing. Directly he was whole he would come again. And he ran off, beckoning to his slaves to follow with the ass.

A week later he was back, scarcely healed, still inconvenienced by his sacrifice, but radiating confidence; he found the head of the family away on a journey. Jacob avoided the meeting and let his sons act for him. He found himself pushed after all into the role of the devil Laban, and preferred to play it *in absentia*. Poor Sichem told the sons that their condition was fulfilled; it had been no such trifling matter as he had thought but bothersome enough; however, now it was done, and the sweet reward earned. And what did the brothers say? Done, yes, they answered him. Yes, perhaps, they would willingly think so. But done in the wrong spirit, without understanding, superficially — and quite meaningless. It was done, perhaps. But done simply for the sake of the female Dinah, not at all in the sense of marriage with "Him." And it was highly probable that it had been done with a metal knife, not with a stone one as was indispensable—this alone made the whole thing most questionable. And moreover, Sichem the son of the castle had already a chief wife and sister, the only true wife, Rehuab the Hevite woman; Dinah, daughter of Jacob, would be only one of his concubines. It was not to be thought of.

Sichem fidgeted. How could they tell, he cried, in what

spirit and understanding he had fulfilled the unpleasant condition? And as for the business of the stone knife, that they were bound to have told him beforehand. But as for being a concubine! The king of Mitanni himself had sent his daughter, named Gulichipa, with pomp and retinue, to marry Pharaoh, not to be the queen of the country, for the goddess Teia was that, but as a second wife; and if King Shutarna himself —

Yes, said the brothers, that was very well for Shutarna and Gulichipa. But this was a matter of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, a prince of God and of the seed of Abraham; and that she could not become a concubine to Sichem of the castle would be plain to his understanding directly he consulted it.

And this Sichem was to take as their final word?

They lifted their shoulders and spread out their hands. Could they possibly appease him with a present — two or three muttuns, perhaps? . . .

Then there was an end of his patience. He had paid for his ardour with a good deal of vexation. The temple priest had not proved nearly so competent as he had pretended, and his awkwardness had resulted in much swelling, pain and inflammation for Hamor's son. And this was the result! He gave vent to a curse, the burden of which was the consignment of the sons of Jacob to the weightlessness of light and air — which they tried to ward off with quick and practised motions — and rushed away. Four days later Dinah disappeared.

## THE ABDUCTION

" KNOWEST thou of it? " Again we must give heed to the sequence of events. Sichem was a spoilt and rickety youth, not brought up to relinquish easily any sensual gratification he had set his heart on. But that is not to say that we must take literally those fairy tales of the shepherds which put him in the worst possible light. The reason why the story was graven so deeply in Jacob's careworn face was precisely that he himself, however much he desired to tell it, and to believe it, in its softened and improved form, knew very well even as he did so who it was had the first thoughts of violence and pillage, who had planned the affair from the start, and that Hamor's son had not stolen Dinah at all, in the beginning, but wooed her honourably, and only when he had been cheated felt himself justified in making his happiness the basis of further negotiations. Dinah was gone, stolen, carried off. In broad daylight, in the open field, in sight of her own people, men from the castle had stolen upon her as she played with her lambs; they had put a cloth over her mouth, flung her upon a camel and were far upon the way to the city before the men of Israel could mount to ride after. Gone she was, shut up in Sichem's house of delights, surrounded by all sorts of unknown and urban amenities; and Sichem held in haste his much-desired nuptials, against which she made no particular resistance. She was an insignificant thing, very yielding, without judgment or power of resistance. Whatever happened to her, provided it was vigorous and unequivocal, she took as natural and right: And Sichem did her no

violence, quite the contrary; and the rest of the little sisters, including the first wife, Rehumah, were most friendly.

But the brothers — particularly Simeon and Levi! Their rage seemed to know no bounds, and Jacob, bewildered and distressed, had to bear the brunt of it. Dishonoured, violated, villainously seduced, their sister, their little black pigeon, their only one, and of Abraham's seed! They broke their ornaments, rent their clothing, put on sackcloth, tore their hair and beards, howled aloud and gashed their faces and bodies with knives until they were terrible to look upon. They flung themselves on their bellies, struck the ground with their fists and swore never to eat food nor to void it before they had torn Dinah from the lustful Sodomites and made like the desert the place of her shame. Revenge, revenge! Assault, murder, bloodshed, torture — were all the words they knew. Jacob was profoundly agitated and cast down; painfully aware that he had behaved like Laban after all, and well knowing too that the brothers were now in sight of what had been their goal all the time. He had hard work to keep them even temporarily in leash without laying himself open to the reproach that he was lacking in pride and fatherly feeling. He took part to some extent in their manifestations of grief and rage, putting on a soiled garment and somewhat dishevelled his hair; but at the same time he was pointing out to them that there was not much good in tearing Dinah by force from the castle as it would settle nothing and give rise to the fresh question of what they were to do with the shamed and ravished creature. Now that she was actually in Sichem's hands, no wise person could want her

back; it would be the part of wisdom to moderate their grief and wait a little — and also such a line of conduct seemed to be suggested by the liver of a sheep he had slaughtered in the emergency. The way things stood between the city and the seed of Abraham on the basis of their covenant, Sichem would doubtless be heard from himself before long; he would make new proposals and open up possibilities of putting a better, if not an actually gratifying face on the ugly affair.

And behold, to Jacob's own astonishment they assented and agreed to wait for the messenger. Their sudden composure disquieted Jacob almost more than their former raging — what was behind it? He watched them with misgiving, but was not a party to their counsels, and heard indeed of their new decision hardly sooner than did the messenger of Sichem, who, just as Jacob had expected, appeared after a few days, bearing a letter written in Babylonian upon several potsherds. It was polite in form and in content no less friendly and ingratiating. It said:

To Jacob, son of Yitzchak, prince of God, my lord and father, whom I love and upon whose love I set the greatest store. Sichem, son of Hamor, speaks, thy son-in-law who loves thee; heir of the castle, whom the populace exalt with shoutings. I am well. Mayest thou likewise be of good health. And may thy wives and thy sons and the people of thy house, thy cattle, sheep and goats and all that is thine rejoice in the highest degree of well-being! Behold Hamor my father hath at one time made with thee, my other father, a covenant of friendship and sealed it, and there hath been between us and you a close friendship for four cycles, during which time it was my

constant thought that the gods might keep it so and not otherwise, that as we are now friendly one with another, by commandment of my god Baal and thy god El Elyon who are almost one and the same god, differing from each other only in trifles, so might it remain to all eternity and through countless years of jubilee, in respect to the cordiality of our friendship.

But when mine eyes beheld thy daughter, Dinah, child of Leah the daughter of Laban, I desired most fervently that our friendship might not suffer as to its infinite duration but also be increased in kind even a millionfold. For thy daughter is like a young palm tree by the waters and as a pomegranate blossom in the garden, and for her sake my heart quivereth with desire, so that I knew that without her my breath would be of no worth. Then as thou knowest, Hamor, prince of the city, whom the people acclaim, came out to speak with his brother and to take counsel with my brothers, thy sons, and he returned comforted. And when I myself came, to woo Dinah, thy daughter, and to beseech you for breath unto my nostrils, then you spoke and said Friend, before Dinah can be thine thou must be circumcised in thy flesh for otherwise it were an abomination before our god. And lo, I gave no offence to the heart of my father and my brothers for I was friendly and I said: I will do according to your will. For I rejoiced beyond all bounds and sought Yawoh, the writer in the book of God, to do unto me that which you had said, and I suffered pain under his hands and afterwards, so that mine eyes ran over with tears, and all this for the sake of Dinah. But when I came again, lo, it was of no avail. Then came unto me Dinah thy child, the condition being fulfilled, and I knew her

upon my bed to my highest delight and to hers no little as she hath told me with her own lips. But that there might not therefore be discord between thy god and my god, let my father straightway fix the price and the conditions of my marriage with Dinah, who is so sweet unto my heart, that a great feast may be held at Shechem in the castle and we may all celebrate the wedding with laughter and with song. For Hamor, my father, will stamp three hundred scarabs with my name and the name of Dinah, my spouse, in memory of this day and of the everlasting friendship between Shechem and Israel. Given in the castle on the twenty-fifth day of the month of the harvest home. Peace and good health to the receiver.

#### MODEL AND COPY

THIS was the letter. Jacob and his sons withdrew to study it, and when he looked at them they told him what they had agreed to do in this situation, and he wondered greatly but could not on principle dissent from their proposal. For the fulfilment of the new condition would not only be a spiritual triumph of real importance, it would also constitute repentance and compensation for the past misdeed. So when they sat again in the presence of the letter-bearers he left the word to Dinah's offended brethren, and it was Dan who played the spokesman and announced the decision. They were, he said, rich by the grace of God and set no great store by the amount of the dowry for Dinah, their sister, whom Sichem had justly compared with a palm tree and a fragrant pomegranate blossom. Hamor and Sichem might decide as seemed to them commensurate with their dignity. But Dinah had

not " come " to Sichem, as he had been pleased to express it, she had been stolen, and an entirely new situation had thus been created, which the brothers were not prepared to accept without more said. They would therefore lay down the prior condition, that just as Sichem had himself most commendably submitted to be circumcised, all the male citizens of Shechem must now do the same, greybeards, men and boys, all that had the name of a male in Shechem, on the third day reckoned from the present day, and with stone knives. When that was done, then the wedding feast might be held in good sooth at Shechem and celebrated amid laughter and shoutings.

The condition seemed rather extravagant, at the same time it would be easy of compliance, and the messengers at once expressed their opinion that Hamor, their lord, would not be behindhand in what was needful. But they were hardly gone before Jacob felt on a sudden the deepest misgiving surge up within him concerning the meaning and intent of the apparently godly stipulation — so that he quaked in his very entrails, and was fain to call back the messengers. For he did not believe that the brethren had forgotten their ancient cravings, nor ever abandoned their revenge for Dinah's seduction and dishonour, and when he considered their late sudden complaisance in the light of this new demand, and recalled the look on their savagely gashed faces when Dan spoke of the tumult of the wedding feast, then he marvelled at his own stupidity in not comprehending their dark designs the moment they had uttered them.

What had put him off was his own pleasure in repetition and recurrence. He had thought of Abraham: how at the Lord's command and in obedience to the covenant he

and his whole house with him, Ishmael and all the servants, born in the house or bought with money of any stranger, everything that bore the name of a man-child was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And he had realized that the sons' stipulation was based on this history; yes, they had certainly got their idea from it — but how did they think to carry it out? He repeated the story to himself; how that on the third day, when his wound was hot, the Lord came to Abraham to see how he fared. And stood before the house, where Eliezer did not see him. But Abram saw him and asked him in. But when the Lord saw him unbind and bind up his wound, he said: "It is not meet that I should stand here." So delicately had God demeaned Himself in the presence of Abraham's holy and sacred suffering. And now the brethren — what forbearance had they in mind to display to the ailing citizens of Shechem, on the third day, when the wound smarted? This kind of recurrence made Jacob shiver, and he shivered again at the look on their faces when the message came from the castle that the condition was readily accepted, and that the general sacrifice would be consummated on the third day of the given term, counting from yesterday. More than once he almost lifted his hands to implore them. But he was afraid of their outraged fraternal feeling, their just right to revenge; he saw that conduct which once he might have with overwhelming solemnity interdicted now received from circumstances strong elements of justification. He was even, he discovered, conscious of a little private gratitude towards them for not bringing him into their plot, for keeping him aloof and innocent, so that he need know or suspect nothing unless he liked, **but** could

simply let happen what was to happen. Had not God the Lord, at Beth-el, cried out to the sound of the harps that he, Jacob, would possess gates, even the gates of his enemies; and might that not mean that regardless of his own personal love of peace, it was written in the stars that conquests, wars and plunderings should accompany his course? Horror, unrest, and a secret pride in the craft and virility of his own seed, kept him from slumber. Nor did he sleep at all in that night of terrors, the third night after the expiry of the given term, when he lay in his tent, wrapped in his mantle, and his horror-struck ear caught from afar the noise of armed conflict.

I have come to the end of this faithful depiction of the interlude at Shechem which later was the occasion of so much extenuating fable, saga and fine writing — extenuating in favour of Israel, with reference to the sequence of events which led up to the extremity if not to the extremity itself — for that gave no ground for extenuation, and indeed the saga dwells in pride and vain-boasting upon its uttermost frightful detail. Thanks to their disgraceful stratagem the people of Jacob, though far outnumbered, being only fifty men all told, had an easy victory over the Shechemites. The wall was almost bare of watchers, when they noiselessly and easily mounted it with cords and scaling-ladders; once inside they threw off all disguise and hurled themselves upon the startled inhabitants in a furious onslaught with which the latter, in their maimed state, were little calculated to deal. For every man child in Shechem, whether old or young, suffered from fever and was busy unbinding and binding up his wound, not excepting the greater part of the garrison. Whereas the Ibrim were sound of limb, and their spirits

unitedly enflamed by the cries of " Dinah! " which they shouted ever and anon at their bloody work; they raged like lions, they were here, there, and everywhere at once, and from the first moment the souls of the citizens perceived them as an oncoming and inescapable calamity, so that they offered little or no resistance. Simeon and Levi, the instigators of the plot, were the most frightful of all; they practised a battle-cry like the roaring of a bull, making the inwards of the hearer to quake, and possessing its victim with that fear of God which makes him seek refuge from death in flight alone, and never by any chance in battle. " Woe, alas! " they all cried. " These are not men, this is Sutekh come among us! Baal the glorious is in all their members! " And as they fled they were struck down with the naked club. Literally with fire and sword the Hebrews worked their will: from city, castle and temple went up clouds of smoke, the streets and houses swam in blood. Only the physically strong were taken prisoner, the rest were strangled; and if horrors were perpetrated upon the dead we must remember in extenuation that the doers were no less involved than their victims in the mythological implications of their deeds. For they envisaged in the struggle a war of dragons, the victory of Marduk over Tiamat the dragon of Chaos, symbolically represented by the many mutilations and cuttings-off of " show " members which followed the slaying. The whole execution lasted hardly two hours; at its end Sicheu the son of the castle, shamefully disfigured, stuck head down in the waste-pipe of his own latrine; and the body of Weser-ke-bastet with its dragged garland, lay bleeding in the street, having suffered a deprivation which the eye of his ancestral re-

ligion would have viewed as more serious than death. Old Hamor had simply died of fright. Dinah, the blameless, insignificant cause of so much desolation, was restored to her family.

The pillage went on for a long time. That old wish dream of the brethren came to pass: they comforted their souls with rapine, a brilliant haul; the very considerable riches of the city came into the hands of the victors, and their return home at the end of the last watch of the night, with their prisoners in chains, with high-piled loads of golden sacrificial jugs and basins, sacks full of rings, hoops, buckles, girdles and necklaces, with fine household gear in silver, amber, faience, alabaster, cornelian and ivory, to say nothing of the crops and stores, the flax, oil, flour and wine, resembled a triumph. Jacob did not leave his tent when they came. He had occupied great part of his wakefulness that night in making a sin-offering to the imageless god, under the sacred trees near his camp: the blood of a milk lamb had flowed upon the stone and the fat been burnt with fragrant drugs and spices. But now, when his sons entered his tent all glowing, swollen with pride, bringing with them the sister they had so horribly rescued, he lay shrouded upon his face and for long would not be moved to look either at her or his bloodthirsty sons. " Away," he cried with a gesture of repulsion. " Fools and accursed ones! " They stood defiantly, pursing their lips. " Should we," asked one of them, " let him deal with our sister as with a whore? Lo, we have washen our hearts clean. Here is Leah's child. She is seven and seventy times avenged." He kept silent and would not uncover his head, then they said: " If our lord would deign to look upon the things which are out-

side. There is much more to come, for we left men to bring up the townsmen's flocks from the fields and lead them to the tents of Israel." Then he sprang up and lifted his clenched fists above their heads so that they shrank back. "Accursed be your anger," he cried out with all his strength, "that it is so violent and ye so stiff-necked in your rage. For ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, like an ass that is troubled by flies! When they gather themselves together against me, what then? I being few in number they will slay me, and my house, and the blessing of Abraham will be lost, which ye should continue into the centuries, and that which has been founded will be broken. Ye bloodthirsty ones! For ye go to avenge your hurts and to make us rich for the moment, and are too feeble in your heads to think of the future, the covenant and the promise! "

They only stood there pursing their lips. They knew nothing else but to repeat: "Shall they then deal with our sister as with an harlot? " "Yes," he screamed, beside himself, to their horror. "Rather that, than endanger our lives and the blessing. Hast thou conceived? " he went on to Dinah, where she cowered miserably on the ground. "How can I know? " she wailed. "The child shall not live," he said with decision, and she wailed afresh. More quietly he spoke: "Israel will set forth with all that is his, and remove with all his flocks and possessions which ye have taken with the sword for Dinah's sake. For it is not meet for him to remain in the place of this abomination. I have had a vision in the night and the Lord spake to me in a dream: 'Take up thy route towards Beth-el! ' Away! And put our goods together."

The vision and the command had actually been vouchsafed to him, when after the sacrifice by night, while his sons were pillaging the city, he had fallen into a doze in his tent. It was a reasonable vision and after his own heart, for Luz, the place of sanctuary, which he knew so well, had under these circumstances great attraction; if he went thither it was as though he had taken flight to the feet of God the King. Fugitives from Shechem, escaped from that bloody marriage feast, were indeed on their way towards the neighbouring cities to tell the tale. And likewise just at this time certain letters, written by the various heads and shepherds of the cities of Canaan and Amor, had reached the city of Amun, in order to be laid before Horus in the palace, the sacred majesty of Amenhotep the Third; most unfortunately, indeed, because this deity was at the time suffering from an attack of nerves due to an abscess in his tooth, such as often afflicted him; also he was preoccupied with the erection of a marvellous forecourt for the Amun temple of the southern quarter of the city, and the building of his own tomb on the western side, so that he simply had no ear at all for any disquieting news from the wretched Ammon country, to the effect that "the cities of the king are lost" and "the land of the Pharaohs is fallen to the Kabirites, who have plundered all the countries of the king," for so it was written in the letters of the shepherds and chiefs. These documents accordingly — which had moreover sounded rather comic at court on account of their faulty mastery of the Babylonian tongue — found their way into the archives without producing in the mind of Pharaoh any resolve to take steps against the robbers. So that here again Jacob's people might boast of their good fortune.

Likewise the nearby cities had been put in awe by the extraordinary savagery of the attack, and made no head against the perpetrators; thus Jacob, the father, having undertaken a general purification, having collected the numerous idols which in these four years had found their way into his camp, and buried them with his own hands under the sacred trees, might set himself in leisurely motion with all his goods and chattels, and leaving in his rear that place of horror, over which the vultures were circling, go jogging off toward Beth-el on made roads.

Dinah and her mother Leah were mounted on the same strong and intelligent camel. They rode in baskets slung under a canopy on both sides of the animal's hump; Dinah let down the shade and rode for the most part in darkness. She was with child. When her time came, the infant she brought into the world was exposed, by the stern command of her menfolk. She herself pined and withered long before her time. When she was fifteen her poor little face looked like an old woman's.

# 4

## THE FLIGHT

### THE PRIMORDIAL BLEATING

THESE are grievous tales. And Jacob the father was weighty with them, stately and bowed down as by his manifold possessions: by the latest and only just happened as well as by the old and ancient — by stories and by history too.

History is that which has happened and that which goes on happening in time. But also it is the stratified record upon which we set our feet, the ground beneath us; and the deeper the roots of our being go down into the layers that lie below and beyond the fleshly confines of our ego, yet at the same time feed and condition it — so that in our moments of less precision we may speak of them in the first person and as though they were part of our flesh-and-blood experience — the heavier is our life with thought, the weightier is the soul of our flesh.

When Jacob came again to Hebron, called also the "town of four"; when he returned to the tree of wisdom, planted and blessed by Abram — whether *the* Abiram, or another, unknown one — and entered once more his father's house, after having meantime suffered that sorest blow, of which I shall speak in due course; Isaac declined and died, being a very old man and blind, a

grey-haired old man bearing that ancestral name, Yitzchak, son of Abram; and in the dread hour before his death he spoke to Jacob and to the others who were by, in high and awe-inspiring tones, very darkly and oracularly, of " himself " as the rescued sacrifice, and of the blood of the ram, which was to be thought of as his very own blood, the true son's, poured out in sin-offering for all. Yes, just before the end he essayed with remarkable success to bleat like a sheep and his bloodless face took on an astounding likeness to the countenance of that animal — or rather, they were conscious all at once that the likeness had always been there, to an extent that they were all horrified and made haste to fall upon their faces in order not to see how the son became a ram; while he began again to speak, calling the ram father and god. " A god shall they slay," he babbled, in ancient and poetic language, and went on, with his head bent back, his eyes wide open and fixed, and his fingers spread out, to say that they should all hold a sacrificial meal with the flesh and the blood of the slain ram as he and Abram had once done, the father and son, for whom the god-and-father beast had intervened. " Lo, it was slain," they heard him rattle in his throat; he went babbling and rambling on, they not daring to look at him, " the father and the beast instead of the man and the son, and we ate. But verily I say to you there shall be slain the man and the son instead of the beast and in the place of God and ye shall eat." Then he bleated again, in a most lifelike manner, and then he died.

They remained some time upon their faces after he stopped speaking, uncertain whether he were really dead and would not speak and bleat again. It was with them

all as though their entrails turned over within them and the undermost came uppermost so that they could have brought it all up; for the words and bearing of the dying man had about them something aboriginally indecent; something grisly, yet primevally, pre-religiously sacred, which lay beneath all the civilized layers in the most unregarded, forgotten and ultra-personal depths of their souls and had been turned uppermost by the death of Yitzchak, with nauseating effect: an obscene apparition out of the far-away and deep-down past of the animal that was God, namely the ram, the god-ancestor of the race, from which it came down, and whose divine and tribal blood they had once in that unspeakable aforetime poured out and consumed, in order to strengthen the bond between the tribe and the beast-god. That was before He came, the God from far away, Elohim, the God from beyond and above, God of the wilderness and God of the moon peak, who had chosen them, severed the connection between them and their primitive nature, married them with the ring of circumcision and established a new beginning of God in time. Hence it was they were sick at sight of Yitzchak's ramlike face and his bleating — Jacob himself had felt sick. But also he had felt mightily exalted when he presided over the burying. Barefoot and dust-strewn, with shorn head, he had attended to the rites, the wailings and the sacrificial vessels for offerings to the dead: he and Esau the pipe-playing goat, who had come from his goat-mountain to help bury his father in the double tomb, and with tear-wet beard to add his childishly unrestrained howls to the " Hoi-adon " of the male and female singers. Together they sewed up Yitzchak in a ram-skin, with his knees under his chin, and thus they

gave him to time to devour, to time which devours his children that they may not set themselves over him, but must choke them up again to live in the same old stories as the same children. (For the giant cannot tell by touching it that the artful mother has only given him a thing like a stone, wrapped up in a skin, and not the child.) " Woe, alas, for the lord! " That had often been cried over Yitzchak the rescued sacrifice and many a time and oft had he lived again in his tales, telling them in the first person, as was right, partly because his ego faded out and back into the archetype, partly because what had been had now become the present in his flesh and might have repeated itself conformably to the foundation. In this sense had Jacob and the rest heard and understood it when dying he spoke again of the averted sacrifice; heard as it were with a double ear yet understood in a single sense — just as we, in fact, hear with two ears and see with two eyes, yet grasp the thing heard and seen as one. Moreover Yitzchak was a very old man talking about a little boy who had been near being killed; whether the child had once been himself or an earlier one was scarcely pertinent, since in any case the remote little almost-sacrifice could not have been stranger or more utterly outside of himself than the boy which Yitzchak had once been.

### THE RED ONE

DEEP-SUNK in musing, yet mightily uplifted, was the soul of Jacob in these days when he with his brother Esau buried their father; for all past events stood up in him and became present to his spirit, as they had once become present again in the flesh according to the arche-

type; and to him it was as though the ground beneath his feet were transparent, consisting of crystal layers going down and down without any bottom and lighted up by lamps which burned between the layers. But he walked above them among the experiences of his proper flesh, Jacob, present in time, and gazed at Esau, who likewise walked again with him according to his archetype and was Edom, the Red.

Such a characterization of Esau's personality is doubtless unobjectionable; yet doubtless in a certain sense and unobjectionable only in a qualified one. For the clearness of it is like that of the moonlight, an illusory and deceptive clearness, in which we of to-day can scarcely move with the bearing of pensive simplicity which characterized the persons of our story. I have related how Esau, the red-skinned, had even in his youth and while still at Beersheba, established relations with the land of Edom, the people of the goat mountains and the wooded ranges of Seir; how he cultivated these relations and later entirely identified himself with them; went over root and branch, with his Canaanitish wives, Aholibamah and Bashemath, and their sons and daughters, to them and to their god Kusakh. The goat people, then, were already in existence, and had been for no one knows how long, before Joseph's uncle Esau went over to them, and the tradition, later embodied in the chronicle and fabricated in the course of generations of "fine language," which refers to him as the "father of the Edomites," and original goat of the goat people, is really nothing but moonshine. For Esau was not the father of Edom, not this Esau, not personally, however much he might be so considered in the story and even in a manner of speaking by himself.

The Edomites were in existence long before Joseph's uncle — I refer thus to Esau because it is much safer to fix his identity in terms of the descending rather than of the ascending generations. They were immeasurably older than he; for that Bela, son of Beor, who is mentioned in the tables as the first king in Edom, is no more certainly the first king than Menes was certainly the first king of Egypt — and Menes' kingship is notoriously a case of a time coulisse. So that our present Esau was certainly not the father of the Edomites in any exact sense; and when it was expressly sung of him " He is Edom " but not, for instance, " he was Edom," the present tense is not a matter of chance, and the phrase is better understood as referring to a timeless and extra-personal generalization. Historically and also individually the original goat of the goat tribe was a remotely older Esau, in whose footsteps the present Esau trod. And it is well to add that the footsteps were right well-marked ones and often trodden in; probably — to put a point on it — they were not even the footsteps of him of whom the story might with justice assert that " He was Edom."

And here indeed our tale issues into mysteries, and our signposts are lost in the endlessness of the past, where every origin betrays itself as but an apparent halt and inconclusive goal, mysterious by its very nature — since that has to do not with distance but with the sphere. For distance in a straight line has no mystery. The mystery is in the sphere. But the sphere consists in correspondence and redintegration; it is a doubled half that becomes one, that is made by joining an upper and a lower half, a heavenly and an earthly hemisphere, which complement

each other in a whole, in such a manner that what is above is also below; and what happens in the earthly repeats itself in the heavenly sphere and contrariwise. This complementary interchange of two halves which together form a whole and a closed sphere is equivalent to actual change — that is, to revolution. The sphere rolls — that lies in the nature of spheres. Bottom is soon top and top bottom, in so far as one can speak of top and bottom in such a connection. Not only do the heavenly and the earthly recognize themselves in each other, but, thanks to the revolution of the sphere, the heavenly can turn into the earthly, the earthly into the heavenly, from which it is clear that gods can Become men and on the other hand men can become gods again.

All this is as true as it is true that Osiris the dismembered martyr was once a man, namely a king over Egypt, but became a god, though with a constant inclination to become a man again; indeed the phenomenon is plainly seen in the form of existence of all the Egyptian kings, all of them being god as man. But the question as to what Osiris was in the beginning, whether god or man, remains unanswered, since there is no beginning in the rolling sphere. The same is true of his brother, Set, who, as I said some while back, was his murderer and dismembered him. This evil-doer was said to have an ass's head and to be of warlike mien, a huntsman to boot, who taught the kings of Egypt how to shoot with the bow, at Karnac, near the Amun city. By others he was called Typhon, and he had early been assimilated to the burning desert wind Chamsin, the burning sun, fire itself, and became Baal Hammon or the god of fire and was called among the Phoenicians Moloch or Melech, the bull king of Baal,

who with his fire consumes the children and the firstborn, and to whom Abram had been tempted to offer Isaac. What proof is there that Typhon-Set, the red huntsman, was first and last at home in the skies and none other than Nergal, the seven-named foe, Mars, the red, the fire planet? With equal right might it be asserted that he was in the beginning and at the end a man, Set, brother of Osiris the king, whom he thrust down from his throne and murdered, and that he only afterwards became a god and a planet, always prepared indeed to become a man again, according to the revolving of the sphere. He is both, and neither first: planet-god and man, by turns, in one. And therefore no time-form is meet for him but the timeless present, which is resolved in the revolution of the sphere — and rightly is it always said of him, " He is the Red."

But if Set the archer corresponds in the alternation of earth and heaven with Nergal-Mars, the fiery planet, it is clear that the same relation exists between the murdered Osiris and the royal planet Marduk, to whom those black eyes looked up from the edge of the well and whose god is called Jupiter-Zeus. Of him is told that he cut off with a sickle the manhood of his father, Chronos, that giant deity who devoured his children and would have done the same to Zeus but for the artfulness of his mother. Zeus deposed his father and made himself king in his place. This is a piece of information useful to those who in the search for truth are not minded to stop halfway. For it clearly means that Set, or Typhon, was not the first king-murderer, that Osiris himself had a murder to thank for his throne, and that what he had done as Typhon was done to him as king. This, in other words, is part of

the mystery of the sphere; that thanks to the revolution the unity and identity of the person may go hand in hand with a change of role. He is Typhon, so long as he is at the stage of plotting murder; after the deed he is king, in the full majesty of success, and the role and character of Typhon fall to another. It has been thought by many that it was the red Typhon and not Zeus, who cut off Chronos' manhood and dethroned him. But argument is idle, for what we are dealing with is only the same thing in revolution: Zeus is Typhon before he conquers. But the father-son relation revolves too, it is not always the son slaying the father, for at any moment the role of sacrifice may fall to the son, who then is slain by the father; in other words, Typhon-Zeus by Chronos. The original Abram probably knew all this when he set out to sacrifice his only begotten son to Moloch the red. Obviously he took the melancholy view that he must base himself on the story and carry out the tradition. God, however, prevented him.

There was a time when Esau, Joseph's uncle, was constantly with his own uncle Ishmael, Isaac's cast-off half-brother; visited him with surprising frequency in his wilderness underworld and laid plots with him, the shocking nature of which we shall learn hereafter. The companionship was, of course, not due to chance, and if one speak of the red one one must also speak of Ishmael as well. His mother was named Hagar, the wanderer — a name calculated to get her sent into the wilderness at once that it might be fulfilled. But the immediate occasion of her expulsion was Ishmael, whose underworldly characteristics had always been much too prominent to make it likely that he could permanently retain the favour of the gods

of the upper earth. It was written of him that he was a " mocker." Not in the sense of being loose-mouthed — that alone would not have disqualified him for the upper spheres. No, in his case " mocking " is to be interpreted as " sporting "; Abram having happened to see " through the window " Ishmael disporting himself in an underworldly manner with Isaac his younger half-brother — which was by no means without its dangers for Yitzchak, the trueborn son, Ishmael having a beauty like to the sunset on the desert plain. Therefore the future father of many sons was alarmed and found the time was come for taking a decisive step. The relations between Sarah and Hagar had always been bad; Hagar had flaunted her maternity in the face of the barren woman, and once already had been obliged to flee before the jealous wrath of Sarah, who was constantly scheming to bring about the expulsion of the Egyptian and her offspring, not least because of the unsettled and contentious matter of the inheritance. Between the elder son of the concubine and the younger son of the true wife, the question arose whether Ishmael ought not to inherit jointly with Yitzchak or even before him — a state of affairs intolerable to Sarah's jealous mother-love, and unpleasant likewise to Abraham. What he had seen brought down the scale; he presented the supercilious Hagar with her son, some bread and a bottle of water, and sent her away never to return. What else could he have done? Should Yitzchak, the saved sin-offering, fall victim after all to the fiery Typhon?

Let me make the matter plain. It sounds most injurious to Ishmael — but was only fair. For the injuriousness lay in himself; that he walked in ways that were not

quite everyday, that he was himself not an everyday person, is undeniable. His very name sounds symbolic to us; significant too is the fact that he became a very fine archer in the wilderness — it made an impression upon the wise men who have compared him with a wild ass, the beast Typhon-Set, the murderer, the wicked brother of Osiris. Yes, he is the bad man, he is the Red, and Abraham did well to drive him out, and to protect his favourite, who had received the blessing, from the snares of the fiery and the unrighteous. When Isaac begot sons of his wife's body, the red man came again, to relive his history beside Jacob, the smooth man; the sweet-smelling grass and the prickly plant, Esau the red-skinned, whom teachers and seers rail at more violently than his commonplace earthly person really merits. They call him serpent and Satan, and swine as well, the wild pig, in allusion to the boar which tore in pieces the shepherd and lord in the glades of Lebanon. Yes, in their instructed anger they call him a strange god, so that nobody can be deceived by his commonplace person as to what he actually is in the revolution of the sphere.

It revolves, and often they are father and son, the unequal, the red man and the bearer of the blessing, and the son unman the father or the father slays the son. But often again — and nobody knows what they were at first — they are brothers, like Set and Osiris, Cain and Abel, Shem and Ham. And it may be that there are threes forming both pairs in the flesh: the father-son pair on one hand, the brother pair on the other. For Ishmael, the wild ass, stands between Abram and Isaac. To one he is the son with the sickle, to the other the red brother. Did Ishmael then desire to unman Abram? Certainly he did.

For he was in act to beguile Isaac into underworldly love, and if Isaac had not begotten upon his wife's body, Jacob had never been born nor his twelve sons, and what then would have become of the promise of unnumbered seed — and of Abram's name, which signifies "father of many"? But now they moved again in the presentness of their own flesh, as Jacob and Esau; and even Esau, simpleton as he was, understood his own position; how much the more then Jacob, the instructed and pondering man?

## OF ISAAC'S BLINDNESS

THE DIM and blurring gaze of Jacob's wise brown eyes, with their somewhat weary expression, rested upon the huntsman his twin as the latter helped him to bury their father, and all the events of the past rose up again in him and became the brooding present: their childhood, and how the long-awaited decision had at last been made, with the curse and the blessing and all that these involved. He mused dry-eyed, only now and again his breast heaved with the heaviness of his thoughts, and he gave an inward gasp. But Esau blubbered and howled throughout — though all in all he had little for which to be grateful to the old man they were sewing up; for nothing indeed, save the curse which was all that was left for him after the giving away of the blessing — to the father's sore grief, as Esau remained convinced; for it was a necessity to him, this conviction, and therefore he craved to hear it again and again, even out of his own mouth. Ten times while they worked, snuffling and wiping his nose he said amidst wailings, "Thou, Yekew, wast beloved of the woman, but my father loved me, and ate with satisfac-

tion of my venison. ' Hairy-skin,<sup>9</sup> said he, ' my firstborn, it is savoury to me, that which thou hast killed and prepared for my eating by the blazing fire. Yea, and I will eat of it and thank thee for thy skill, and thou shalt remain my firstborn all thy days, and I will remember thee.<sup>9</sup> Thus and not otherwise spake he an hundred times and a thousand. But the woman loved thee and spake to thee: \* Little Yekew, my chosen one!<sup>9</sup> And the gods know that in the mother<sup>9</sup>s love one lies softer than in the father<sup>9</sup>s. So have I found it."

Jacob was silent. And Esau went on between his sobs, and saying that which his soul had need to hear: " And ah, how wrathful was the old man when I came after thee and brought what I had prepared that he might be strengthened for the blessing and he understood that it was not Esau who had come before! He was wroth beyond all measure and cried out again and again: ' Who then was the huntsman, who was he? For now he has the blessing for I had strengthened myself to give it. Esau, my Esau, what remaineth us to do? ' "

Jacob was silent.

" Be not so silent, smooth man!<sup>99</sup> cried Esau. " Thou sittest in thy self-seeking silence and givest it out still silent for mild forbearance, until it maketh my gall to rise. Have I not right, that the old man loved me and was angry beyond all measure? "

" Thou sayest it,<sup>99</sup> answered Jacob, and Esau had to be content. But that he said it did not make it more true than it was, did not make it less involved; it still remained half-truth and equivocal, and that Jacob first kept silent and then answered in monosyllables was not due to dissembling or spite but to his feeling of helplessness

before the complicated nature of the whole affair, which could not be got at in Esau's way, with wailings and exclaimings, natural as they were and fitting to Esau's character — the self-deceiving and extenuating emotions of the survivor, who tries to put in the best light the relations that existed between him and the deceased. It might be true that Isaac had been angry when Esau appeared, after Jacob had been there. For the old man might have feared that some stranger had been with him in the darkness, some villain who was no relation at all and made off with the blessing — which would certainly have been regarded as a catastrophe. But whether he would have been so enraged, and so sincerely enraged, if he had known that it was Jacob who preceded Esau, was a question not so easily answered as Esau's heart was fain to answer it. It was at bottom the same question as the other one, whether the love of the parents had actually been divided between the sons on the simple lines laid down by Esau: with "red-skinned" on the one side and "little Yekew" on the other. Jacob found some ground for doubt on the subject, but felt it unfitting to bring the same to the notice of his weeping brother.

Often, when the younger lad nestled at his mother's side, she had told him how hard it had been to carry the brothers in the months before they were born; how she had dragged herself about, misshapen and clumsy on her overburdened feet, while in her womb the two would not have peace but strove together over precedence. She said that he, Jacob, was actually the firstborn, in the eyes of Isaac's God, but that Esau had claimed the right with such violence that Jacob had courteously retired before him — very likely in the secret conviction that not

much attention is paid between twins to the small difference in age, that it was not actually decisive, and that only outside and in the course of time would the true firstborn be made manifest, the smoke of whose sacrifice would rise to the nostrils of the Most High. Rebecca's account seemed probable. Yes, Jacob certainly might have behaved like that, he himself seemed to recall doing it. But what the mother's tale betrayed was precisely this: that Esau's defiant little bid for priority had never been taken seriously by the parents, and the expectation of the blessing had for long hung in the balance between the brothers, even up to their early manhood and the fatal day; so that Esau might complain of a decision made against him, but not of an arbitrary injustice. For a long time, especially in the eyes of the father, his actual priority had weighed heavily enough to overcome any disinclination to Esau's character — and by character I mean his physical as well as his mental and moral parts — but the time came when it did so no more. Red-haired he had been from the beginning, all over his body, like the fell of a bezoar, and equipped with a full set of teeth. These were uncanny manifestations, but Isaac set himself to welcome and interpret them in the most favourable sense. He wanted to stick to the elder-born and was himself the author and for long years the champion of the idea to which Esau clung, that Esau was his son and Jacob the mother's. He spoke to the fair-skinned and toothless infant and admonished his own soul, for about the small person was a sort of mild radiance, he had a wise and friendly little smile — whereas the other wrinkled up his face and squalled intolerably; but the smooth one was obviously delicate, there was not much hope of

him, while the hairy one seemed made of heroic stuff and would certainly go far. Such-like phrases the father used every day, quoting old saws mechanically, though his voice sometimes trembled with inward irritation; for Esau wounded Rebecca's breast with his untimely little teeth, so that they became enflamed and young Jacob had to be fed on diluted goats' milk. "He will be a hero," was what Isaac said to that, "and he is my son and my firstborn. But the smooth one is thine, daughter of Bethuel, heart of my heart!" For he called her so in this connection, and said that the gentle child was her son and the rough one his. Which then did he prefer? Esau. So it was stated later in the shepherds' songs and was known at the time in all the region roundabout. Yitzchak loves Esau, Rebecca Jacob, such was the view fostered by Yitzchak and supported by his own words — a little myth within a much larger and more significant one, but contradicting the larger one to such extent that it finally brought about Yitzchak's blindness.

We are to understand this statement in the light of the fact that the fusion of soul and body is far more profound, the soul something much more physical and the body much more malleable by the soul, than has at times been thought. Isaac was blind, or as good as blind, when he died, there is no denying it. But when his twins were small his eyesight was not nearly so poor, and if by the time they were young men it had grown very much worse, that was due to the fact that he had neglected it for years; had humoured it by disuse, and excused it on the ground of his tendency to conjunctivitis — an ailment very prevalent in his circle, Leah and several of her sons suffering from it all their lives. But the real ground was

distaste. Is it possible for a man to become blind, or as nearly blind as Yitzchak was in his old age, because he does not like to see, because seeing is a torture to him, because he feels better in a darkness where certain things can happen *which must happen*? I do not assert that such a cause would have such a result; but only that the causes were present.

Esau was precocious, like an animal. When still a mere boy he married several times, daughters of Canaan, Hittite women, Hivites, as we know: first Judith and Adah, then Aholibamah and Bashemath. He lodged his wives in his father's tents, was fruitful with them and allowed them and their brood to practise their ancestral nature- and idol-worship under the eye of his parents, the more unconcernedly that he himself lacked all feeling for his father's lofty inheritance, had struck up a hunting friendship with the people of Seir in the south and openly paid homage to the tempestuous Kusakh. And as the song later had it and it still stands in the chronicle, this was a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca; to both of them, but of course far more to Yitzchak than to his sister-bride, although Rebecca gave vent to her irritation and Isaac was silent. He was silent, and when he spoke his words were: "Mine is the red one. The firstborn is he, and I hold him dear." But Isaac, the bearer of the blessing and custodian of the God-idea which Abram had won, whom his brothers in the faith regarded as the son and reincarnation of the Chaldaean, Isaac suffered sore by reason of what he saw or must close his eyes to in order not to see it, and suffered from his own weakness which prevented him from making an end of the difficulty by sending Esau into the wilderness, as had actu-

ally been done with Ishmael, his beautiful wild uncle. The little inner myth prevented him, Esau's actual priority of birth, which still bore heavily on the vexed question as to which of the twins was the chosen one; thus he complained of his eyes, how they ran, and of the burning of the lids, and that he saw dimly, like the dying moon, that the light hurt him — and he sought the darkness. Shall we say that he became blind in order not to witness the idol-worship of his daughters-in-law? Ah, that was the least among all that offended his sight, that made him long for blindness — because only so could that happen which must happen.

For the older the boys grew the clearer to a seeing eye grew the lines of the " great myth " which despite all the father's principles made the " little myth " more and more forced and untenable; the clearer it became *who they both were*, in whose footsteps they walked, on whose story they were founded, the red man and the smooth man, the huntsman and the dweller in tents. How could Isaac, who with Ishmael the wild ass had formed the brother pair; who himself had not been Cain but Abel, not Ham but Shem, not Set but Osiris, not Ishmael but Isaac the trueborn son — how could he, with seeing eyes, have supported the claim that he preferred Esau? So his eyes failed him, like the dying moon, and he lay in darkness that he might be betrayed, together with Esau, his eldest son.

#### THE GREAT HOAXING

BUT actually nobody was deceived, not even Esau. For if I am venturing here to write about people who did not always know precisely who they were — Esau himself

not being of the clearest on the subject and sometimes taking himself for the original goat of the Seir people and mentioning him in the first person — yet this occasional lack of clarity had to do only with the individual and the time-conditioned, and was precisely the consequence of the fact that everybody knew, perfectly well outside of time, and mythically and typically speaking, who the individual was, and so did Esau, of whom it has not been idly said that he was in his way as pious a man as Jacob. He wept and raved, of course, after the betrayal, and was more murderously minded against his favoured brother than Ishmael had been against his — indeed, it is true that he discussed with Ishmael an attack upon Isaac as well as upon Jacob. But he did all that because it was the role he had to play; he knew and accepted the fact that all events are a fulfilment, and that what had happened had happened because it must, according to the archetype. That is to say, it was not the first time, it was ceremonially and in conformity to pattern, it had acquired presentness as in a recurrent feast and come round as feasts do. For Esau, Joseph's uncle, was not the father of Edom.

Therefore when the hour came, the brothers being almost thirty, when Yitzchak out of the darkness of his tent sent the slave who served him — a youth lacking in one ear, it having been cut off on account of his light-headedness and manifold shortcomings, greatly to his amendment — to stand before Esau where he worked with the hands in the ploughed field, to fold his arms across his black chest, and announce: "The master hath need of my lord," Esau stood like one rooted to the ground, and his ruddy face paled under the sweat that

covered it. He murmured the formula of compliance: " Here am I . " But in his soul he thought " Now is the time! " and that soul was full of pride and dread and solemn unrest of mind.

Then he left the sunny field and went in unto his father who lay in the half-light with two little damp pledgets on his eyes; made an obeisance and said: " My lord hath summoned me."

Isaac answered rather querulously:

" That is the voice of my son, Esau. Is it thou, Esau? I have called thee, for the hour is at hand. Come near to me, my eldest son, that I may be sure of thee."

And Esau knelt in his goatskin apron beside the couch and raised up his eyes to the little pledgets as though he would bore through them into his father's eyes, while Isaac felt his shoulders and arms and breast, saying:

" Yea, these are thy fells and Esau's red fleece, I see them with my hands, which for good or evil have learned right well to fill the place of my declining eyes. Hearken now, my son, and open thine ears and receive the words of thy sightless father, for the hour is come. Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death and as my eyes have long since failed, so it may be that I shall soon fail utterly and disappear into the darkness so that my life is night and no more seen. Therefore, that I die not before I hand on the blessing and give the power from me and the inheritance, let it be now as it hath been: go hence, my son, and take thy weapons, thy quiver and bow, with which thou art mighty before the Lord, and go about in the plain and the field and take me venison. And make me savoury meat such as I love, cooked in sour milk by a bright fire and well seasoned, and bring it to

me that I may eat and be strengthened that I may bless thee before I die, with seeing hands. This is my will, now go."

"It is already done," murmured Esau perfunctorily, yet remained upon his knees and only bowed his head low so that the blind eyes stared over it into space.

"Art thou still there?" asked Isaac. "A moment I thought thou wast already gone, and was not surprised, for the father is accustomed to have all performed quickly in love and fear according to his wish."

"It is already done," repeated Esau and went out. But after he had lifted the skin at the door of the tent he let it fall and came back, knelt again by the couch and spoke with breaking voice:

"My father!"

"What then!" asked Isaac, raising his brows above the pledgets. "It is well," he said then; "go, my son, for the hour is come, that is great for thee and for us all. Go, hunt and cook, that I may bless thee."

And Esau went out, with his head high, and stood before the tent, in the hour of his pride, and in a loud voice announced to all within hearing his impending honour. For events do not happen all at once, they happen point for point, they develop according to pattern, and it would be false to call a narrative entirely sad because the end is so. A tale with a lamentable close has yet its stages and times of honour, and it is right to regard these not from the point of view of the end, but rather in their own light, for while they are the present they have equal strength with the presentness of the conclusion. Thus Esau was proud in his hour and cried out with a ringing voice:

" Hear, ye people of the court, children of Abram and who burn sacrifice to Ya, hear ye, too, ye who sacrifice to Baal, wives of Esau and your seed, the fruit of my loins! Esau's hour is come. The lord will bless his son to-day. Isaac sendeth me forth to the fields that with the bow I may find him savoury meat to strengthen him for my sake. Fall down! "

And while those at hand who heard him fell upon their faces, Esau saw a maid running so that her breasts danced up and down.

That was the maid who shortwindedly announced to Rebecca what Esau had said in his boasting. And again the maid, quite breathless from running, came to Jacob, who was tending the sheep in company with a crop-eared dog named Tarn, and leaning sunk in thought, on a long staff with a crook at the top. She gasped with her forehead bent to the grass: "The mistress!" Jacob looked at her and after a pause of some length answered very low: " Here am I . " For in the pause he had thought in his soul: " The hour is come! " And his heart was full of pride and awe.

He gave his staff to Tarn to watch and went in to Rebecca, who was awaiting him impatiently.

Rebecca, the successor of Sarah, was a matron with gold earrings, stately and strong-boned, with large features that still possessed much of the beauty once so alluring to Abimelech of Gerar. The gaze of her black eyes was shrewd and steadfast beneath arched brows that were evenly accentuated with pencilling and showed between them the two perpendicular folds of an energetic character. Her nose was well formed and masculine, with a pronounced hook and distended nostrils.

Her voice was deep and resonant, and there was a line of little black hairs on her upper lip. Her black and silver locks were parted in the middle and lame down upon her forehead, veiled by the brown headcloth which hung far down her back but left uncovered the fine shape of\*her noble shoulders and arms — these were in colour an amber-brown and the years had had as yet no power to touch them. She wore an ungirdled garment of figured wool, reaching down to her ankles. Her small, veined hands had just now been busy at the loom set up in the middle of the floor, correcting the women who squatted there using their fingers and wooden pegs to urge the flaxen woof through the warp. But she had stopped their work and sent them away, and was waiting for her son inside her own tent — the mistress's tent, hung with skins and mats. She moved swiftly towards Jacob as he respectfully entered.

" Yekew, my son," said she softly and low, and drew his upraised hands to her breast. " The time has come. The master would bless thee."

" Me would he bless? " asked Jacob, losing colour. " Me, and not Esau? "

" Thee in him," said she impatiently. " It is not a time for quibbling. Speak not nor seek to reason, but do as it is commanded thee, that no wrong may happen and no error come to pass."

" What is the command of my little mother from whom I have my life, as at the time when I was still within her? " Jacob asked.

" Hearken," she said. " He hath ordered him to slay and make him a savoury meat to strengthen him for the blessing. That canst thou do quicker and better than he.

Go then to the flock, take two kids, kill them and bring them. Of the best parts I will make for the father a meal such that he will leave none for thee. Away! "

Jacob began to tremble, he did not cease to tremble unto the end. At times he had the greatest trouble to control the chattering of his teeth. He said:

" Merciful mother of men! As the word of a goddess is thy word to me, yet what thou sayest is more dangerous than can be told. Esau is hairy all over and thy child is smooth with but little exception. If now our lord lay hold upon me and feel my smoothness, how shall I stand before him? As though I would deceive him, surely, and I should have instead of his blessing his curse straight-way upon my head."

" Art again at thy hair-splitting? " she hectored him. " Upon me be the curse. I will see to it. Away and fetch the kids. A mistake is in act to be made."

He ran. He hastened to the slope near the tents, where the goats were pastured, seized two of the young kids as they gambolled about their mother, and cut their throats, calling to the goatherd that they were for the mistress. He let their blood run out before the lord, flung them over his shoulder by the hind legs and went home, his heart thumping. The little heads hung down behind, with their small curling horns and cleft snouts, their eyes glazing — so early sacrificed, to so great an end. Rebecca stood waiting. She nodded.

" Quick," said she. " All is ready."

There was a hearth built of stones under her roof, and a fire burnt under the brazen pot and all the gear was there for the cooking. His mother took the kids and began hastily to skin and cut them up. She moved about the

blazing hearth, large and capable, fork in hand, stirred and seasoned, and during all this there was silence between the two. But while the dish was cooking Jacob saw how she took out of her clothes-press garments which lay there folded, shirt and smock: Esau's festal garments, which she kept for him, as Jacob remembered, going pale again. Then he saw her cut up into strips and pieces with the knife the skins of the kids, which were wet inside and sticky with blood, and he shuddered at the sight. But Rebecca bade him take off the long smock with half-sleeves which was at that time his daily wear, and drew over his smooth and shivering arms the short shift and then the line coat of blue and red wool, which left one shoulder bare. Then she said " Come! " And while her lips moved in murmured words and the frown stood out on her brow she put on him the pieces of skin everywhere where he was bare and smooth, on neck and arms, on his shanks and on the backs of his hands and bound them fast with thread, although they were sticky and clung of themselves, most unpleasantly.

She murmured:

" I cover the child, I cover the youth, changed be the child, changed the youth, by the skin, by the fell."

And again:

" I cover the child, I cozen the lord, the lord shall touch, the father shall eat, the brothers of the deep shall be made to serve thee."

Then with her own hands she washed his feet, as she had done when he was small; took anointing oil that smelt of the fields and the fragrance of the fields, which was Esau's oil, and anointed his head and his newly washen feet, and as she did so muttered through her clenched teeth:

" I anoint the child, I anoint the stone, the blind shall eat; at thy feet, at thy feet must fall the brethren of the deeps! "

Then she said: " It is finished "; he stood up, clumsy and altered by his strange disguise, with his arms and legs stuck stiffly out, and his teeth a-chatter. Meanwhile she dished up the savoury meat, with wheaten bread and golden-clear oil to dip it in, and a jug of wine; gave the whole into his hands and said: " Now go thy ways! "

And Jacob went, laden with the meal, awkward and straddling in his fear lest the hatefully sticky skins slip awry under the cords. His heart beat hard, his face was screwed up, and his eyes were on the ground. Many of the household saw him as he passed through the court, held up their hands and wagged their heads; they clucked with their tongues and kissed their finger-tips, and said: " Lo, the master! " He came before his father's tent, put his mouth to the curtain and spoke:

" Here am I, my father. May thy servant lift his foot to enter unto thee? "

Out of the depths of the tent came Isaac's fretful voice:

" But who art thou? Art thou not a thief and the son of a thief, that thou comest before my tent and sayest it is I? For anyone can say I, but all depends upon who sayeth it."

Jacob answered, and his teeth did not chatter, because he clenched them: " It is thy son who hath said I, for I have hunted and killed for thee to eat."

" Well and good," answered Isaac then. " Come thy ways in."

Then Jacob entered into the twilight of the tent, at the back of which ran a covered clay ledge, and Yitzchak lay upon it, wrapped in his mantle and his head elevated

upon a headrest with a bronze half-ring, and with **the** pledgets over his eyes. He asked again:

" Who art thou then? "

**And** Jacob answered, **in** a failing voice:

" I am Esau, the hairy, thy elder son, and I have done as thou hast commanded. Sit up then, my father, and strengthen thy soul, for here is the meat."

But Isaac did not yet sit up. He asked:

" How so soon hast thou found game and so quickly brought it within the range of thy bow? "

" The Lord thy God, he hath given me good hunting," answered Jacob, and his voice died away on some of the syllables. However, he had said " thy " God, speaking for Esau, whose god was not the God of Isaac.

" But how is it then with me? " asked Isaac again. " For thy voice is uncertain, Esau, my eldest son; yet it sounds to me like the voice of Jacob."

Then Jacob knew not what to say for fear, and stood quaking. But Isaac spoke with mildness:

" Yet often are the voices of brothers alike, and words come with the same sounds out of their mouths. Come hither, that I may feel thee with my seeing hands, whether thou art Esau my eldest son or no."

Jacob obeyed. He set down his burdens, came close and offered himself to be felt. And when he was near he saw that his father had bound the pledgets to his head with a cord that they should not fall off when he sat up, just as Rebecca had secured upon himself the hateful skins.

Isaac felt about a little in the air with his fingers spread **out** before he touched Jacob. Then the lean white hands **found** him **out** and felt **him**, over **his** neck and arms

where no garment was, on the backs of his hands and down his legs, everywhere touching the skins of the kids.

" Yea," said he, " these are thy hairy limbs and Esau's red fleeces, I see them with my seeing hands and must be convinced. The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Art thou then my very son Esau? "

And he said: " Thou seest and sayest it."

" Then give me to eat," said Isaac and he sat up, with his mantle hanging down over his knees. And Jacob took the dish and crouched down at his father's feet and held out the meat. But first Isaac bent over with his hands on Jacob's skin-covered hands and smelt of the dish.

" It is good," he said. " Thou hast prepared it well. It is in sour cream, as I have commanded, and there is in it cardamom and thyme and somewhat of caraway." And he named the names of other things that were therein which he discerned by his sense of smell. So he nodded and fell to and ate of the dish.

He ate it all, it took a long time.

" Hast thou bread likewise, Esau, my son? " he asked as he chewed.

" Wheaten cakes and oil, of a surety," answered Jacob.

He broke off some of the bread, dipped it in the oil and brought it to his father's mouth. The old man chewed and took more meat, stroking his beard and nodding his satisfaction, while Jacob looked up in his face and watched him while he ate. It was very thin and transparent, this face, with fine hollows in the cheeks, and a sparse grey beard springing from them, a thin high nose with delicate nostrils, whose bridge was like the blade of a knife. Despite the pledgets on the eyes it looked so spiritual, so well-nigh holy, as to make the meal and the

chewing appear unfitting. Jacob was almost ashamed to watch the old man while he ate — as though he must feel ashamed to be watched. But it may be that the pledgets protected him, at all events he chewed away very comfortably, his thin jaw moving up and down under the scanty beard, and as only the best parts of the kids were in the dish, he ate it all.

" Give me to drink," he said then. And Jacob hastened to fetch the wine jug and hold it himself to the thirsty lips, Isaac's hands grasping it over his son's hairy ones. But as Jacob came thus close to his father the old man smelled the nard in his hair and the fragrance of the flowers of the field in his garments; he turned away from the jug to say:

" Truly it is strangely deceiving, how my son's festal garments smell sweet, like the fields and the meadows in the spring of the year when the Lord hath sown them far and wide with blossoms for our delight."

And with two thin finger-tips he lifted one pledget a very little and said:

" And thou art then verily Esau, my oldest son? "

Jacob laughed in desperation and asked in his turn:

" Who then else? "

" Then it is good," spake Isaac and took a long draught, so that his Adam's apple went up and down under the beard. Then he commanded that water be poured over his hands. But when Jacob had done this and dried his hands, the father said:

" So let it be."

And mightily strengthened by the food and drink, flushed of face, he laid his hands upon the trembling and crouching Jacob, to bless him with all his strength, and

as his soul was strong from the meal he had taken, so were his words full of all the power and richness of the earth. Its fatness gave he him, and its voluptuousness like to a female's, and thereto the dew and the male water of the sky, gave him the fullness of the ploughland, tree and vine, and the rank fruitfulness of the flocks and a double shearing in each year. He laid upon him the covenant, and gave him to bear the promise and the inheritance of that which had been founded throughout time. His words were high-sounding and flowed like a stream. He gave him the victory in the battle of the hemispheres, the light and the dark, and victory over the dragon of the waste; he called him the beautiful moon and bringer of the equinox, with laughter and the renewal of the year. He used the fixed phrase which Rebecca had muttered: the primitive phrase which was so old that it was already a mystery; it did not precisely fit the case, for here the brothers were only two. But Isaac uttered it solemnly above his head: the children of his mother shall serve the bearer of the blessing, and all his brothers shall fall down at his anointed feet. Then he cried out three times the name of God, and said: " So be it and so may it come to pass! " and released Jacob out of his hands.

Jacob rushed away to his mother. But shortly afterwards Esau came home with a young wild goat which he had shot — and matters became both comic and tragic.

Jacob saw with his own eyes nothing of that which followed, nor had he any desire to, and kept himself hidden. But he knew all from hearsay, and remembered it as well as though he had been present.

Esau came back still in the same high mood, knowing nothing, of course, of what had happened in the mean-

time, for he had not reached that stage in the tale. Puffed up with pride and self-esteem, with his bow in his hairy fist and the buck over his shoulder, he marched in triumph, throwing out his legs, and beaming darkly in all directions to see if his splendour and preferment were being observed. Still at some distance he began to boast again, so loud and vaingloriously that it was both comic and painful for all who heard. And those who had seen Jacob go in unto the master in his skins and come out again all put their heads together, and likewise those who had not seen it. Only Esau's women and children drew not near, though he summoned them repeatedly to come and witness his greatness and his pride.

The household ran together and laughed to see him throw out his legs and made a circle round him to see and hear what he did. For he began to skin his buck, as he continued to boast; dressed and cut it up, made a fire with kindlings, hung a kettle over it and shouted out commands to the laughing watchers to bring him this and that of which he had need for the feast.

" Ha, ha," he cried, and " Ho, ho! Ye godly gapers! Fetch me the great cook's fork! And bring me sour milk of the sheep for he savours it best seethed in sheep's milk. And bring me salt from the salt mine, good-for-nothings and idlers: coriander and garlic, mint and mustard to tickle his palate, for I would cram him so that the strength breaks out at his pores. And bring me good *solet* bread to eat with the dish and oil pounded from olives, and strain the wine, ye sluggards and slumberers, so that no yeast come in the jug, or may the white ass trample you! Run and fetch. For it is the feast of the feeding and the blessing of Isaac, Esau's feast, the feast of the hero

and son, whom the lord hath sent to make him a meal, and whom he will bless within his tent in this hour! "

Thus he went on, with mouth and hand, with ha, ha! and ho, ho! and bombast and braggadocio, with windy boasting of his father's preference and the great day come to the red skin; so that the folk of the household bent double and writhed with laughter and wept and held their sides. He went off with his dish, holding it high before him like the tabernacle, and throwing out his legs and prancing up to his father's tent; and they shrieked aloud, clapping and stamping their feet — and then were suddenly still. For Esau, at the door of the tent, was saying:

" Here am I, my father. Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison that thy soul may bless me. Is it his will that I come in? "

Isaac's voice came forth:

" Who is it that sayest I and will come in to the blind man? "

" Esau, thy hairy-skin," answered he, " hath hunted and cooked for the strengthening, as thou commandest."

"Thou fool and robber!" the voice said. "Why speakest thou falsehood in my sight? For Esau, my eldest, he was here long since and gave me to eat and drink, and I have blessed him."

Then Esau was so startled that he almost let everything fall and he gave such a jump that he spilled the sour cream sauce all over him. His auditors roared with laughter. They wagged their heads feebly and wiped the water out of their eyes and shook it off. But Esau rushed into the tent, without more asking, and there came a silence, while those outside covered their mouths with their

hands and thrust their elbows into each other's ribs. But presently came a roar from inside, a perfectly incredible roar, and Esau burst out again, no longer red, but purple in the face, with uplifted arms. "Curse it, curse it, curse it," he shrieked, at the top of his lungs — words we might use to-day on occasion of some trifling vexation. But at that time, and from the lips of Esau the shaggy, it was a new cry, full of the original meaning, for he himself had really been cursed, instead of blessed, solemnly betrayed and made a mock of like no one before him, in the eyes of the people. "Curse it," he shrieked. "Betrayed, betrayed, betrayed!" And he sat himself down on the ground and howled with his tongue hanging out, his tears rolled down the size of hazel nuts, while the crowd stood round and laughed until they cried at this tremendous sell, the story of the hoaxing of Esau the red.

#### JACOB MUST JOURNEY

THEN came the flight, Jacob's escape from house and camp, planned and carried out by his resolute and stout-hearted mother, who sent her darling away content never to see him again if only he possessed the blessing and might carry it through the years. She was too wise and far-seeing not to know what must be the issue of that solemn betrayal; but she assumed the burden deliberately, as she had deliberately laid it upon her son, and offered up her heart.

She did so silently; even in the necessary conversation with Isaac not a word was said of the real posture of affairs; they avoided actualities. But nothing escaped her. It lay in the nature of things that Esau would brood

in his bewildered soul over plans of revenge, and seek to upset what she had done. But also she knew how he went about to play the role of Cain. She learned that he had got in touch with Ishmael, the man of the wilderness, the darkly beautiful youth who had been cast forth. They plotted together — nothing could be more natural. They were of the same disadvantaged breed — the brother of Isaac, the brother of Jacob; they walked in the same footsteps, they were unlovely, shut out; of course they would draw together. In reality, matters were even worse than Rebecca had foreseen, for Esau's murderous thoughts were directed not only towards Jacob but towards Isaac as well. She heard that he had proposed to Ishmael to murder the blind man, after which he, Esau, would take upon himself the smooth man. He shrank from the deed of Cain, shrank from becoming more, and more clearly, himself through committing it. Thus the suggestion that the uncle give him courage by acting first. But Ishmael made difficulties, and that gave his sister-in-law time to turn round. He did not care for the idea. Memories of the feeling he had once cherished towards his more delicate brother, which must then have been made the pretext for his expulsion, made it hard for him, he said, to raise his hand against Isaac. Esau would better do that himself; then he, Ishmael, would plant an arrow so neatly in the back of Jacob's neck that it would stick out through his throat in front and the favourite would straightway measure his length on the ground.

It was like Ishmael to make these proposals. They were something new, whereas Esau had only the traditional fratricide in mind. He did not understand the other's meaning, and thought he was talking at random. Father-

murder did not come within his range of ideas, it had never happened, there was not such a thing, the proposal was without practical value, it was absurd. It might come to pass that a man cut off his father's manhood, with a sickle, as had been done to Noah; but to kill him — the idea was sheer moonshine. Ishmael laughed at his nephew's open-mouthed incomprehension. He knew that the idea was far from being moonshine; that it had in fact quite a venerable actuality and was perhaps the beginning of all things; that Esau contented himself with stopping short too soon, with beginning too late, when he thought such a thing had never come to pass. He told him so, and more. He said things that, when he heard them for the first time, made Esau run away in horror with his fleeces standing on end. He recommended him, after killing his father, to eat abundantly of the flesh, in order to incorporate into himself the Abram-blessing; and to that end he must not cook Isaac's body but eat from it raw with bones and blood — whereat Esau ran away a second time.

He came back, of course; but it took some time for them to apportion their roles in the murder drama, and that gave mother Rebecca time to act. She told Isaac nothing of what his near relatives were plotting against him. Husband and wife confined their conversations to Jacob, and not in the sense that he was threatened by danger — though even Isaac must have been aware of that. Their talk had no reference to the deception or the wrath of Esau — about that they were altogether silent. They merely said that Jacob must go a journey to Mesopotamia, in search of his Aramaic kin, for if he stopped here there was danger of him making an unfortunate

marriage — he too! It was on this plane the parents came to an understanding. If Jacob took a wife from the daughters of the land, said Rebecca, a Hittite woman, who would be like Esau's wives, and commit the abomination of idol-worship, what, she asked Isaac in all seriousness, would life be worth to her? Isaac nodded, and on this ground agreed with her that Jacob must go away for a while. For a while. So she told Jacob too and she meant it seriously, at least she hoped it would be so. She knew Esau, he was a harebrained, light-headed creature, he would forget. He was bent on bloodshed just now, but his mind could be distracted. She knew that while he was with Ishmael in the wilderness he had lost his head over Ishmael's daughter, Mahalath, and considered marriage with her. Perhaps even now his mind was beginning to dwell on this more peaceful concern rather than on thoughts of revenge. When he seemed to have calmed down and abandoned all such ideas, then Jacob would receive a message from her and return home to her bosom. For the present, her brother Laban, the son of Bethuel, living seventeen days' journey from here, in the country of Naharaim, would receive him with open arms. So the flight was resolved upon and Jacob privily got ready for the journey towards Aram. Rebecca did not weep. But she held him long to her in the early dawn, stroked his cheeks, hung charms round his and his camels' necks, embraced him again and thought in her heart that if her god or another so willed it she might perhaps never see him again. So it turned out. But Rebecca had no regrets, either then or later.

## JACOB MUST WEEP

WE know what happened to the traveller on the first day out — his shame, and his great exaltation. But the exaltation was inward, a great soul-vision, whereas the disgrace was actual and physical, like the journey, which he then had to continue in its sign and as its victim: alone, that is, and a beggar. The way was long, and he was not Eliezer, to whom the land " came to meet him " as he went. He thought a great deal about the old man. Abram's messenger and head servant, who had resembled his forefather in face, according to all accounts, and who had come this way on his great errand, to fetch Rebecca for Isaac. But he had travelled in state as was fitting, with his ten camels and all goodly gear of his master's providing, with necessities and with superfluities, as Jacob himself had been before the accursed meeting with Eliphaz. Why had God the King seen fit to do this to him? Why had he punished him with such wretchedness and hardship? For that the matter was one of punishment, of retribution and compensation for Esau's sake, he did not doubt; and upon his hard and heavy journey he pondered much upon the nature of the Lord, who had certainly willed and brought about what had happened yet punished him, Jacob, for it, making him pay for Esau's tears — if only for form's sake, as it were, and with benevolent partiality. For all his burden, however heavy — was it fair payment for the advantage he had over his permanently disadvantaged brother? The mere question made Jacob laugh in his beard — the beard which had grown on his journey, that darkened the more his lean

brown face, glistening with sweat beneath the damp and dirty headcloth.

It was high summer, the month Ab, hopelessly hot and dry. The dust lay finger-thick on trees and shrubbery. Jacob swayed loosely on the ridge of his lean uncomfortable camel, whose great knowing eyes were infested round with flies and grew ever wearier and more melancholy; when he passed other travellers he veiled his face. Or he eased the animal by leading it on the bridle, walking beside it on one of the parallel paths that made up the road, his feet deep in a dust of powdered stone. He slept in the open — in the field, at the foot of a tree in an olive orchard, beside the wall of a village, as it happened, lying close to his beast for warmth; for the nights were often perishingly cold, and he was used to houses and sensitive, so that he often caught cold and coughed like a consumptive on the hottest day. The cough was troublesome, it hindered him in earning his living; for of course he had to get his bread by relating to all and sundry the story of his distresses and the reason why he, the son of such a family, was journeying in poverty. He told his tale in the villages, in the market squares, by the well outside the wall, where he was permitted to wash himself and water his beast. Men and boys, and women with jugs stood round and listened to his tale, which was broken by coughing but otherwise well and vividly told. He gave his name, celebrated his origins, described in detail the lordly life he led in his own home and the rich meals he sat down to. Then went on to draw a picture of the loving liberality with which he, the firstborn son of the house, had been equipped for the journey to Harran in the land of Aram, eastwards and northwards, beyond

the river Prath, where dwelt certain kin of his, whose repute among the inhabitants of the land was not matter for wonder, seeing how many thousands of sheep and goats they possessed. He had been sent to them, and the reason of his sending was partly business, but partly a religious mission of far-reaching importance. He dwelt in detail on the gifts and tokens he had had in his pack, the adornments of his camels, the weapons for securing his princely safety, the dainties for him and his train; and his sensation-hungry auditors, though well aware that a man can draw a long bow, unanimously refrained from making any distinction between the true and the well invented, and stood with eyes and mouths open wide as they listened. In such state he had left home; but alas, certain districts of the land were infested with bandits. They were quite young but uncommonly bold. As he passed with his caravan through a ravine, they had with their great numbers cut off his advance and his rear, also any possibility of escaping sideways; and a battle had ensued, more thrilling than anything of the kind in the memory of man — Jacob painted it in detail, thrust for thrust and blow for blow. The ravine had been filled with bodies of men and beasts, he himself had laid low seven times seven young robbers and each one of his men a smaller number. But alas, the superior numbers of the foe had told in the end, one after another his own people had fallen round him, and after many hours of fighting, he, the sole survivor, had voided the field.

Why, asked a woman, had they not killed him too?

They had tried to. The robber captain, youngest and most insolent of the band, had lifted his sword for the mortal blow, but Jacob in his great need had called upon

his God and the name of the God of his fathers; with the result that the bloodthirsty youth's sword had been shattered in mid-air into seven times seventy pieces. And the detestable creature's senses were so dazed, and he so sorely smitten with fright, that he and his men had fled away, taking with them, however, all Jacob's possessions, and he was left naked. Naked then he had steadfastly pursued his course, for at his goal there awaited him only balsam for his wounds, milk and honey, and clothing of purple and fine linen. But till then, alas, he had nought, no place to lay his head, nothing to still the pangs of hunger in his belly, for it was empty these many days.

He struck his breast, and his hearers at the booths where they sold meat and drink did likewise, for they were affected by his story and found it shameful that such things could come to pass and the highways be so unsafe. In their country, they said, there were guards on the road, one every two hours' journey. Then they gave the afflicted man to eat: cakes and dumplings, cucumbers, garlic and dates, sometimes even a pair of pigeons or a duck, and they put down hay and even grain for his beast to give it strength to proceed on its way.

Thus he went on, moving towards the course of the Jordan, into hollow Syria, the gorge of the Orontes and the foot of Mount Lebanon; but his progress was slow, for he had to earn his bread. He visited the temples in the cities, talked with the priests about the divine essence, and made a good impression on them with wise and well-informed words, so that they let him strengthen and provide himself from the store chambers of the god. He saw upon his travels much that was beautiful and sacred;

saw the Lordly Mountain of the furthest north sparkle as with fiery precious stones, and prayed to it; saw regions watered by the snow from the mountains, where the tall trunks of the swaying date palms were like the scaly tails of dragons; where the landscape was dark with groves of cedar and sycamore, and there were trees with clusters of sweet fruit like bread. He saw crowded cities, and Damascus lying among fruit orchards and enchanted gardens. There he saw a sundial. And from there, in fear and repulsion, he saw the desert. It was red, as it should be, stretching eastwards in a dull red haze, a sea of impurity, the playground of evil spirits, the lower world. Yes, this now fell to Jacob's lot: God sent him into the desert, because he had been the cause of Esau's loud and bitter wailing; it was God's will. His path, which had led on Beth-el's height to so comforting an ascent, had now attained its westernmost point, where it descended into the infernal regions of the world, and who knew what danger of dragons awaited him there? He wept a little, as he swayed into the wastes on the hump of his beast. Ahead of him a jackal was running, dirty-yellow, with pointed ears, his tail sticking out stiffly behind, a sorry god-beast, an offensive mask. He ran before the rider, sometimes letting him come so near that Jacob could scent his pungent smell; turned his dog's head to look at the rider out of hateful little eyes, then trotted on, with his abrupt laugh. Jacob was far too well versed in such matters not to recognize in him the opener of the way, the everlasting guide into the kingdom of the dead. He would have been surprised not to see him, and wept afresh as he followed on into those drear and barren stretches of the borderland between Syria and Naharina,

among loose boulders and desolate rock, through stony fields and plains of clay and sand, burnt-out steppe and dry tamarisk thicket. He was fairly clear as to his route, the way his first forefather had once taken in reverse direction, the son of Terah, coming to the place whither Jacob now strove, sent westwards, as he now eastwards. The thought of Abram somewhat consoled him in his loneliness; moreover the road was not without all trace of human beings and their concerns. Here and there was a clay tower, that one might climb, first to look round, but also if one were in danger from wild beasts. And now and then there was even a well. But best of all there were signposts, stakes and stones set up with inscriptions, guided by which night travel was possible, provided there was even a little moonlight — they had doubtless served Abram upon his journeyings. Jacob praised God for the good deeds of civilization, and followed Nimrod's signposts towards the river Prath, that is to say towards the point he had in mind, which was the right one: where the Very Broad issued from the mountain gorges through which it burst from the north, and subsided in the plain. O wonderful hour, when Jacob stood at last in the mud among the reeds and let his poor beast drink from the yellow flood! A bridge of boats crossed it, and on the other side lay a town; but it was not the dwelling of the moon god, not the city of the way and Nahor's city. That was still far off across the eastern plain, which he had yet to cross by the help of the signposts, under the burning fiery sun of Ab. Seventeen days? Ah, it became much more for Jacob, needing as he did to keep on relating his bloodthirsty tale — he knew not how many times, he had ceased to count, and only knew that the earth by no

means sprang to meet him, but rather the contrary, doing all it could to keep withdrawing the goal from his weary march. But he never forgot — he spoke of it even on his death-bed — how it was suddenly there, all in a moment, when he least expected it and thought it far away; he had reached it, or as good as reached it; after all, it did come to meet him, together with the best and dearest of all it had to give — that which Jacob then had one day, after his long, long sojourn, to take away with him.

#### JACOB COMES TO LABAN

ONE day, toward evening, as the sun was sinking behind him in the fallow mists and the shadow of rider and beast was like a tower on the plain; on this late afternoon, when the air would not cool but was a breathless heat under the brazen dome of heaven, so that it quivered above the dry grass and seemed about to burst into flame; when Jacob's tongue was parched in his throat for he had had no water since the day before and went rocking along with his mind in a daze — he saw between two hills that made a gateway into a rolling stretch of country a moving point far off in the plain; and his eye, keen despite his fatigue, recognized it at once as a flock of sheep with shepherds and dogs, gathered round a well. He jumped for joy and breathed a thankful sigh to Yah the Most High God; but his only clear thought was "Water, water!" and he cried out the word from his parching throat, clucking to his beast, that seemed to know the joyful news, for it summoned its powers, stretched its neck, dilated its nostrils, and lengthened its stride.

Soon he was so near that he could see the coloured

markings on the sheep, the faces of the herdsmen under their shady hats, the hair on their breasts and the bands on their arms. The dogs growled and were on the defensive, preventing the sheep from scattering; but the men quieted them with a word, for they had no fear of a single rider, and also they saw that he greeted them courteously even from afar. There were four or five men, Jacob remembered, with perhaps two hundred sheep, of a large, thick-tailed breed, as his trained eye quickly noted. They were squatting idly round the well, which was still covered with a round stone. They all carried slings and one of them a lute. Jacob spoke to them at once, calling them brothers and with his hand to his forehead, saying to them at random that their god was great, although he was not certain which one they acknowledged. But to that as well as to whatever else he said they only shook their heads, or rather wagged them from side to side, indicating their regret by clucking with their tongues. But one of them turned out to have a silver disk on his breast with his name on it — Jerubbaal — and to be a native of Amurruland, as he said. His speech was not quite like Jacob's, but sufficiently so that they understood each other and Jerubbaal the shepherd could act as interpreter and translate what Jacob said into the *ummu-ummu* language of the others. They conveyed their thanks for his acknowledgment of the power of their god, invited him to sit down in their circle, and introduced themselves by their names, which were Bullutu, Shamash-Lamassi, Dog of Ea, and so on. He did not leave them to ask his own name and origins but hastened to give them, with a passing but embittered reference to the mischance which had reduced him to such poverty, and implored them above

all else to give him water for his parching tongue. They handed him a leathern bottle, the water was already lukewarm, but he gulped it down rejoicing. His camel, however, had to wait; the sheep too seemed waiting to be watered, yet the stone lay over the mouth of the well and nobody rolled it away.

Whence came his brothers, Jacob asked.

"Harran, Harran," they answered. "Bel-Harran, lord of the way. Great, great — the greatest."

"One of the greatest, at least," said Jacob guardedly. "But I am bound for Harran. Is it far?"

Not far at all. The town lay on the other side of the nearby slope. They could reach it with their flocks in an hour.

"Praise be to god!" Jacob cried. "Then am I at the end, after more than seventeen days' journeying. Scarcely can I believe it." And he asked them if they knew Laban, son of Bethuel, son of Nahor, since they were from Harran.

They knew him well. He dwelt not in the city, but only a half-hour from here. They were waiting for his sheep.

Was he in good health?

Very good. Why?

"Because I have heard of him," Jacob said. "Do you pluck your sheep or shear them?"

They all answered with scorn that of course they sheared them. Did they pluck them where he came from?

Oh, no, he answered. They were far enough on, in Beersheba and the region round, to have shears.

They came back to Laban, saying that they were waiting for Rachel, his daughter.

As to that, he cried, he had greatly longed to enquire — about the waiting, that was. " For ye sit here round the covered well like watchmen, instead of rolling away the stone that your flocks may drink. Why then? True, it is yet early to drive them home, but ye could move the stone and water your lord's sheep instead of lounging here, even though ye must still wait for the wench, Laban's daughter, whatever her name is."

He spoke with authority, like a man who is more than a servant, even though he called them brothers. For the water had strengthened him in body and mind and he felt his superiority.

They talked together — *ummu, ummu*, and then told him through Jerubbaal that what they did was regular and in order, and a matter of courtesy. They might not roll away the stone and water and go home before Rachel came with the sheep which she tended for her father. For all the flocks had to be gathered together and driven home at the same time, and if Rachel reached the well before them she too waited until they came and rolled away the stone.

" Ye say sooth," Jacob laughed. " For she is but a maiden and it needeth the arms of men to roll away the lid." But they answered that was all the same, why she waited, in any case she did so, and they did the same.

" Good," said Jacob then. " Ye are belike in the right, and for you it would not be right any other way. But I am sad that my camel must thirst so long. How said ye that the maiden's name is? Rachel?" he repeated. " Jerubbaal, say what that meaneth in our tongue. Hath she then yeaned, the ewe, for whom we wait so long? "

Oh no, they said, she was as pure as the spring lilies

in the field and undefiled like the petals of the garden rose in the dewy morning, and had never known the arms of man. She was twelve years old.

It was plain that they respected her, and unconsciously Jacob did the same. He smiled and drew a long breath, for the thought of meeting with his uncle's child made his heart contract a little with pleasurable curiosity. He chatted a while longer with the shepherds, through Jerubbaal: about the local prices for sheep, and how much wool one got for five minas, and how many selas of corn their masters allowed them in the month. Until one of them said: " She cometh." Jacob had just begun to beguile the time with his robber story, but he broke off and turned to look where the shepherd pointed. Thus first he beheld her, his heart's destiny, his soul's bride, for whose lovely eyes he was to serve fourteen years, the mother sheep of his lamb.

Rachel was walking in the midst of her flock; it huddled close about her, and a dog with lolling tongue ran at the margin of the woolly flood. She raised her staff, the shepherd's crook, the top of which consisted of a metal sickle or knife, by way of greeting the group; putting her head on one side and smiling — so that Jacob, while she was still at a distance, saw for the first time her shining white teeth, with the spaces between them. As she came up she overtook the animals round her and walked in front, parting them with her crook. " Here am I , " said she; like a short-sighted person she contracted her eyes, but then lifted her brows in surprise and delight as she added: " Lo, a stranger!" She must have seen long before, if **her** short-sightedness was not unusually bad,

Jacob's figure and the riding-camel, but she had given no sign at first.

The shepherds round the well kept silence and held back from the meeting of the young master and mistress. Jerubbaal too seemed to feel that they were already in touch; he gazed in the air, munching grain. Jacob greeted Rachel with upraised hands, while her dog barked round them. She gave a quick word of reply to his salute, and the two stood there, soberly, side by side, in the bright slanting rays of the late afternoon sun, among the tumbling sheep, enveloped in their warm and friendly steam, under the wide pale sky.

Laban's daughter was slender — as one could see despite the shapelessness of her garment, a yellow smock or pinafore with a red border patterned in black moons. It hung free and comfortably from throat to hem, showing the little bare feet, but fitted round the shoulders displaying their appealing fineness and tenderness, and it had sleeves reaching halfway down the upper arm. Her black hair was tumbled rather than curled, and almost short, at least shorter than Jacob had ever seen it on women at home; only two braids, curling at the ends, hung across her cheeks and down upon her shoulders. She played with one of them as she stood and looked. What a sweet face! Who shall describe its magic? Who shall decipher the sum of those sweet and happy dispensations of providence, out of which life, groping among inherited stores, adds the one unique thing to make up the charm of the human face? It is a charm balanced on a razor's edge, it hangs, as one may say, on a hair; so that if one tiny trait were altered, the smallest muscle differently placed, though but little were changed

yet the heart's delight, the whole little miracle, would be lacking. Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured, and both at once in such an arch and gentle way that one saw — Jacob saw, as she looked at him — how spirit and will-power, wisdom and courage in their feminine counterparts, were the effective source of all this loveliness, so expressive her whole person was of open-eyed readiness for life. She looked towards him, one hand fingering her braid, the other grasping the staff that rose above her head, and measured the young man, gaunt from his journey, in dusty, faded and tattered garments, with the brown and bearded, sweat-marked face that was not the face of a hireling. As she looked, the nostrils — perhaps too thick — of her little nose seemed to dilate drolly, and her upper lip, which stuck out somewhat beyond the lower, to shape with it in the corners of her mouth, all by itself and with no tension of the muscles, that lovely thing a tranquil smile. But loveliest and best of all was the look, peculiarly sweetened and transfigured by her short-sightedness, in her black, perhaps just faintly slanting eyes, that look which, with no exaggeration, nature had endowed with the uttermost of charm that she can give a human face — a deep, liquid, speaking, melting, friendly light, at once serious and playful, and such as Jacob never before in all his life had seen or thought to see.

"Down, Marduka!" she cried, stooping to reprove the noisy dog. And then she asked, as Jacob could guess without understanding:

"Whence cometh my lord?"

He pointed westwards over his shoulder and said Amurru.

She turned towards Jerubbaal and laughing beckoned him with a motion of her chin.

" So far? " said she, in words and gestures. And then she asked in more detail, saying that the west was wide, and naming two or three of its cities.

" Beersheba," Jacob answered.

She started and repeated the word, and her mouth, which he had already begun to love, shaped the name of Isaac.

His face twitched, his mild eyes ran over. He did not know Laban's people and would not have been eager for contact with them. He was an outlaw, stolen to the lower world, not here of his own will, and felt not much cause for soft emotion. But his nerves gave way; under the strain of the journey they had gone soft. He was at his goal, and this maiden, with eyes so darkly sweet, uttered his far-off father's name and was his mother's brother's child.

" Rachel," said he, with a sob, and put out his arms to her, his hands trembling. " May I kiss thee? "

" How canst thou claim such a right? " she asked, and retreated in smiling dismay. She gave no sign of suspecting anything, just as before she had not seemed to mark the presence of a stranger.

But with one arm still stretched out towards her he pointed to his own breast.

" Jacob, Jacob," he said. " I. Yitzchak's son, Rebecca's son, Laban, thou, I, child of mother, child of brother. . . . "

She gave a little cry. She put one hand on his breast and so held him away from her as together they reckoned up the kinship between them, laughing, but with tears

in both their eyes. They cried out names, nodded their heads, making out the genealogical tree by signs to each other, putting their forefingers together, crossing them, or laying the left across the tip of the right.

" Laban — Rebecca," cried she. " Bethuel, son of Nahor and Milka! Thy grandfather and mine! "

" Terah," cried he. " Abram — Isaac, Nahor — Bethuel! Abram — forefather, thine and mine."

" Laban — Adina," cried she. " Leah and Rachel! Sisters, cousins, thine! "

They nodded to each other over and over, amid tears, while they came to the conclusion as to the blood relationship between them, through both his parents and through her father. She gave him her cheeks and he kissed her solemnly. Three dogs sprang at them baying, as the creatures do when men, for good or evil, lay hands on each other. The shepherds applauded rhythmically, singing in high head-tones: "*Lu, lu, lu!*" So he kissed her, first on one cheek then on the other. He forbade his senses to perceive more of her femininity than just the softness of her cheeks, he kissed her reverently; but the friendly darkness of her eyes had bewitched him already, and he felt favoured to have received her kiss at once. Many a one must look longingly, desire and serve, before there would be incredibly vouchsafed to him that which had fallen at once as it were into Jacob's lap, because he was the cousin from afar.

When he let her go she laughed, rubbing with her palm the cheek his rough beard had tickled, and cried:

" Quick, Jerubbaal! Shamash, Bullutu! Roll away the stone that the sheep may drink, and see that they drink, yours and mine, and water my cousin Jacob's camel and

be swift and skilful, ye men, that I may run to Laban, my father, and tell him that Jacob is come, his sister's son. He is on the meadows not far from here and will come running in haste and joy to embrace him. Make haste, and follow after me, for I will run whip and spurs. . . ."

Jacob got the sense of what she said by tone and gesture, even some of the words. Already, for her lovely eyes, he began to learn the speech of her land. And when she had begun to run, he stopped the men and cried so that she might hear:

"Halt, brothers, away from the stone, for that is Jacob's work. Ye have guarded it like good watchmen, but now I will roll it away from the well for Rachel my cousin, I alone. For not yet hath the journey drawn away all the strength from my man's arms, and it is fitting that I lend their strength to the daughter of Laban and roll the stone, that the blackness may be taken from the moon and the round of the waters and become beautiful."

So they made way for him, and with all his strength he rolled the stone away, though it was not the work of one man, yet by his strength alone he put the heavy stone on one side though his arms were not of the strongest. The cattle pressed forwards and there was a many-toned baaing of sheep, goats, and lambs — and Jacob's camel grunted as it got to its feet. The men drew up the living water and poured it in the troughs. With Jacob they kept watch over the watering, drove away those that had drunk, and made way for the thirsty, and when all were sated, they put the stone again over the hole, covered it with earth and grass that the place might not be known and uninvited folk make use of the well, and they drove

home all the sheep together, Laban's as well as their master's; and Jacob towered up on his camel in the midst of the press.

#### THE CLOUD

PRESENTLY came running a man in a cap with a neck-shield; he suddenly stopped short. It was Laban, Bethuel's son. On such occasions he always came running, had done so a few decades, a swift generation ago, when he had found Eliezer, the wooer, with his ten camels and his train at the well, and said to him: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord!" But now a grey-beard he ran again, Rachel having told him that Jacob was here from Beersheba, no servant, but the grandson of Abram, his sister's son. But if he stood still and let the other come to him, that was because he had seen no gold clasp on Rachel's forehead nor any bracelets such as Rebecca had had; and because he saw that the stranger came not at the head of a well-furnished caravan, but obviously quite alone, mounted on a lean and mangy beast. Therefore he would make no concessions nor go too far to meet the supposed nephew; but remained standing with his arms folded, full of mistrust, as Jacob approached.

Jacob but too well understood, ashamed and embarrassed as he was by the evil conscience of his poverty and need. Ah, he came not as a rich ambassador, delighting the household with costly presents from his saddlebags, and urged to stop one day or ten. A fugitive and houseless man he came, with empty hands, sent away from home, begging for shelter — he had good reason for a humble bearing. But he recognized his man at once and knew what stripe it was who stood before him, and that it

would not do to humble himself too much. Therefore he made no especial haste to dismount from his beast, but advanced towards Laban with all the dignity of his seed, greeting him with propriety, and saying:

" My father and brother! Rebecca thy sister hath sent me, to tell thee she hath bid me to live a while under thy roof; I greet thee in her name, and in the name of Yitzchak, her lord and mine, further in the name of our common forefathers; and I call on Abram's god to protect the health of thee, thy wife and thy children."

" And thee likewise," said Laban, having understood the drift of Jacob's words. " And art thou then in truth Rebecca's son? "

" Truly am I , " the other answered. " Yitzchak's first-born am I, thou sayest it. And I recommend to thee not to be misled by my lack of attendance nor my clothing, rotted by the sun. My lips shall explain all these things to thee at a fitting time, and thou shalt see that if I have nothing save that which is all-important, at the least I have that, and that if thou callest me ' Blessed of the Lord,' thou choosest thy words aright."

" Then I embrace thee," said Laban dourly, after Jerubbaal the shepherd had translated all this into their *ummu-ummu* speech. He laid his arms across Jacob's shoulders, bent first right and then left and kissed the air on either side. Jacob's immediate impressions of this uncle of his were most equivocal. He had a couple of bad lines between the eyes, and one of the eyes was almost shut and blinked, though at the same time he seemed to see more with it than with the other. And on that side there was a distinctly underworldly twist to the mouth, a paralytic droop of the corner, under the grizzled beard,

which looked like a sour smile and affected Jacob with misgiving. Laban was stout, with grey hair that stuck out behind under the neck-shield; he wore a knee-length smock with a knife and a whip thrust into the girdle, and narrow sleeves that left free the sinewy forearms, covered with grizzled hair like his muscular thighs and wide, moist hands. They were the hands of a having man, Jacob saw, whose thoughts ran in the dark and narrow circle of earthly possessions — a perfect clod. Yet in the face this uncle might almost have been good-looking, with heavy, well-marked brows that were still quite black, a strong thick nose making one line with the forehead and full lips showing in his beard. Rachel had her eyes from him — as Jacob noted with the mingled recognition, emotion and jealousy with which one traces the earthly source and natural history of traits possessed by a beloved being. The knowledge is agreeable, in so far as it gives us a sense of penetrating the mysteries and discovering the intimate origins of something we love; yet in another way it is unpleasant, and our feeling towards the immediate predecessor and ancestor of such traits is a curious mixture of awe and disgust.

Laban said:

"Welcome, then, and follow me, stranger, since thou sayest, and I am fain to believe, that thou art my nephew. In the past we had room for Eliezer, straw and fodder for his ten camels, and that shall we also have for thee and thy one beast, for more thou seemest not to have. Gifts hath thy mother not sent then, gold, garments, spices or the like?"<sup>99</sup>

"Verily she did, and in abundance, be assured," answered Jacob. "That I have none of these things now

shall be explained when I have washed my feet and had somewhat to eat."

He deliberately took a high tone to sustain his dignity before the clod and the latter marvelled at the combination of so much poverty with so much pride. They spoke no more till they reached Laban's farm, where the strange shepherds left them to go on towards the town, while Jacob helped the master to fold the sheep, in mud pens that had wattles on top as a protection against beasts of prey. Three women were watching them from the house-top, one of them Rachel, the others Laban's wife and elder daughter, Leah, who squinted. The house and indeed the whole steading — for besides the dwelling-house there were other reed huts and storehouses shaped like bee-hives — made a marked impression upon Jacob the tent-dweller; but he had seen in the towns he had passed through much finer houses and was not minded to betray any admiration. Indeed he began carping at once: had a word of contempt for the wooden ladder which led up to the roof outside and said they ought to build a brick stair; also the whole house ought to be white-washed and lattices put on the ground-floor windows.

"There is a stair up from the court," Laban said. " My house is good enough for me."

" Say not so," answered Jacob. " If man be easily content, so is God for him, and withdraweth the hand of blessing. How many sheep hath my uncle? "

" Eighty," replied his host.

" And goats? "

" Some thirty."

" No oxen? "

Laban made an irritated gesture with his beard in the

direction of one of the mud and straw huts, indicating the cattle-stalls, but gave no figures.

" There must be more," said Jacob. " More of every kind of beast." Laban flung him a sour glance; but behind the sourness was lively speculation. They turned towards the house.

### THE EVENING MEAL

SEVERAL poplar trees overtopped the dwelling-place, one of them barked down its whole length by lightning. The house was a rude structure of modest dimensions, built of crumbling clay bricks; but the airiness of the upper part gave it a certain architectural charm, for the roof rested only at the corners and in the middle of the sides upon masonry, and for the rest upon wooden pillars. The top was covered with earth and provided with several little straw huts. The picture would be clearer if I spoke of a cluster of roofs; for the whole house formed a square surrounding a small court in the centre. A few steps of trodden clay led up to the palm-wood door.

Two or three domestic slaves were working in the court as uncle and nephew crossed it, a potter and a baker who was slapping his barley dough at the outer wall of his little oven. A maid in a loincloth was fetching water from the nearest watercourse, called the Bel-canal, which in its turn flowed from another, the Ellil-canal. Laban watered his unhedged barley and sesame fields from the Bel-canal; it belonged to a merchant in the town, who had had it dug and charged an oppressive tribute of oil, corn and wine for its use. Beyond the ploughed fields the open country rolled away to the horizon,

on which rose the terraced tower of the moon-temple of Harran.

The women had come down from the roof and awaited their guest in the ante-room which one entered through the house door, a great mortar for grinding corn was fixed in the centre of its clay floor. Adina, Laban's wife, was an insignificant-looking matron, with a headcloth hanging down over the close-fitting cap that covered her hair, a necklace of gaily coloured stones and a facial expression which was like her husband's in its joylessness save that the look round the mouth was less sour than bitter. She had no sons, a fact that perhaps went far to explain Laban's gloom. Jacob later learned that they had had a son early in their married life, and sacrificed him when the house was built, burying him alive in an earthen jar, with lamps and basins, in the foundations of the building, by way of invoking the blessings of prosperity upon the house and farm. But the sacrifice had brought no particular benefit, and thereafter Adina had not proved capable of bearing sons.

As for Leah, she was certainly not less well built, in fact she was larger and more imposing than Rachel. But she was a good example of the strange abatement of value a fine figure suffers when it has an ugly face on top. She had extraordinarily thick ash-blond hair, covered with a little cap and hanging in a great knot in her neck. But her green-grey eyes squinted dejectedly down her long red nose, and the lids were sore and red; red too were her hands, and she tried to hide them, as indeed she hid her squint too by dropping her eyelids with a sort of shame-faced dignity. There we have it, thought Jacob as he looked at the sisters: the pale moon and the bright. Yet

he spoke to Leah and not to Rachel, as they crossed the little paved court, in the centre of which an altar was set up. But she only gave a deprecating little cluck, like the shepherds in the field, and seemed to be waiting for the interpreter, whose Canaanitish name she mentioned several times: a domestic called Abdcheba, the same whom they had seen baking cakes in the outer court. For when they had climbed the brick stair leading up to the roof, and reached the open room where the meal was taken, he brought water for Jacob's feet and hands, and announced that he was born in a village belonging to the lords of Jerusalem, because of his parents' poverty had been sold into slavery for the fixed price of twenty shekels — a sum which apparently conditioned the modest opinion he had of himself — and since then had many times changed hands. He was short, grey-haired and hollow-chested, but he had a ready tongue; whatever Jacob uttered he at once translated into the native idiom and returned the answer with equal fluency.

It was a long, narrow room in which they sat down, a pleasant, airy spot. Between the pillars that supported the roof one looked out on one side over the darkening fields, on the other into the peaceful quadrangle of the inner court, which was hung with coloured awnings and had a pebbled pavement and a wooden gallery running round it. Evening was coming on. The maid in the loincloth apron, who had brought the water, now fetched fire from the hearth and lighted three earthenware lamps that stood upon tripods. Then she and Abdcheba brought in the meal: a pot of thick porridge, prepared with oil of sesame (" *Poppasu, poppasu!* " shouted Rachel in childish glee, licking her lips comically and clapping her

hands); warm cakes of barley flour, radishes, cucumbers, sprouts of the cabbage palm, and for beverages goats' milk and water from the canal, a supply of which hung in a great earthenware amphora on one of the pillars. There were also two large earthenware chests on the outer wall of the room, full of various copper basins, milk vessels, goblets and a hand-mill. The family sat or perched irregularly about the low leather-covered dais which served as a table: Laban and his wife reclined side by side on a couch, the daughters sat with their legs curled under them on bundles of reed with cushions atop; and Jacob had a backless chair of gaily painted earthenware, with a footstool to match. There were two cowshorn spoons for the *poppasu*, which were used in turn, each person after using filling his spoon from the dish and passing it on to the next. Jacob sat next to Rachel, and filled the spoon so full each time for her that it made her laugh. Leah saw it, and her squint became positively painful.

Little was said during the meal, and that little had reference to the food. Adina would say to Laban:

" Eat, my husband, all is thine! "

Or to Jacob:

" Come, stranger, refresh thy weariness with food! "

Or one of the parents would say to one of the daughters:

" I see, thou takest all for thyself and leavest the others nought. Bridle thy greediness, else the witch Labartu will turn thy inwards over and make thee to vomit."

Even such trifles as these Abdcheba failed not to translate for Jacob's benefit; and the latter began to take his share in the conversation, saying to Laban in the strange tongue:

" Eat, father and brother, all is thine! "

Or to Rachel:

" Come, sister, eat and rejoice thy heart."

Abdcheba and the maid in the apron ate at the same time as the others, interrupting their meal to serve; suddenly squatting down to munch a radish or to take turns in drinking goats' milk out of a bowl. The maid, whose name was Iltani, kept brushing the crumbs from her hanging breasts with the tips of her fingers.

When the meal was finished Laban called for liquor for himself and the guest. Abdcheba dragged up a skin of beer, made from fermented grain, and two beakers were filled, with straws to drink from as there were many wheat kernels floating on top. The women retired, after Laban had perfunctorily laid his hand upon the head of each. They took leave of Jacob for the night, and as Rachel did so, Jacob gazed once more into the friendly darkness of her eyes and saw the whiteness of her teeth, with the spaces between, as she said laughing:

" Much, much *poppasu*, spoon full up! "

" Abraham, forefather, thine, mine! " he answered as in explanation, repeating the gesture of laying one forefinger across the tip of the other. They nodded again as they had in the field, while the mother's face wore its bitter smile, Leah looked down her nose and the father blinked, with his usual wry and gloomy expression. Then uncle and nephew were alone in the airy upper room, only Abdcheba squatted beside them on the floor, puffing from his exertions during the meal, and kept his eyes fixed upon the lips of each in turn.

## JACOB AND LABAN STRIKE A BARGAIN

" SPEAK now, guest," said the master of the house, after drinking, " and unfold to me the particulars of thy life."

So Jacob related to him all things in detail as they had fallen out and according to the facts. At most he somewhat glozed over the precise circumstances of the encounter with Eliphaz; though even here, since his poverty and nakedness were eloquent enough, he gave honour to the truth. From time to time, in convenient sections, he interrupted his tale and gestured towards Abdcheba, who then translated. Laban drank a great deal of beer during the process, listening dourly and sometimes nodding his head. Jacob spoke with objectivity. He did not characterize as either good or evil the late happenings between him, Esau and their parents; he merely narrated, freely and god-fearingly, for he could afford to let everything rest upon the one great, decisive fact before which his present nakedness paled into insignificance; that he, and none other, was the bearer of the blessing.

Laban listened, blinking furiously. He had sucked so industriously upon his straw that his face was like the late and waning moon when it rises red and threatening on the horizon, and his belly was swollen so that he unloosed his girdle, let down his coat from his shoulders and sat in his shirt, with his muscular arms crossed on the half-naked grizzled breast. He sat humped upon his bed and put questions, the questions of a practical and practised business man, about this blessing of which his interlocutor boasted; he, Laban, was not prepared to **swallow it whole. He had his doubts. The blessing was**

not wholly innocent, he felt. Jacob had brought it out clearly enough, that Esau was definitely the man of the curse and he himself the man of the blessing. But considering how the blessing had been acquired, he, Laban, felt that some curse was bound up with it, which must make itself felt in the end. Everybody knew how the gods were. They were all alike, the local ones, with whom Laban naturally kept in good odour, as well as the vague and unnamed ones belonging to Isaac's people, whom likewise he conditionally recognized. The gods willed and compelled human acts; but the guilt therefor was man's. The possession upon which Jacob rested his case was weighted with guilt; the question was, who was the guilty party. Jacob assured him of his own innocence. He himself, he said, had scarcely done anything, he had merely let happen what had to happen, and even that with great personal compunctions. The guiltiest party was the energetic Rebecca, who had arranged everything. " Upon me be thy curse, my son," she had said; meaning, of course, in case the father had seen through the deception. But her words expressed her relation to the whole affair, the responsibility she had taken upon herself, and her maternal acceptance of her son's innocence.

" Yes, maternal," said Laban. The drink made him breathe heavily through his mouth and his body sagged forward and sideways. He pulled himself up, then sagged over on the other side. " Maternal. The way mothers are, and parents. And the way the gods are." Parents and gods displayed their partiality in the same questionable way. Their blessing was power and its source was power, for love too, and in particular love, was sheer power, and gods and parents blessed their favourites, out of love for

them, with a life of power, made them powerful in good and evil. That was the way of it and that was the blessing. On my head the curse — that was only talk, a mother's prattle, ignoring the fact that love was power and blessing power and life power and that was all there was to it. But after all, Rebecca was only a female, and Jacob was the bearer of a blessing in whose possession guilt was involved. "Upon thee will the guilt be visited," said Laban, thick-tongued, pointing with his heavy hand and arm, at his nephew. "Thou hast betrayed, and thou shalt be betrayed — Abdcheba, stir thy chaps and tell him all that, thou villain. I bought thee for twenty shekels and if thou sleepest instead of interpreting, I will leave thee a week buried to the upper lip in the earth, thou gowk."

"Hold, and shame upon thee," said Jacob, and spat upon the ground. "Doth my father and brother curse me? What then hast thou in thy head? Am I not thy flesh and blood?"

"That art thou," answered Laban. "So far as that goes. Thou hast told me of Rebecca and Isaac, and Esau the red, and thou art Jacob, my sister's son, as thou hast proven. I embrace thee. But the case must be thought of in the light of all thy words, and the consequences drawn for thee and me according to the laws of trade and husbandry. I am convinced of the truth of thy reports, yet have I no ground to praise thy sincerity, since to explain thy state thou haddest no recourse but truth. And it tallies not with thy first statement, that Rebecca sent thee to me to pay me a respect. For it was rather for the sake of thy not abiding at home, where thy life was in danger from Esau because of thine and thy mother's deed, which I deny not was crowned with much success yet did it

make thee for the time a naked beggar. Thou camest to me not of thy free will, but because thou hadst else no place to lay thy head. Thou wast given to me, and therefrom follows the consequence: thou art not guest but servant in my house."

" My uncle speaks with justice, yet not mingling with it the salt of love," said Jacob.

" Words," said Laban. " I speak with the natural harshness that governs the life of trade, and by it I am accustomed to govern my actions. The bankers in Harran are two brothers, sons of Isullanu; they can demand of me what they will because I have pressing need of their water and that they know, so they demand as it pleaseth them, and if I cannot comply then they will sell me and my possessions and take their gains. No man can afford to be a fool. Thou art sent me, and I will use thee. I am not rich enough, nor bear a blessing, that I should indulge myself in charity and keep open house for all the homeless. Of pairs of arms to labour for me I have but his here, who hath no more strength than a toad, and Iltani the maid, who hath the brains of a chicken and of a cackling hen; for the potter is a journeyman and I have contracted with him for only ten days, and when it is the time of harvest or of shearing I know not whence the workers will come, for I cannot pay them. For long hath it been unfitting that Rachel my daughter keepeth the sheep and suffereth heat by day and frost by night. That shalt thou do for lodgment and herbs and nothing more, for thou knowest not whither to go and art not a man to write conditions. This is the state of the matter."

" Gladly will I tend the sheep for thy child Rachel's sake," said Jacob, " and serve for her that her life may

be soft. I was born a shepherd, and I can breed the sheep and have understanding of all things. I had it never in mind to play the idler and be a useless mouth to thee; but since I hear that it is for Rachel, thy child, and that I can replace her strength with the strength of my man's arms, I am twice glad to serve."

" Stands it so? " asked Laban, shooting a glance across at him and blinking hard, while the corner of his mouth went down. " Good," said he. " For well or ill, thou must, for the conditions of the business life compel thee. But if thou dost so gladly, that is an advantage to thee without being a harm to me. And tomorrow we shall make the contract."

" Seest thou? " said Jacob. " It can come to pass that there are advantages which advantage both sides and make soft the natural harshnesses: that wouldst thou not have believed. Thou wouldst not mingle with thy justice the salt of love, so have I given thee of mine, naked and nothing as I stand at this moment before thee."

" Words, words," Laban finished for him. " We will write down the contract and seal it, that all may be in order and no one may assail it lest he behave illegally. Go, now, for I am sleepy, and bloated with beer. Put out the lamps, toad," said he to Abdcheba; stretched himself out on the bed, covered himself with his coat and fell asleep with his mouth open and awry. Jacob might sleep where he would. He mounted to the roof, laid himself down on a coverlet under the awning of a straw hut, and thought of Rachel's eyes until sleep kissed his own.

# 5

## SERVING LABAN

### HOW LONG DID JACOB STAY WITH LABAN?

THIS was the beginning of Jacob's sojourn in Laban's country and in the land of Aram Naharaim, which in his thoughts he called Kurnugia: at first because it was from the beginning the lower world for him, whither for a while he had once wandered; but afterwards because in the course of years this stream-circumscribed land proved that it could hold its man fast; it turned out to be literally and actually the land whence one never more returned. For what does one mean by never more? One means, at least approximately, until the ego no longer retains its form and its condition, is no longer itself. A return after five and twenty years no longer concerns the ego which, when it departed, thought to return in half a year or at most in three and take up its life where it was interrupted. To return thus is for that ego to return "never more." Twenty-five years are not an interval, they are life itself, they are, if they occur in a man's young years, life's kernel and core; and if Jacob lived a long time after his return, and passed through his highest and his hardest times — for he was precisely reckoned a hundred and six years old when, once more a dweller in that lower world, he solemnly departed this life — yet one may say

that he dreamed the dream which was his life down yonder in Laban's house, in the land of Aram. For there he loved, he married, and there four women bore him his children down to the youngest, twelve in number; there he grew heavy with increase and stately with possessions. But the youth who had set forth never returned, it was a grey-haired man of fifty-five, a roving eastern sheikh, who returned to the west as to a foreign land, and moved towards Shechem.

That Jacob sojourned twenty-five years with Laban is demonstrably true, and the certain result of any unbiassed investigation. Song and story display a looseness of thought more excusable in them than it would be in ourselves. They would have it that Jacob spent twenty years in all with Laban: fourteen and then six. They adhere to the view that he had demanded his freedom of Laban for several years before he broke the dusty bolt and fled; but that Laban had never yielded, always binding him over under new conditions for a longer space. The time when this happened is fixed by the phrase "when Rachel had borne Joseph." But when did that happen? If only fourteen years had passed, then in these fourteen, or precisely speaking in the last seven of them, all twelve children including Dinah and Joseph, and only excepting Benjamin, must have been born. This would not be impossible, in itself, considering that four women were in activity, according to the order of birth ordained by God; but the fact was otherwise. For the sweet-toothed Asher, five years older than Joseph, was born after the end of the second seven years, that is in the eighth year of wedlock; and a detailed consideration will show that Joseph could not have been born less

than two years after the birth of the sea-loving Zebulun, namely in the thirteenth year of wedlock and the twentieth of the sojourn at Harran. How could it be otherwise? For he was a child of Jacob's old age; Jacob must have been at least fifty years old when his darling was born and in consequence must have already spent twenty years with Laban. But of these twenty, only twice seven, or fourteen years were years of actual service; so that between them and the time of giving notice and signing the new contract lie a further six years not covered by contract, a quiet passage of time which, from the point of view of Jacob's ultimate riches, must be reckoned with the last five, during which another contract obtained. For though these years may afford the best and most convincing explanation of the man's extraordinary increase, yet after all they are not space enough in which to accumulate a fortune the magnitude of which has been celebrated in song and story. Granted that much exaggeration had crept in; for instance, the statement that Jacob had two hundred thousand sheep is obviously impossible to believe. But there must have been many thousand, to say nothing of his other cattle, his slaves, his gold and silver; Laban's words, when he overtook his son-in-law on the flight, that he might restore what he had "stolen" by day and "stolen" by night, would not have a shadow of justification, they would be meaningless, if Jacob's riches had been founded merely on the last contract with Laban; if he had not already, in the aforementioned interval, done much business for himself and laid the foundations of his later fortunes.

Twenty-five years; to Jacob they passed like a dream, as life passes for the living; in desire and attainment,

in expectation, disillusion, fulfilment — a succession of days which he does not count, each of which gives what it has to give, and in waiting and striving, patience and impatience, retreat one by one into the past, and melt into larger units, into months, years and decades, each of which, in the end, is like a single day. It is a question, whether monotony or organized variation makes the time pass more swiftly; in any case it is a matter of the passage of time: the living creature urges forwards, he strives to put time behind him, he strives, at bottom, towards death, thinking that he is striving towards the various goals and turning-points of his life. And though time for him is articulated and divided into epochs, in another sense it is uniform because it is *his* time, moving on always under the constant sign of his own ego; so that for him the passage of time and of life are always attended by two favouring powers, uniformity and articulation.

In the end it is an arbitrary business, this dividing up of time — not greatly different from drawing lines in water. One can draw them so, or again so, and even as one draws the water flows together again into uniformity. We have divided the five times five years of Jacob's sojourn at Harran into twenty and five, and again into fourteen and six and five; but he might himself have divided them into the first seven years, then the thirteen in which the children were coming, and then the five final ones which completed the term just as the five intercalated days complete the twelve times thirty of the solar year. He might so reckon — or even otherwise. At all events, there were twenty-five years in all; uniform not only because they were Jacob's years, but because in all

outward circumstances they were just alike, and any variation they showed in the point of view was not sufficient to stem the flow of their uniformity.

JACOB AND LABAN CONFIRM THEIR BARGAIN

AN ARTICULATION, a sort of epoch in Jacob's sojourn, came about through the fact that the contract which he signed with Laban on the day after his arrival was voided after only a single month and replaced by another much more binding one. The uncle had taken immediate steps to give legal sanction to Jacob's position in his house, as he had conceived it in his dry and materialistic communings over his beer. They set off early from the steading and betook themselves on asses to the town of Harran: Laban, Jacob and the slave Abdcheba, the last-named having to serve as witness before the notary or officer of the law. This officer had his seat set up in a court where there was a great press of people, all come hither to execute or to contest contracts: buyers and sellers, lessors and lessees, couples to be married and to be divorced — the justice and his two clerks who squatted beside him had their hands full to satisfy the claims of the town and country population, and Laban and his people had to wait a long time until it was the turn of their after all insignificant and quickly despatched affair. Laban had first to find a bystander — several stood about in hope of such windfalls — and to pay him with corn and oil, to act as second witness. This man then, with Abdcheba, became guaranty for the contract, and both sealed to it by pressing their thumbnails into the convex reverse of the clay tablet. Laban possessed a cylindrical seal; Jacob

had forfeited his and so sealed with the hem of his garment. Thus they attested the simple text scratched down by one of the scribes to the mechanical dictation of the judge: Laban, sheepbreeder, took this and this man from Amurru-land, being homeless, son of this and this man, as hired servant until further notice; said man obliging himself to devote his powers of body and mind in the service of Laban's house and business, with no other pay than the satisfaction of his bodily needs: qualification, appeal, complaint, there were none. Whoever might, contrary to law, in future impugn this contract and seek to challenge it, his suit should be no suit, and he should be fined, five minas of silver. That was all. Laban had to pay the charges, and did so with a couple of copper plaques which he threw grumbling on to the scales. But actually it was cheap at the price, to bind Jacob over on such terms, for he set more store by the blessing than he had been willing to confess, and it would be to underestimate his business sagacity to assume that he was not aware of the good bargain he had made. He was a depressing man and unpleasing in the sight of the gods; without confidence in his own star and hence unsuccessful so far in his undertakings. He did not for a moment fail to recognize that he could do excellently well with a blessing-bearing man as a partner.

Thus after the contract was signed he was in good spirits, for him, and indulged in a little shopping, buying food, stuffs and small equipment; and challenging his companions to express their admiration of the city and its noisy traffic. The thickness of the walls and bastions and the beauty of the well-watered gardens surrounding them, where garlands of vine hung between the date palms; the

sacred splendours of E-hulhul, the walled temple, whose courts had gates plated with silver and guarded by bronze bulls; the loftiness of the tower, rising in graduated steps on its immense mound, surrounded by ramparts — a monstrosity erected of tiles in seven different colours, the top being azure blue, so that the shrine and temporary quarters of the god, where his marriage bed was set up, melted into the brilliant blue of the upper air. But Jacob had only Hum and Ha to say to these sights. The urban did not speak to him, he loved neither the bustle and tumult nor the exaggerated gorgeousness of the buildings, which gave themselves the airs of the eternal, but in his view were destined to destruction within a term which in God's sight was very trifling indeed — and that no matter how cleverly the brick mountain was drained and protected by bitumen and reed mats. He was homesick for the meadows of Beersheba; but by contrast with the pretentious splendours of the town, which oppressed his shepherd's soul, he could almost think of Laban's farm as home, where there waited for him a pair of black eyes in whose expression he had read utter readiness; with which, he felt, important matters were to be discussed. He thought of her, as he absently regarded these doomed and presumptuous structures: of her and of his God, who had promised to keep his feet in strange places and to lead him rich home, the God of Abram, for whom he felt jealous as he looked at Bel-Harran's house and court, this fortress of an idolatrous faith, guarded by bronze griffins and wild bulls, in whose inmost cell, sparkling with precious stones and built of gilded cedar beams, the bearded statue of the idol stood on a silver pedestal and received the smoke and incense

and adoration of a regally developed ritual. Whereas Jacob's God, whom he felt was greater than all others, even to being the only God, possessed no house at all upon earth, and was worshipped in simplicity under trees and on heights of ground. Doubtless He would not have it otherwise, and Jacob felt proud that He had scorned and despised such earthly and urban splendours, because they would not have done Him enough honour. But in his pride there mingled some suspicion that even his God would have liked to live in an enamelled house with beams of cedar and adorned with carbuncles, which of course would have to be seven times finer than the house of the moon-idol, and only resigned it because His people were not yet powerful enough to build it for Him. " Only wait," Jacob thought, " and boast your uttermost of the splendours of your high lord Bel! Me hath my God at Beth-el promised to make rich those who believe in Him; and when we are rich, we will build to Him a house of pure gold and sapphire, rock crystal and jasper, within and without, so that the houses of all your gods and goddesses shall pale before it. Awful is the past and the present mighty for that it is present to the eye. But greatest and holiest is beyond doubt the future, and consoling to the oppressed heart of him to whom it is promised."

#### OF JACOB'S EXPECTANCY

LATE as it was when uncle and nephew returned from the town, Laban insisted on putting the tablet with the contract into the chamber in the cellar of his house, which served for the deposit of such documents. Jacob went with

him, each with a lighted lamp in his hand. The chamber lay beneath the floor of the left-hand room, opposite the gallery where they had taken yesterday's meal; it was a sort of archive, combined with a chapel and a burial place, for Bethuel's bones reposed here in the centre in an earthen chest, surrounded by vessels and food offerings and tripods with pans for the burning — and somewhere here too, deeper down or within a side wall, must be the jar with the remains of Laban's sacrificed little son. There was a niche at the back of the cellar with a square brick altar before it, and along the sides ran low narrow benches; on the right-hand one lay various tablets, receipts, accounts and contracts, put here for safe keeping. But on the opposite bench stood some ten or twelve little gods, curious to behold, some with high caps and the faces of bearded children, others bald and beardless, with skirts like scales and bare upper parts, holding their hands folded peacefully under their chins. Others had coarsely modelled garments falling in folds, the plump toes sticking out beneath. These were Laban's household gods and little soothsayers, his teraphim, in whom he reposed great confidence and was wont to consult them upon every occasion of moment. They protected the house, he explained to Jacob; they were fairly reliable weather prophets, advised him in matters of buying and selling, indicated the direction in which a lost sheep might have strayed, and so on.

Jacob did not relish the bones, the receipt tablets nor the idols, and was glad when they had reascended the ladder that led down to their domains through a hole in the floor, and he could go to sleep. Laban had worshipped before Bethuel's coffin, changing the water which was

there for the refreshment of the deceased — " poured out water " to him — and made his obeisances to the teraphim; it only lacked that he should have worshipped the documents. Worship of the dead and adoration of idols were alike repugnant to Jacob; he was depressed by the confusion and lack of clarity that reigned in this house in religious matters — one would have expected a much more enlightened attitude in Laban, who after all was Rebecca's brother and the grandnephew of Abram. He was not without knowledge of the religious tradition of his relatives in the west, but so much local observance mingled with his original convictions that it formed now their main content, to which the Abramitic contribution was only subsidiary. Seated though he was at the very source and fount of the spiritual history of his tribe — and perhaps because he had remained seated there — he regarded himself entirely as a subject of Babel and adherent to its state religion, speaking to Jacob of Ya-Elohim, " the god of thy fathers," and mixing him up quite ridiculously with Marduk, the god of Shinar. That upset Jacob, he had expected a more enlightened culture, as his father and mother had obviously done too, and particularly on Rachel's account he was disquieted, for of course her beautiful and well-favoured little head must suffer from equal confusion — he took every occasion from then on to influence her in the direction of the true and just God. For from the first day, indeed from the moment he had seen her at the fountain, he thought of her as his bride; and it is probably not too much to say that she too, in the little cry which escaped her when she was convinced of his cousinship, acknowledged him as her bridegroom.

Marriage between relatives was at that time, for excellent reasons, quite the usual thing. It was the only proper, sensible and respectable arrangement — we know how poor Esau damaged his position by his eccentric marriages. It was no personal crotchet of Abram's which caused him to insist that Yitzchak " the true son " should take a wife only from his race and his father's house, that is from Nahor's house at Harran, in order that one might know what one was getting. In coming to this house of marriageable daughters, Jacob was treading in the footsteps of Isaac — or more precisely in Eliezer's — and the idea of marriage was for him, as well as for Isaac and Rebecca, bound up with the visit; as indeed it would also have been for Laban, had the man of business been able at once to recognize a son-in-law in this fugitive and beggar. Laban, like any other father, would have found dangerous and repugnant the idea of giving his daughters into a strange and unknown race — to sell them, as he would have put it, abroad. Far wiser and more fitting it was for them to remain, as married women, within the bosom of the tribe; and a cousin on the father's side being available, he — that is to say, Jacob — was the natural and foreordained husband for them. Which meant, not only for one of them but for both. Such was the tacit general assumption in Laban's house when Jacob came — and certainly it was Rachel's. She it was who had first greeted the newcomer, and she understood her role on this earth quite well enough to know that she was beautiful and well-favoured, whereas Leah had " tender " eyes — yet in that open-hearted measuring gaze she had given Jacob at the well, she was by no means thinking of herself alone. Life would have it that the

coming of their cousin made rivals of the sisters and playmates; but not in regard to the decisive question of whom he would choose; it might indeed rest with her to use her greater attractiveness to the advantage of them both. No, it would be later that a question would arise: the question as to which of them would make a better, more capable, fruitful and beloved wife to the cousin-husband — a matter in which she had no advantage, and which did not depend on a more or less ephemeral power of attraction.

Such was the attitude in Laban's house, and only Jacob himself — and this was the cause of much misunderstanding — looked at things differently. For in the first place, though he knew that besides the lawful wife one could have concubines and slaves, who bore one half-legitimate children, he was not aware, and did not learn for a long time, that in this region, and particularly in Harran and roundabout, marriage with two equally legitimate wives was not only frequent, but in well-to-do families even customary. And in the second place his heart and senses were too full of Rachel's charms even to spend a thought upon the somewhat older, more mature and ill-favoured sister. Even when he spoke to her out of politeness he was not thinking of her, and she knew it and smiled bitterly, shrouding in dignity the pain at her heart and drooping her eyelids to hide her squint. Laban saw it too and was jealous for his eldest born, rejoicing for her neglected sake that he had reduced the cousin-suitor to the legal status of a hired slave.

## JACOB MAKES A DISCOVERY

As often as he could, Jacob came to speech with Rachel; but that was seldom enough, for both were busy during the day; and in particular Jacob found himself in the position of a man whose heart is filled with a single matter which he would fain make the sole concern of his days, yet is compelled to hard labour precisely for the sake of his love, and in that labour must even forget his love, and thus again do violence to it. For a man of feeling, such as Jacob was, that is hard indeed. For he would gladly have rested in feeling and made it his life, yet might not, but must play the man precisely in honour of his feeling — since if he did not, how should he else have honoured it? Of course, they were really one and the same, his love for Rachel and his work for Laban; for if he did not succeed in this, how should he in the other? Laban must be convinced of the full value of his nephew's claim, and be eager to attach him to himself. In a word, Jacob must not put to shame the blessing of Isaac; for it was the part of a man to do his utmost not to make a shame of the blessing, but rather to bring to honour the feeling of his heart.

In the beginning, the meadow where he watched his uncle's sheep was not far, not more than an hour from his uncle's house. He went thither every morning with food in his shepherd's pouch, a sling in his belt and armed with the long crook, and stopped there all day, with the dog Marduka. This had the advantage that he could sleep at home; driving his flock in at sunset and putting his best foot foremost all the evening. He was

glad of this, for otherwise his shepherding would have left him little chance to convince Laban that he had taken a blessing into his household with the runaway nephew. Not a lamb was missing when at folding time he let the flocks pass under his crook into the pen beneath Laban's eyes; he taught the young lambs to feed so early that he saved Laban much in milk and curds; and by dint of skill and devotion he cured one of the two he-goats, a fine breeder, of the pox. But Laban took all these achievements as the service due from a capable shepherd and expressed no gratitude, either then or when Jacob, soon after he entered upon his tasks, fitted the ground-floor windows with pretty lattices. He refused to pay for whitewash for the walls and Jacob had to give up the idea of marking his advent with so signal an improvement to the appearance of the steading. He was at his wit's end how to testify to the blessing; but the inward tension produced by all his ardent desires and searchings may have prepared him for revelations and made him the instrument of an event of far-reaching importance, which all his life long he thought back upon with joy.

He found water near Laban's cornfield, living water, a subterranean spring; found it — as he well knew — by the Lord's help, though the miracle was attended by somewhat offensive manifestations, which were apparently a concession of His pure essence to the local spirit and the ideas current in the region. Jacob had just been talking with the lovely Rachel outside of the house, and his language had been as frank as it was gallant. He had told her that her charm was like to that of the Egyptian Hathor, or of Isis, or the beauty of a young heifer. The

light of her womanliness shone round her, he poetically-said; she was like a mother nourishing with humid warmth the good seed, and to have her for wife and to beget sons of her was his dearest desire. She listened with a chaste and noble charm. The cousin and bridegroom had come, she had proven him with her eyes, and loved him with all her youthful readiness for love. With her head between his hands he asked her whether she too would rejoice to give him children, she had nodded, and the sweet black eyes had brimmed with tears, and he had kissed these tears from her eyes, their moisture was still on his lips. In the twilight, between daylight and moonlight, he had gone out to the meadows; suddenly he felt his feet held and pulled back, while a strange twitching ran from his shoulder to his toes, like a flash of lightning. Straining his eyes, he saw close in front of him a most strange figure. It had the body of a fish, glistening silvery-slippery in the moonlight and the daylight, and its head was a fish's head. But beneath that, and covered by it as by a cap, was a human face with a ringleted beard, and the creature likewise had human feet growing out of its fish-tail and a little pair of arms. It was stooping down and seeming to draw something from the ground in a pail, which it held with both its hands, to pour it out and draw it full again, and again. Then it tripped a few steps sideways on its little feet and glided into the earth; at least it vanished.

Jacob understood at once that the shape was Ea-Oannes, god of the water depths, lord of the middle earth and of the oceans above the deeps, to whom the people hereabouts ascribed their possession of almost all they

knew that was worth knowing, considering him very great, as great as Ellil, Sin, Shamash and Nabu. Jacob, of course, knew that he was not so great in comparison with the highest, known of Abram, in the first place for the reason that he had a shape, and even an absurd one. He knew that if Ea had appeared to him to show him something, it could only be at the instigation of Ya, the one and only, Isaac's God, who abode with him. But what this lesser god had indicated to him by his gestures was none the less of great importance in itself, and also in all its issues and ramifications, and he pulled himself together and ran to the court to fetch tools, and roused up Abdcheba the twenty-shekel man to help him, and dug half the night, slept for an hour, and then went on digging, until to his distress he had to drive out the sheep and leave his labours for the whole day. He could neither stand nor lie nor sit that day while he pastured Laban's flock.

It was still some time to the beginning of the winter rains and the resumption of field-work. Everything was burnt up, Laban paid no further attention to the fields, but worked in the court, so that he did not come to where Jacob was, and knew nothing of the activities which the latter resumed that evening and continued by the light of the rising moon until Ishtar appeared. He dug at several points within a small circumference, and went deep down through clay and stone, in the sweat of his brow. But when the eastern sky grew bright, before ever the sun had pushed its rim over the horizon, lo, the water gushed up, the spring spirited forth in great force, it leaped up three spans high inside the hole and began to fill the hastily dug and shapeless ditch; it sprinkled the

earth roundabout, and its waters tasted like the treasures of the lower world.

Then Jacob prayed; yet even as he prayed he ran to find Laban. When he saw him from afar, he went more slowly; came up and greeted him and said with bated breath:

" I have found water."

" What sayest thou? " asked Laban, the corner of his mouth going down.

" A spring from beneath the earth," was Jacob's reply. " I have dug it between the court and the field; it gusheth up the height of an ell."

" Thou'rt possessed."

" No. The Lord my God showed me, according to my father's blessing. Let my uncle come and see."

Laban ran, as he had run at the announcement of Eliezer's coming, the rich wooer. Long before Jacob, who followed more slowly, he was at the ditch, gazing.

" That is running water," he said, with some emotion.

" Thou sayest it," Jacob agreed.

" How hast thou done this? "

" I had faith and dug."

" This water," said Laban, without lifting his eyes from the ditch, " I can lead on my field in an open channel and water it."

" It will be very good," responded Jacob.

" I can," Laban went on, " say to Isullanu's sons at Harran that I renounce the contract which I have with them, for that I have no more need of their water."

" Such a thought had passed likewise through my mind," said Jacob. " Moreover, thou canst dig a pond and wall it in, and plant a garden with date palms and

all kinds of fruit trees, as figs, pomegranates and mulberries. If thou thinkest well, thou canst plant likewise pistachio trees, pears and almonds, and put in a few strawberry trees; and thou wilt have from the dates the flesh, the sap and the kernel, and the pith of the palm for food, the leaves for woven work, the ribs for many household uses, the bast for weaving and rope-making, and the wood for building."

Laban said nothing. He did not embrace the bearer of the blessing, nor fall down before him. He said nothing; he stood, turned on his heel and went. Jacob, too, departed, sought and found Rachel, who sat milking in a stall. He told her all, and how that now they might in all likelihood have children together. They took each other by the hands and danced about and sang: " Hallelu-Ya! "

#### JACOB SUES FOR RACHEL

WHEN Jacob had been a month with Laban he came before his master and said that now Esau's wrath must be sensibly abated, he, Jacob, had somewhat he must say.

" Hear me, before thou speakest," responded Laban, " for I had in mind to speak unto thee. Lo, now, thou art a month in my service and we have made offerings together on the roof, by the new moon, the half moon, the full moon and the day of vanishing. In this time have I taken, besides thee, three hired servants, for a term, whom I pay, according to the law. For water hath been found, not without thy aid, and we have begun to wall in the spring and lay the runnels of bricks. And we have measured off the pond that is to be dug, and if we shall plant a garden, there is much labour and the strength of

many arms required, thine, and theirs whom I have hired, whom I feed and clothe and reward with each five selas of corn daily. Until now thou hast served me without reward, out of kinship and love, according to our contract. But, lo, we will make a new contract, for it is no longer right, before gods and men, that the strange servants should be rewarded and thou, because thou art my nephew, serve me for naught. Tell me, therefore, what shall thy wages be? For I will give thee what I give the others, and somewhat more if thou wilt seal to sojourn with me for as many years as the week hath days, and as one counts, until the ploughland lie fallow and the earth rest, that man neither sows nor reaps. Thus shalt thou serve me seven years for the reward which thou demandest."

Such was the speech of Laban and the course his thoughts took; plausible speech, clothing plausible thoughts. But the thoughts — and not only the words — of the earth-bound man are only a garment and a gloze for his inner hopes and desires, which he clothes in plausible form, so that he is prone to lie even before he speaks, and his words have such an honest ring, because it is the thoughts that are false and not they. Laban was downright horrified to hear that Jacob wished to go, for since the finding of the spring he had known that Jacob was in truth a bearer of blessings, a man with a lucky hand; and that he must do his uttermost to bind him to him, for thus his affairs would prosper from the blessing which the other bore with him wheresoever he came. The finding of the spring was a mighty blessing, so full of consequence that it was only one of its boons, not the greatest, that it freed Laban from his heavy tribute to

Isullanu's sons. They had made all sorts of excuses, declaring that without their water Laban could never have planted his field, and therefore whether he used it or not he owed the oil, the corn and the wool, he, and likewise his posterity, for evermore. But the judge feared the gods and decided in Laban's favour — which Laban was inclined to interpret as another manifestation of Jacob's God. And now there was much under way and in progress, much undertaken, for which the blessing was requisite for its prosperity and success. The economic relation between the two was altered in the nephew's favour. Laban felt he needed him; Jacob was well aware of the fact, and could bring pressure by his threat of leaving, which Laban's practical sense was prepared to take into account. Thus, even before Jacob had applied it, Laban anticipated the pressure by acknowledging that the conditions of Jacob's servitude were unworthy of him, and taking the words out of his mouth by his fair proposals. Jacob knew, nobody better, that he could not dream of leaving, that the circumstances were by no means ripe; he rejoiced that his uncle conceded that the nephew had the whip hand, and felt grateful to him for meeting him halfway, though well knowing that the offer was prompted not by love, but by self-interest. He even felt grateful to him for the interest which bound the other to him; for man is so constituted that the friendliness which is the outward expression of the interest will often elicit a loving response. But more than all, Jacob loved Laban for the sake of that which he had to give, and for what he thought to demand of him, for it was greater than much corn and many shekels. He said:

" My father and brother, if thou wilt that I shall stay

here and return not to Esau, even though he be now appeased, but serve thee, then give me Rachel thy child to wife, and let her be my meed. For in beauty she is like to a young heifer, and she looks upon me with kindness. We have spoken together and have said to each other that we would have children together after our likeness. Give her, then, to me, and I am thine."

Laban was not at all surprised. I have already said that he had begun by thinking of Jacob as a wooer, and only on account of Jacob's plight had the thought slipped into the background of his mind. It was not strange that his nephew, now that his position had so greatly improved, should bring up the idea, and also it was not unpleasing to the clod to realize — as he did at once — that the tactical advantage passed thereby once more into his hands. For Jacob, in confessing that he loved Rachel, put himself again, as it were, in Laban's power, and weakened the pressure of his threat to leave. But what annoyed the father was that Jacob spoke of Rachel, only of her, and passed over Leah entirely. He answered:

" So I should give you Rachel? "

" Yes, Rachel. She, too, would have it so."

" Not Leah, my elder child? "

" No. She is not quite so dear unto my heart."

" She is the elder, and the next to woo."

" Truly, she is somewhat older. She is likewise of fine figure and bearing, despite some small defects, or just on account of them; and she would probably be fruitful in bearing me children, such as I desire. But my heart hangs upon Rachel, thy younger child, for she is to me like Hathor and Isis; she is radiant in womanly charm, like Ishtar, and her sweet eyes follow me whithersoever I go.

Lo, an hour since my lips were wet with tears which she had shed for me. Give her to me, then, and I will labour for thee."

"Certainly it is better I should give her to thee than to a stranger," Laban said. "But shall I, then, give Leah, my elder, to a stranger, or shall she wither without a husband? Take first Leah; take both! "

"Thou art of a kindly heart," said Jacob, "but let it not affront thine ears if I say that Leah speaks not to my man's desires, but on the contrary, and my service hath to do with Rachel alone."

Then Laban looked at him a while with his afflicted and drooping eye and said gruffly:

"As thou wilt. Then seal unto me that thou wilt sojourn seven years with me and serve me for this reward."

"Seven times seven," Jacob cried. "A jubilee, in the name of the Lord. When shall the wedding be? "

"After seven years," answered Laban.

We can imagine the start Jacob gave.

"What," he cried, "I should serve thee for Rachel seven years, and before thou givest her to me? "

"How else?" responded Laban, as though in astonishment. "I should be a fool to give her to thee at once, that ye might be up and off, when it pleased thee, do what I would. Or where is the purchase price and the dowry and the fitting morning presents thou wilt give me that I may bind them to the bride's girdle and they remain unto me according to the law, in case thou drawest back from the marriage? Hast thou them by thee, the minas of silver and the other matters, or where are they? Thou art as poor as a field mouse, and poorer. And so let it be signed and sealed before the judge that I sell thee the

wench for seven years that thou wilt serve, and the payment will be when it has been earned. And we will lay the tablet below with the other tablets, and entrust it to the charge of the teraphim."

"A hard-hearted uncle," ejaculated Jacob, "hath the Lord given to me!"

"Words!" was Laban's reply. "I am as hard as the situation permits me to be, and if it require, then I shall be softer. But thou wilt have the wench to wife—go, then, without her, or else serve.

"I will serve," Jacob said.

#### OF THE LONG WAITING

THUS passed the prelude; the first and preliminary period of Jacob's long sojourn with Laban; it was only one month, and at its end the new contract, with its fixed and far-away terminus, came into force. It was a contract of marriage as well as a contract of service, a mixture of the two, such as the *mashkim*, or presiding judge, had probably not had often come before him, though something similar probably now and again, and which he recognized as a matter susceptible of legal treatment, and also, with the consent of both parties, legally binding. The contract was written out in duplicate, and then discussed with both sides, in order to clear up any doubtful points, and the words of both set down, so that there was clear and apparent proof that they had agreed. This man had said to that man: Give me thy daughter to wife, and the other man had answered: What wilt thou give for her? And the other man had had nothing. Then the above-mentioned man had said: Seeing that thou canst

pay no dowry nor any presents to hang at the bride's girdle at the betrothal, thou shalt serve me for as many years as the week hath days. And that shall be the price which thou payest, and the bride shall be thine for the nuptials after the end of the term, together with a mina of silver and a maid, which I will give as dowry, but so that the price of the maid shall be reckoned as two-thirds of the mina of silver and the other third be paid in metal or the fruits of the fields. Then said the other man: So be it. In the name of the king, so be it. Each side took one of the contracts. Whoever shall set himself up against it, in that he behaveth unlawfully, there shall no good come unto him for it.

The agreement was sensible, the judge found it fair, and from the business side, Jacob himself had not much to complain of. If he owed his uncle a mina of silver at sixty shekels, seven years' labour would not suffice to pay the debt, for the average wage for a labourer was seven shekels a year, and seven of them would not make up the sum. He felt profoundly that the economic point of view was a very deceptive one; that if there were a just scale, a God's scale, as it were, the side with the seven years would have made the side with the shekels fly up into the air. But after all, he would spend these years in Rachel's company, and thus love's sacrifice would be mingled with much joy; besides which, beginning with the signing of the contract, she would be legally betrothed and sealed to him, so that no other man could approach her without being as guilty as though he had led away a married woman. Seven years! Seven years they must wait for each other, these children of brother and sister. They would be at a quite different time of life, be-

fore they might bring forth sons to each other, and that was a bitter condition, which proceeded either from Laban's cruelty or his lack of imagination, and displayed him, in short, once more, and in the most glaring light, as a man without heart or imagination. Another grievance was his extraordinary greed and his tendency to overreach even his nearest and dearest, for instance, in the clause in the contract which referred to the dowry, the parental morning gift, which was such a bad bargain for poor Jacob, particularly as the problematical maid was valued at at least twice the sum asked for a fair average slave either in these parts or in the west. But there was no helping this offensive feature, nor any other, of the situation. The time when he could drive a better bargain would come, Jacob realized; he felt in his soul the promise of good business and a secret power and capacity which was certainly greater than any resident in the bosom of this underworldly devil of a father-in-law of his, Laban, the man of Aram, whose eyes had become lovely in Rachel his child. As for the seven years, they were even now in the process of being lived down. It would have been easier to sleep them away; but not only because that was not possible, but because it seemed better on the whole to look after them actively, Jacob suppressed the thought in his mind.

This he did, and so, too, should the narrator, and not imagine that he can pass over and obliterate the time with a little sentence like "Seven years went by." It is the story-teller's way to say things like that; and yet no one should let the words, if they must be spoken, pass his lips lightly, nor otherwise than heavy with meaning and hesitant with reverence for life, so that the hearer,

too, feels them heavy with meaning, and he marvels how they can pass, those years the end of which one can see only with the understanding but not with the soul; and even pass as though they had been seven days. For such is the tradition: that the seven years, before which Jacob had at first quailed with fear, passed by like days; and the tradition must ultimately go back to his own words, must be, as they say, authentic, and also most illuminating. What we have here is certainly no "seven-sleeper" enchantment, nor, indeed, any other kind, save that of time itself, whose larger units pass as do the smaller ones, neither slow nor fast, but simply pass. A day has four-and-twenty hours; quite a fair amount of time, with room in it for much life and many thousand heartbeats. Still, from one morning to another so many of them pass, what with sleeping and waking, one way and another; you do not know how, and just as little do you know how seven days pass, a week, the unit a mere four of which suffices the moon to go through all her phases. Jacob did not say that seven years went as fast as days; he would not have made a comparison so derogatory to the value of one day of life. And the day, too, does not go "fast," but it goes, with its times of day, its morning, midday, afternoon and evening, one among others; and so likewise does the year, with its seasons, from spring to spring, in the same unqualifiable way, one among others. Thus it was Jacob said that seven years passed, to him, like days.

It is idle to say that a year consists not only of its seasons, the succession of spring, green grazing and sheep-shearing, harvest and summer heat, first rains and new planting, snow and frosty nights, and round again to the

rosy blossoms of the tamarisk. That is only the frame of the year; the year itself is a filigree of life, heavy with events, an ocean to drink up. Such a filigree of thinking, feeling, acting, and happening the day is likewise, and the hour, on a smaller scale, if you like; but distinctions of size among time units are very little absolute, and their relative yardstick is the measure of ourselves, our feeling, our adaptation, or the lack of it. Seven days may under some circumstances be harder to swallow, a more daring adventure in time, than seven years. But what do we mean by daring? For whether one plunge hot-blooded or shivering into time's stream, there lives not a soul who is not forced to surrender to it. And nothing more is needed. For it carries us away, tears us along with it, without our marking, and if we look back, lo, the point where we stepped in is "far back," it is, for instance, seven years away, years that have passed like days. No, we cannot even express or distinguish the manner in which man gives himself to time, whether gladly or with misgiving; for the necessity dominates such distinctions and makes them void. No one says that Jacob undertook and entered upon his seven years with joy, for only after they had passed might he beget children with Rachel. But that was a trouble of the mind which was greatly assuaged by the contrary workings of his vitality, which conditioned his relation to time and time's relation to him. For Jacob was to live into his hundred-and-sixth year, and though his spirit knew it not, yet his body knew it, and the soul of his flesh; and thus seven years to him, while not so little as seven years in the sight of God, were yet not nearly so much to him as to one who should live but fifty or sixty years; thus

his soul could more tranquilly envisage the waiting-time. And finally, for our general comfort be it said, that it was not pure waiting which he had to bear, for that would have been too long. Pure waiting is torture; no one could bear to sit seven years, or seven days, or walk up and down and wait, as one can do for perhaps an hour. In the large and larger time units that cannot happen, because the waiting gets longer and thinner, and at the same time more densely occupied with mere living, so that for long stretches of time it falls victim to sheer forgetfulness; that is to say, it withdraws into the depth of the soul and is no longer consciously present. Thus a half hour of pure and mere waiting is more frightful and a crueller test of patience than a waiting that is put into a life of seven years. What we await close at hand affects us, precisely because of its nearness, as a much keener and more immediate stimulus than if it were far off; it transforms our patience into nerve- and muscle-consuming impatience, it makes us morbid; we literally do not know what to do with our limbs; while a long-term waiting leaves us in peace; it not only permits, but forces us to think of other things, and do other things, for we must live. Such is the origin of the surprising truth, that no matter with what degree of longing we wait, we do it not with more difficulty, but with more ease, the more distant in time lies the goal of our hopes.

These consoling reflections — which simply amount to the statement that nature and the soul have ways of helping themselves out — proved particularly true in Jacob's case. He served, ostensibly, as Laban's shepherd; and a shepherd, we know, has much idle time. Hours on end, whole half-days long, his lot is spacious contemplation,

and if he is waiting for something, his waiting is not enveloped in much activity. But here was the virtue of long-sight waiting; for it was by no means the case that Jacob could not sit nor stand nor lie, but ran about the plain with his head between his hands. Rather his soul was tranquil, if also a little sad, and waiting formed not the treble, but the ground-bass of his life. Of course he thought much of Rachel, and their children to be, when he was far from her, with the dog Marduka; as he lay propped on his elbows with his cheeks in his hands, or with his hands folded in the back of his neck, one leg supported on the other knee, in the shade of rocks or shrubbery; or leaning on his staff in the wide plain with his sheep grazing round him. And not alone of her, but of God, and all the tales he knew, the near and far, his flight and wandering, of Eliphaz, and the proud vision of Beth-el; of the feast of the cursing of Esau; of Yitzchak the blind, of Abram, of the tower, the flood, of Adapa or Adama, in the garden of paradise . . . which reminded him of the garden which he had helped his clod of a father-in-law to plant, through his blessing, and which had meant such increase of prosperity to the man.

I may say that in the first year of the contract, Jacob did not, or not often, keep the sheep. Either Abdcheba, the twenty-shekel man, or one of La-ban's daughters did it, and Jacob devoted himself, by his uncle's wish and command, to the works that arose out of his discovery: the laying of the water system and the building of the pond, for which he utilized a natural hollow in the ground, evened it out with the spades, walled it round and hardened the floor with stone cement. At last the garden was in being — Laban laid great stress on having this new

enterprise carried out with the aid of the blessing-bearing hands, for he was now quite convinced that the blessing, so shrewdly obtained, was indeed efficacious, and flattered himself at his own cunning in enlisting it to the interest of his own business. Certainly it was plain and clear that Rebecca's son brought good luck, almost against his will; that his mere presence could set in vigorous motion enterprises which had seemed destined to drag and to founder. What a prosperous bustle there was in Laban's court and in his fields, what digging, hammering, ploughing and planting! Laban had borrowed money to enlarge his business, and to make the necessary purchases. Isullanu's sons at Harran had advanced it him, despite their loss of the lawsuit over the water. For they were cool and practical heads, personally quite unemotional, the loss of the suit seemed to them no ground at all for refusing to do business with the man who had won it; it was precisely the advantage by means of which he had won it that now made him look like a good investment in their eyes. They lent him money without a thought. But so it is in business, and Laban was not at all surprised. He needed the bank's money, if only to pay and feed the three new servants, who were the property of a lender in the city. Jacob directed the work of these, sometimes giving a helping hand, and overseeing the whole. For it goes without saying that his position in the house, even without any agreement on the subject, was not in the least like that of these crop-headed hirelings and slaves, who wore the name of their owner written in indelible dye in the right hand. The seven-year contract, down below among the teraphim, was far from putting him into their category. He was the nephew of the house,

the betrothed of its daughter, and he was lord of the water-sources to boot and engineer and head gardener — all this Laban conceded to him and knew very well why he did so.

Also he knew why he entrusted Jacob with the larger part of the buying of tools, material, seeds and plants needed for the new operations, upon which the borrowed money was laid out. He confided in his nephew's lucky hand — and with right; for it always turned out to his advantage and he got better material than when he dealt himself, being sour of visage and lacking in the blessing. But Jacob profited too, and this period saw the slender beginnings of the prosperity which was to assume such large proportions. For he conceived his dealings in the city and with business associates scattered throughout the country not in the fixed and rigid sense that he was Laban's authorized middle-man and agent, but as though he were commissioner and factor, and such a very good, experienced, sociable and conversable one that he could always put aside a smaller or greater private gain in cash or goods; and was soon the owner of a little flock of sheep and goats — even before he had begun to tend Laban's sheep. God the King had cried out to the sound of the harps that Jacob should return with riches to Yitzchak's house, and that was at once a promise and a command, the latter in so far as such promises can hardly be expected to be fulfilled without human co-operation. Should he prove God the King a liar and bring his words to shame out of sheer carelessness and unlimited consideration towards an uncle who himself dealt with affairs in the most grimly practical manner and yet failed to draw any advantage from them? Jacob was not even

tempted to make such a blunder. Let nobody think that he cheated Laban and secretly overreached him. No, for Laban was in general aware of what Jacob did; as to details, he drew down the corner of his mouth and deliberately shut his eyes. For the man saw that things almost always turned out to better advantage than when he kept them in his own two heavy fists; also he had some reason to feel afraid of Jacob and to connive at what he did. For Jacob was very sensitive, and required to be dealt gently with, out of consideration for the blessing. He said so quite openly, and warned Laban once for all in plain words: "If my lord check me and set me to rights in every small matter that falleth to my advantage in his service, and if he looketh askance when not he alone hath some advantage from his servant's wisdom, then quencheth he my heart in my breast and the blessing in my body, so that his affairs no longer prosper in my hands. For the Lord my God spoke in a dream to the man Belanu, from whom I have bought seed-corn for thee, that thou needest for the enlarging of thy fields, and He said: 'It is Jacob, bearer of the blessing, with whom thou dealest, and I guide his head and his feet. Therefore have a care that thou reckon the five cor which he will buy from thee for five shekels, with two hundred and fifty selas the cor, and not two hundred and forty, or thirty, as thou mightest reckon with Laban, else I will deal with thee. Jacob will give thee nine selas of oil instead of a shekel and five minas of wool instead of another, besides a good mutton of the value of a shekel and a half, and for the rest a lamb of his flock. All that will he pay for thee for thy five cor of seed-corn instead of five shekels, besides much friendly words and looks so

that thou wilt have pleasant trading with thy purchaser. But if thou makest him worse prices, then beware. For I will come amongst thy flocks and strike them with pestilence and I will visit thy wife with barrenness, and the children thou already hast with blindness and folly, and thou shalt learn to know Me.<sup>9</sup> Then did Belanu fear the Lord my God, and did as he had been commanded, so that I had the barley cheaper than another person, and much more cheaply than my uncle. For let him try himself and see if he could have made a deal with nine selas of oil for a shekel and five minas of wool for another, when in the market one gets twelve selas and more and six minas of wool, not reckoning in the exchange. And for the other shekel and a half hadst thou not given at least three lambs or a pig and a lamb? Therefore I took two lambs from thy flock and marked them with my mark and they are now mine. But what is that between thee and me? Am I not the bridegroom of thy child and through her is not what is mine likewise thine? If thou wilt that the blessing profit thee and I serve thee with wisdom and out of a willing heart, then must a reward and promise spur me on, else my soul weary in thy service and my blessing come not to profit thy works."

"Thou mayest keep the sheep," said Laban; and thus it was between them several times, until Laban preferred to say nothing and let Jacob do as he would. For he was unwilling that his nephew should weary in well-doing, and so had to give way. But he was glad when the water system was finished, the pond filled, the garden planted and the field enlarged, and he could send Jacob out with the sheep, away from the court, first near at hand, then further away, so that for weeks and months at a time he

came not under Laban's roof, but set up his own light shelter against sun and rain, out on the plain, near a spring, and made pens of clay and wattle and a temporary tower for refuge and look-out. There he lived, on scanty fare, with his crook and his sling, and with the dog Marduka guarded the scattered herds and yielded himself to time; talking to Marduka, who pretended to understand him and in part did so, watered his beasts and penned them evenings in the folds; suffered heat and cold, and got but little sleep, for the wolves howled at night after the lambs, and sometimes even a lion crept upon them, and Jacob had to make the noise of twenty men with rattle and shouting, to drive the robber away.

## OF LABAN'S INCREASE

WHEN he drove home the sheep, a day's journey or so, to give accounting to the master of flock and yearlings, and let the sheep pass under his staff, he saw Rachel, who was waiting too, and they withdrew hand in hand and spoke together long over their lot, how they must wait for so long upon one another and might have no children together, and they consoled each other by turns. Yet chiefly it was Rachel who needed consolation, for the time was longer and the waiting bore harder upon her soul, since she was not to become one hundred and six years old, but only forty-one, so that seven years were more than twice as much of her life as they were of his. And so her tears welled up from the depth of her soul, when they stood apart together, and the sweet black eyes ran over with copious tears as she mourned:

" Ah, Jacob, thou cousin from afar, who art promised

unto me, how the heart of thy little Rachel is sore within her in the impatience of her soul! For lo, the moons change and time passeth by, and it is both a pain and a gladness; for I shall soon be fourteen and I must be nineteen before the harps and drums can sound for us and we withdraw into the bridal chamber, and I am before thee as is before God the spotless one in the upper temple, and thou speakest: ' Like to the fruit of the garden will I make fruitful this woman.' All that is still so far away, according to our father's will, who hath sold me to thee, that I shall no longer be as I am when it comes, and who can tell if before that time a demon might not touch me, that I be seized with an illness and even the roots of my tongue be attacked and human help be vain? And if I recover from the touching, perhaps it might make me lose all my hair and blemish my skin with spots and yellowness, so that my friend knoweth me no more. All this I fear unspeakably, and cannot sleep and throw off my covers and wander through house and courtyard while my parents sleep, and grieve over the time, that it passeth and passeth not, for it is borne in upon me that I shall be fruitful unto thee, and by the time that I am nineteen we could have had six sons, or even eight some of them being twins, and I weep for very longing of the time."

Then Jacob took her head between his hands and kissed her beneath her two eyes, Laban's eyes, transformed in her to beauty, kissed away her tears so that his lips were wet, and said:

" Ah, dear, good, wise and clever little mother-sheep, be of good cheer! Lo, these thy tears I take with me to the field, they go with my loneliness as pledge and token **that thou art** mine, my very own, and in patience and im-

patience thou waitest for me as I for thee. For I love thee, and the darkness of thine eyes is dear beyond all else to me, and the warmth of thy head against mine moves me to my soul. Thy hair is like to the goats in the herd, for its darkness and silkiness, like to the goats of the mount of Gilead; thy teeth are as white as a bright light, and thy cheeks make me to think of the softness of peaches. Thy mouth is like young figs when they redden on the bough; and when I close them in a kiss, so is the breath of thy nostrils like the fragrance of apples. Thou art surpassingly beautiful and well-favoured, but thou wilt be so still more when thou art nineteen, and thy breasts will be like clusters of dates and clusters of grapes. For thou art pure of blood, my beloved, and no sickness can touch thee, and no demon seize thee; the Lord my God, who led me to thee and kept thee for me, will have thee in His safe keeping. And as for me, my love and my tenderness for thee is unfaltering, it is as a flame which the rain of many years cannot quench. I think of thee when I lie in the shadow of the rock or of the bushes or stand leaning on my staff; when I go to seek the strayed sheep or tend the sick ones or bear the weary lamb in my arms, when I confront the lion and when I water my flocks. In all that I do I think of thee and I slay the time. For it passes unceasingly in all that I do and have to do, and God lets it not stand one moment still, whether I rest or run. Thou and I, we wait not upon emptiness and vacancy, but we know well our hour and our hour knoweth us and it cometh to meet us. And thus it is in some ways not evil that there is still time between us and it, for when it is come we shall go hence into the land whither our forefather went, and it will be well if I

am then heavier with possessions, that the promise of my God may be fulfilled, that He should lead me back with riches into Yitzchak's house. For thine eyes are to me like the eyes of Ishtar, goddess of marriage, when she said unto Gilgamesh: ' Thy goats shall bear twofold and thy ewes twins.' Yes, though we may not yet embrace and be fruitful, our sheep are for us, and bear twofold for our sake that I may make prosperity for Laban and for me and become heavy before the Lord before we go hence."

Thus he consoled her, and the fineness of his feeling found the right words, speaking of the sheep and their, as it were, vicarious fruitfulness. For truly it was as though the local goddess of fertility, in bonds and prevented against human fruitfulness, freed herself and made good her loss in the beasts of the field, and especially in Laban's flocks which Jacob tended. They thrived as no others, and manifested the blessing as never before, so that Laban might rejoice that he had taken Jacob for his servant, for his gain was great; and he was greatly astonished at this fruitfulness, when he came out riding upon an ox, one or two days' journey, to see after the increase of the flocks. But he said nought, either for good or for evil, not in evil either, for the most ordinary shrewdness bade him deal cannily with such a breeder and man of the blessing, if ever in trade he should take his own advantage now and then as he had said openly that he would. It would have been unwise to combat the principle even if it had been applied wholesale; for such a man is sensitive and one must not offend the blessing in his body.

The truth is that Jacob was far more in his element as

sheep-breeder than he had been as overseer of the operations in court and garden. He was shepherd by birth and breeding, a moon-man, not a sun-man and farmer. The life on the meadows, however much drudgery and even danger it held, was after his nature and his heart, it was a contemplative life and it had dignity, it left him leisure to think of God and Rachel. And he loved the sheep, loved them in his senses and with his spirit, he was drawn to them in his deep and gentle musings. He loved their warmth, loved their way of life, now scattered abroad, now huddled close together, and the idyllic many-voiced chorus of bleating beneath the wide vault of heaven. He loved their solemn and withdrawn physiognomies, their level ears, their wide glassy eyes, with the wool growing down upon the base of the flat nose; loved the strong and stately head of the ram and the finer, more delicate shape of the ewe, and the innocent face of the young lamb. He loved the matted, curly, precious wool, borne patiently about on their backs, the ever-renewing fleece, which twice in the year, in spring and autumn, he and Laban and the slaves washed on their backs, then sheared it off. And his interest gave him mastery in the art of breeding, the tendance and careful regulation of the rutting and lambing times; for he had knowledge of breeds and single sheep, and of physical characteristics and grades of wool to apply in his work — though I should not ascribe entirely to these the remarkable results which he achieved. For it was not only that he improved the quality of the wool and the flesh, but also under his hands the fertility of the flocks increased beyond all known measure. There was not one barren ewe in his folds, they all bore, they bore twofold and threefold, they were still

bearing at eight years old, the time of their rutting was two months and they carried the lambs only four, their lambs matured and propagated within the year, and strange herdsmen asserted that in Jacob's flocks the wethers rutted at the full moon. That was a jest, or a superstition, but it shows Jacob's extraordinary success in this field, and suggests that it went beyond mere knowledge of the shepherd's craft. Shall we invoke the local goddess of fertility to explain these half-envious comments? As for me, I think the explanation rather lies in the state of mind of the shepherd. He was an impatient lover. He might not yet be fruitful with his Rachel; and just as often in the history of the world a damming-up of desires and powers has found its outlet in deeds of the spirit; so here, by a similar process of transference, they found expression in sympathy and care for the life entrusted to the sufferer.

The tradition, which forms the learned commentary to an original text, which in its turn represents a late and literary version of the antiphonal songs and recitatives of the shepherds, has extraordinary things to relate of Jacob's lucky transactions. In its enthusiasm it is guilty of exaggerations, from which we must not too sternly detract lest in our endeavour to clarify we distort the tale afresh. The exaggeration is perhaps not so much in the later glosses and comments as in the original events themselves, or rather in the human beings concerned, for we know how men are prone to overstress the value of something which it has become the fashion to admire and to covet. Thus it was with the tales of Jacob's successes. The report of their unique excellence spread abroad among the breeders of the neighbourhood — I

leave on one side the question of how much they were blinded by the blessing. In any case, everybody was possessed with the desire to have even one of Jacob's sheep. They made it an affair of honour. They came from far to trade with him, and if when they got there they discovered that it was after all a question of ordinary and not supernatural sheep, they forced themselves to find them miraculous, on account of the fashion; a sheep whose teeth were obviously falling out and which therefore was at least six years old, they would buy for a yearling or a tup of his bare say-so. It was said that he had traded a sheep for a camel, an ass for a slave, male or female, and though certainly nothing like such bargains were the rule or practice, yet they might happen in trade — even with reference to the slaves such reports might not be entirely without foundation. For Jacob ultimately needed helpers in his work, undershepherds, whom he hired from other dealers, and whose price might be reckoned against the value of wool, curds, fells, sinews or live animals. In the course of time he appointed some of these shepherds independent overseers over the meadows and the care of the sheep, and made a fixed bargain with them: six-and-sixty or seventy lambs a year for every hundred sheep, a sela of curds for the same number or a mina and a half of wool for each sheep — profits which accrued to Laban, of course, but as they passed through Jacob's hands left a little something behind, if only because he knew so well how to employ it to make more.

Were these the only blessings which Jacob's management secured for our loutish Laban? No — provided we assume that there was an actual connection between the

nephew's presence and the greatest blessing of all that the man had to be grateful for. And I think we may assume it, whether we interpret the fact in a mystical sense or only according to the dictates of reason. If I were here a mere inventor of tales, and conceived my contract with the public as an obligation to fabricate stories which should have a pleasing though ephemeral convincingness, what I have to tell would certainly expose me to the reproach of drawing too long a bow, and presuming far too much upon a credulity which after all has its limits. Luckily, such is not my role. I rest upon the traditional facts, which are not less sound because some of them ring as though they were newly minted. Thus I am in the position to state what I have to tell in an assured and tranquil tone that in the face of all doubts and reproaches carries conviction.

In a word, then, Laban, the son of Bethuel, became a father again during Jacob's first seven years — and the father of sons. Recompense was vouchsafed to the man, along with increasing prosperity, for the unrewarded and rejected sacrifice, the little son in the jar down below. Not single recompense, but threefold. Three times, in the third, fourth and fifth years of Jacob's sojourn, Adina, Laban's wife, that insignificant woman, was expectant; the very groans were proud with which she brooded over what she had conceived; wearing round her neck the symbol of her state, a hollow stone with a smaller one like a clapper inside it, and between prayers and howlings she was brought to bed in Laban's house and in his presence, kneeling on two bricks, to make space for the child before the gateway of her body. One midwife held her arms behind, another crouched in front

of her to watch the gate. Despite Adina's age all three births were successful and without danger to herself. They had brought many times food offerings to Nergal the red: beer, wheaten bread and even sheep, so that he being appeased his fourteen disease-bearing slaves might not mingle in the matter. And thus it was that in none of the three cases did the inwards of the labouring woman turn over, or the witch Labartu close the gateway of her body. She bore three sturdy boys, and their vociferous claims turned Laban's dull house into a very cradle of life. One was called Beor, one Alub and one Muras. And after these three successive pregnancies and births Adina not only suffered no harm but actually looked younger and less insignificant, and adorned herself assiduously with head bands, girdles and necklaces that Laban bought for her at Harran in the city.

Laban's heart was as glad as it was given his heart to be. He beamed — as well as he could — the drooping corner of his mouth looked less sour and more like a smug and even scornful smile. Taken all together, his increase of business and heightened prosperity, added to the lucky renewal of fruitfulness to his loins, and the merciful relaxation of the curse which had so long darkened his household in consequence of that unlucky speculation in the spiritual, justified all the self-complacency the man could have felt. He had no doubt that the birth of his sons, like all the rest of his good fortune, was intimately bound up with Jacob's presence and partnership, with the blessing of Yitzchak; he would have been wrong indeed to doubt it. The better spirits of the wedded pair, in particular of Laban, in respect of the good business his nephew had brought him, might have stimulated

their conjugal activity enough to open the sluices of fruitfulness — in one way or the other Jacob's influence was to be presumed. But that did not prevent Laban from feeling personal pride. After all, it was himself who had been clever enough to attach the blessing-bearer to his house — the fugitive and beggar from whom prosperity obviously went forth wherever he came and even whether he would or no. Indeed, from the very moderate joy manifested by Jacob at the births of Beor, Alub and Muras, Laban deduced that he had very likely not wished for them at all.

" Tell me, now, my nephew and my son-in-law," Laban might say, when he came out to the fields riding on an ox, to visit the flocks, or when Jacob in his turn brought them home for inspection, " tell me whether I am not worthy of praise, and whether the gods smile upon Laban or no, when they rouse up to me sons in my old age and my wife Adina is big with them and brings them to birth, who before was so plain to look upon? "

" Verily," answered Jacob, " thou hast cause to rejoice, and yet the matter is not greatly marvellous in the sight of the Lord. Abram was one hundred years old when he begot Yitzchak, and it is well known that it was no longer with Sarah after the manner of women."

" Thou hast a dry way," said Laban, " of setting great things at nought and diminishing a man's joy."

" It is little fitting of us," responded Jacob with coolness, " to make too much of good fortune in which we may ascribe great share to our own labours."

# 6

## THE SISTERS

### THE UNCLEAN BEAST

As the seven years drew on to their end, and the time approached when Jacob should know Rachel, he found he scarcely realized the truth, yet rejoiced beyond measure, and his heart beat mightily when he thought upon the hour. For Rachel was now nineteen years old and had waited for him in the purity of her blood, invulnerable through it to evil spirits and sickness which might have snatched her from her bridegroom; so that she was indeed, in respect to her bloom and beauty, all that Jacob had so tenderly prophesied: lovely to look at beyond all the daughters of the land, with her full and yet delicate form, the soft braids of her hair, the thick nostrils of her little nose, the sweet, short-sighted gaze of her slanting eyes and the friendly night that rested in their depths; lovely above all in the smiling way the upper lip lay upon the lower, and shaped the inexpressible charm of the corner of her mouth. Yes, lovely was she beyond all others; but if I say, as Jacob always said to himself, that she was lovely most of all before Leah, that does not mean that Leah was uglier than any other maiden, but merely that she was the nearest object of comparison, and suffered most of all next to Rachel. For it is quite

possible to imagine a man less enslaved than Jacob to that single point of view, who might have preferred the elder daughter, despite the stupid gaze and the "tenderness" of her blue eyes, and the trick she had, both proud and bitter, of dropping the lids over their squinting stare. For Leah's rich blond hair hung knotted in her neck, and she had the figure of a fruitful woman, ripe for motherhood. Much might be said in praise of Rachel, that she did not vaunt her own charms above her sister's, or take undue advantage of her lovely little face, the image and likeness of the full moon, as Leah's might be of the waning one. Rachel was not so untaught as not to reverence the latter in right of its condition, and indeed at the bottom of her heart she disapproved of Jacob, that he so utterly rejected the thought of her sister and turned the brightness of his sole regard upon her — even though she could not quite put out of her heart all feminine satisfaction in his preference.

The nuptial feast was set for the full moon of the summer solstice; and Rachel too confessed that she longed for the coming of the festal day. Yet in the weeks just before she had been sad, weeping silently on Jacob's shoulder and against his cheek, answering his anxious query only by a painful smile and a quick head-shake that dashed the tears from her eyes. What weighed upon her heart? Jacob did not know — yet often he himself felt sad as well. Was she mourning over her maidenhead, since now the time of her blossoming drew to an end, when she should become a fruit-bearing tree? Such is the sadness inseparable from life yet not from joy, and Jacob knew it too. For the day of high marriage is the day of death and a feast of the solstice; the moon climbs

to her height and from then on turns her face again to the sun, into which she will sink. Jacob was to know her whom he loved, and begin to die. For from then on he would not stand alone, living for himself and as lord of the world; he would be dissolved into his sons and in his person belong to death. Yet he would love them, they who became the bearers of his divided and diverse lives, because it was himself which consciously he had poured into Rachel's womb.

At this time he had a dream, which he remembered long on account of its strange mood of peaceful sadness. He dreamed it on a warm night of Tammuz, in the meadows by his flocks, when the moon's sickle stood facing left in the sky, which at its fullness should usher in the marriage feast. But in the dream he was still upon his flight from home, or another flight, driven once more to ride into the red waste; and as before a jackal trotted before him, prick-eared, dog-headed, with tail held stiffly out behind him, looked round and laughed. It was a repetition of reality, yet the same reality; recurring to work itself out, since the first time it had been left incomplete.

He was riding among loose boulders and dry shrubbery — naught else grew. The evil one wound among rock and bushes, appearing, disappearing, looking round. Once, when he had vanished, Jacob blinked; when he looked again, the creature sat in front of him on a stone, and was an animal still as to the head, the usual dog's head with sharp upstanding ears and a projecting snout whose mouth ran right round to them; but his body was human down to the slightly dusty toes, and pleasant to look on, like the body of a slender youth. He sat on the piece of rock in a careless posture; one leg was drawn up,

and he leaned with his elbow upon that thigh so that a fold came across his abdomen; the other was stretched out before him sidewise, the ankle on the ground. This limb, the delicate knee, the long, fine-sinewed, slightly curving leg, was a most pleasant sight. But a fell, the colour of yellow clay, began on the slender shoulders, the upper back and breast of the god, merging into the dog's head with the wide jaws and crafty little eyes, which suited the body so ill, was so painful a humiliation of it, that one could only say how lovely, without it, that body might have been. As Jacob rode up he got a strong whiff of the pungent odour which, sad to say, the boy-jackal exhaled. And how sad and strange at once it was to see the figure open its wide jaws and address itself to speech in a labouring, throaty voice:

" *Ap-uat, Ap-uat.*"

" It hath no need, son of Osiris, that thou troublest thyself," Jacob said. " Thou art Anubis, guide and opener of the way, as well I know. And I had marvelled not to meet thee here."

" It was a blunder," said the god.

" What meanest thou? " asked Jacob.

" They were in error," the other said, in his difficult speech, " they who begot me, the lord of the west and my mother, Nephthys."

" I am sad to hear it," said Jacob, " but relate to me how it fell out."

" She should not have been my mother," responded the youth, gradually learning to manage his jaws in speech. " She was the wrong one. The darkness was to blame. She is a cow, it is all one to her. She wears the disk of the sun between her horns, in sign that now and again

the sun goes in unto her to beget with her the young day; but the bearing of so many radiant sons has made no abatement in her dull indifference."

" I seek to understand," Jacob said, " that that might be a danger."

" Very dangerous," agreed the other, nodding. " Blindly, in all the good-natured warmth of her cowishness she embraces all that comes to her, and dully passive lets it come to pass, though it happen only on account of the dark."

" That is an evil," said Jacob. " But which had been the right one, then, if Nephthys were not she? "

" Dost thou not know? " asked the jackal youth.

" I cannot precisely distinguish," Jacob answered, " between that which thou tellest me and that which I know of myself."

" If thou knowest it not," the other responded, " then I could not tell thee. In the beginning — not quite in the beginning, but nearly so, there were Geb and Nut. The earth god and the heaven goddess. They had four children: Osiris, Set, Isis and Nephthys. But Isis was the sister-bride of Osiris and Nephthys of Set the red."

" So much is clear," said Jacob. " And then these four did not keep the arrangement clearly enough in mind? "

" Alas, no," responded Anubis, " two of them did not. What wouldst thou, for we are feckless beings, heedless and distracted from birth onwards. Carefulness and foresight are base earthly characteristics, whereas what all has not carefreeness been the cause of in this life? "

" It is but too true," Jacob confirmed. " One must take care. For to speak openly, it dependeth on the fact that ye are all idols. God knoweth always what He willeth and

doth. He promiseth and keepeth to His word. He setteth up a bond and is true unto eternity."

"What god?" asked Anubis. But Jacob answered him:

"Thou feignest. When earth and heaven mingle, then indeed come forth heroes and great kings, but no god, neither four nor one. Geb and Nut, thou hast thyself said it, were not quite the beginning. Whence came they?"

"Out of Tefnut, the Great Mother," came the prompt reply from the stone.

"Good, thou sayest it because I know it," Jacob went on in his dream. "But was Tefnut the beginning? Whence came Tefnut?"

"The secret, the unbegotten one, whose name is Nun, he called her," responded Anubis.

"I asked thee not his name," said Jacob. "But now thou beginnest to speak sensibly, boy-dog. I had no intent to reason with thee. After all, thou art an idol. Relate to me of thy parents' error."

"The darkness was to blame," repeated the evil-smelling one. "And he that carrieth the scourge and the shepherd's crook, he was carefree and distraught. And in his majesty he sought for Isis, his sister-bride, and by mistake he came in the night upon Nephthys, sister of the red one. Thus she received that great god, thinking he was her bridegroom, and they were both enfolded in the utter unconcern of the night of love."

"Can such things come to pass?" cried Jacob.

"With ease," answered the other. "For in its unconcern night knoweth the truth, and in her eyes the lively prepossessions of the daylight are as naught. For one woman's body is like another's, good to love, good to

beget upon. Only the countenance distinguishes one from another and is the cause of our choosing one and not another. For the countenance is of the day, full of living fancies, but before the night, that knows the truth, it is as nothing."

"Thou speakest crudely and without feeling," said Jacob, greatly disquiet. "One may have ground to speak thus when one hath a head like to thine and a face which one must cover up only to be able to say that thy leg is pretty and well-favoured as it lies stretched out before thee."

Anubis looked down, drew his leg in beside the other one and put his hands between his knees.

"Leave me out," said he. "I shall one day be rid of my head too. Wouldst thou hear the rest of the tale?"

"What happened?" asked Jacob.

"In that night," went on the other, "the lord Osiris was for Nephthys like Set the red her lord, and she for Osiris like to the lady Isis. For he was on begetting bent and she on conceiving, and to the night naught else was of importance. And they delighted one another in begetting and conceiving, for thinking to love each other they could but beget. Then was that goddess pregnant with me, whereas it should have been Isis the true wife."

"Sad," Jacob said.

"When morning came, they parted in great haste; yet might all have been well, had not the god left behind with Nephthys the lotus garland that he wears; Set the red found it and roared aloud. Since that time he seeketh Osiris' life."

"As thou tellest it, so I know it," said Jacob. "Then came the affair with the chest, into which the red one

lured his brother, and slew him by its means, so that Osiris, the dead lord, swam downstream into the sea in the sealed-up chest."

" And Set became king of all his lands and sat upon the throne of Geb," concluded Anubis. " But it is not that upon which I would dwell, or which gives this dream of thine its point. For the red one was not for long king of the lands, for Isis gave birth to the youth Horus, who slew him. And lo, as Isis went searching and bewailing through the world, after her lost and murdered lord, and cried unceasingly: ' Come into thy house, come into thy house, beloved, O beautiful child, come into thy house! ' there stood beside her Nephthys, wife of his murderer, whom the slain god had in his error embraced, and went beside her whither she went, and they agreed together in their grief and mourned together: ' O thou, whose heart beats no more, O lord of beauty, thee I would fain behold! "

" That was sad and friendly," said Jacob.

" And that," responded the other from his stone, " is the meaning of the dream. For who else was with her and aided her in her search, her roving and her wailing, then as well as later, when Set found the discovered and re-hidden corpse and cut it up into fourteen pieces, which then Isis must seek anew? Who but I, Anubis, son of the unlawful wife, fruit of the murdered one, who was ever at Isis' side in her erring and seeking, and as she wandered she laid her arm about my neck that she might lean upon me, and we lamented together: ' Where art thou, thou left arm of my beautiful God, where shoulder-blade and foot of his right side, where art thou, lovely head, and holy sex, which it seemeth is irreparably lost

so that we are fain to replace it with an image made of sycamore wood? ' "

" Thou speakest obscenely," said Jacob, " and like to the death-god of the two countries." But Anubis replied:

" And thou, where thou standest, shouldst have more understanding for such matters, for thou art a bridegroom, and shalt beget and die. For in the sex is death and in death sex, that is the miracle of the grave chamber, and sex teareth the bonds of death and standeth up against death, as it happened to the lord, Osiris, above whom Anubis hovered as a female vulture and made his seed flow out of the dead and cohabited with him even as she mourned."

" It is best now that I should awake," thought Jacob. And even as he still thought to see the god swing himself up from the stone and vanish, so that movement and vanishing were the same, he found himself lying under the starry night beside the sheep-pens. His dream of Anubis the jackal soon faded, it returned into his simple recollection of the experience of his journey and he remembered it, after a while, only thus. But a faint melancholy, pleasant to feel, lingered still a while in his soul, in that Nephthys, wrongfully embraced, had yet sought and mourned with Isis, and the bereaved one been cherished and supported by the wrongly begot.

#### THE WEDDING

AT this time Laban and Jacob often took counsel together over the approaching event and the nuptial celebrations, and how Laban in general thought to hold the feast; and Jacob learned that his father-in-law had

ambitious plans and meant to celebrate regardless of expense.

" It will cost me," Laban said, " a pretty penny, for there are now many more mouths and I must feed them. But I shall not rue it, for lo, trade is not at all bad, rather fairly favourable in these times, thanks to many circumstances among which we should mention the blessing of Isaac. Therefore it is I can pay for more labour in the court, and have bought two maids in addition to that lazy Iltani, and they are quite seemly wenches, named Zilpah and Bilhah. And on the wedding days I will give these to my two daughters, Zilpah to Leah my eldest and to the second Bilhah. And at the marriage will the maid be thine, and I will give her thee as dowry and her price shall be reckoned as two-thirds of the mina of silver, according to our contract."

" I embrace thee in thanks," said Jacob, shrugging his shoulders.

" But that is the least of it," went on Laban. " For all the feast will be at my sole charge, and I will invite people on the sabbath from far and near and have musicians who shall play and dance, and I will lay two bullocks and four sheep upon their backs, and comfort the guests with drink until they see all things double. All that will be a heavy charge but I will bear it and not pull a long face for is it not my daughter's wedding? And besides I have in mind to make the bride a gift, that she may wear it and it will rejoice her heart. I bought it long ago of a traveller, and it cost much money, and I have kept it in the chest: a veil, for the bride to shroud herself in, that she may be holy unto Ishtar and a consecrated one, whose veil also thou shalt lift. It may have belonged to a king's

daughter in times past, being the maiden garment of a daughter of princes, so artfully is it embroidered throughout with manifold symbols of Ishtar and Tammuz, but she, the spotless one, shall veil her head in it. For immaculate is she and shall be like one of the *enitu*, like to the bride of heaven, whom each year at the feast of Ishtar, the priests at Babel lead up to God before all the people up the steps of the stairs and through the seven gates, and take from her some piece of her garment and her ornaments at every gate, and at the last gate her shame, and they lead the holy maid naked into the uppermost bedchamber of the tower E-temenanki. There she receives the god upon the bed in the darkness of the night and exceedingly great is the mystery."

"H'm," said Jacob. For Laban opened wide his eyes and spread out his fingers at the sides of his head and put on an air of sanctimoniousness that in his nephew's view suited him not at all. Laban continued:

"Of course, it is very fine and lovely when the bridegroom hath a house and court of his own, or is held in great esteem in the house of his parents, whence he cometh in great pomp to fetch the bride and to lead her in procession by land or by water to his own place, and his inheritance. But thou as thou knowest art but a fugitive and homeless man, fallen out with thine own, and sittest with me as my son-in-law, and I make no complaint. There will be no bridal procession by land or water, and you will sojourn here after the feast and the nuptial night; but when I have come between you and touched your foreheads, then we shall do as is the custom of our land in these cases and lead you with singing round the court and into the bridal chamber. Thou shalt

sit there upon the bed with a flower in thy hand, and await the bride. For her too, the spotless one, shall we lead round about the court with torches and singing, and at the door of the chamber we put out the torches, and I lead the devoted one in unto thee, and leave you, that thou mayest hand her the flower in the darkness."

"Is that the custom and lawful?" asked Jacob.

"Far and wide, thou sayest it," replied Laban.

"Then will I also approve it," responded Jacob. "And I assume that there will likewise be a torch burning, or a little lamp with a wick, that I may see my bride when I hand her the flower and also afterwards."

"Be silent," cried Laban. "Would I might know what thou hast in thy mind, with thy unchaste speaking, to speak so before the father, to whom it is moreover painful and bitter to lead his child in unto a man that he may uncover her and sleep with her. At least in my presence hold thy lewd tongue and restrain within thyself thy overgreat lustfulness. For hast thou not hands to see, and must thou also swallow up the spotless one with thine eyes to sharpen thy lust upon her shame and her maiden trembling? Have respect before the mystery of the high tower!"

"Pardon!" said Jacob, "and forgive me. I have not meant it so unchastely in my thoughts as it soundeth in thy mouth. Gladly would I have looked upon my bride with my eyes. But since it is far and wide the custom to do as thou sayest, I will be satisfied for the time."

Thus the day of the fullness of splendour came on, and the nuptial feast, and in the house of Laban, the prosperous breeder of sheep, and in his court, there was a slaughtering and a seething and roasting and brewing, so

that everything steamed and all was bustle and noise, and all eyes watered from the smoke of the fires that burned under pots and ovens. For Laban was saving of charcoal and heated almost altogether with thorns and dung. And the master and mistress and all that were in the house, including Jacob, hurried on the work and the servants, to make hospitality for so many and to prepare the banquet; for the wedding would last seven days and for all that time the supplies must be inexhaustible, of cakes and buns and fish bread, of thick soups and plantains and milk dishes, of beer and fruit juices and strong waters, not to mention the roasted mutton and joints of beef — else shame and mockery would be the portion of the household. And as they worked they sang songs to Uduntamku the fat, the god of the belly, the presiding deity of feasting, they all sang and composed them, Laban, Adina, Jacob and Leah, Iltani the idle and Bilhah and Zilpah the daughters' maids, Abdcheba the twenty-shekel man, and the latest-acquired slaves. Laban's sons in their little shirts ran boisterously among the press, slipped on the blood from the slaughtering and befouled themselves, so that their father wrung their ears and they howled like jackals. Only Rachel sat still and idle in the house — for she might not see the bridegroom now nor he his bride — and examined the costly veil, her father's present, which she should wear at the feast. It was splendid to see, a magnificent specimen of the arts of weaving and embroidering: it seemed an unmerited piece of good fortune that such a thing should have found its way into Laban's house and his chest; the man who let it go so cheap must have been greatly pressed by circumstances.

It was large and broad, a garment and over-garment,

with wide sleeves to put one's arms in at will; so cut that a piece of it could either be drawn over the head to cover it or else wound about the head and shoulders, or else left to hang down the back. And the maiden garment weighed uncertainly in the hand, for it was heavy and light at once, and of unequal weight in different places. The background was of the palest blue, woven thin and fine as a breath of air, a misty nothing, to be squeezed together in one hand, and yet weighted heavily everywhere by the embroidered pictures which covered it with brilliant, glittering colours, carried out in close, fine work, in gold and silver and bronze, and every imaginable shade: white, purple, rose and olive, likewise black and white, all blended together like paintings in bright enamel. And such clever pictures and designs! Here was Ishtar-Mami, in various shapes, a tiny nude figure, pressing milk out of her breast with both hands, the sun and moon on either side. Everywhere the five-pointed star was repeated in varying colours, signifying god; the dove, the bird of the mother-goddess of love, was woven most often in silver thread. Gilgamesh, the hero, two-thirds god and one-third man, was displayed strangling a lion in the bend of his arm. One recognized the human scorpion pair who at the ends of the earth guarded the gate through which the sun goes down to the lower world. One distinguished various animals, sometime paramours of Ishtar and transformed by her — a wolf, a bat, the same who had once been Isullanu, the gardener. But Tammuz, the shepherd, was represented by a brilliant bird, the first partner of her lust, to whom she had decreed weeping year for year; and there was not lacking the fire-breathing bull of heaven, whom Anubis sent against Gil-

gamesh because of Ishtar's baffled longing and perfervid plaints. The garment slipped through Rachel's hands: she saw a man and woman sitting at both sides of a tree, stretching up their hands to the fruit, while a snake rose up behind the woman's back. And again there was embroidered a sacred tree, with two bearded angels on either side, touching it with scaly masculine cones to make it bear; while above the tree of life the female emblem hovered surrounded by sun, moon and stars. And likewise there were sayings woven into the veil, in broad-pointed signs, lying down or standing straight or slanting. Rachel made out: " I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? "

She sat and played with the bright-coloured weave, the splendid garment and veil; she wrapped it round her and turned herself about in it, she found new ways to drape its picture-book transparency. Thus she beguiled the time while she waited and the others prepared the feast. Sometimes she had visits from Leah, her sister, who also tried the beauties of the veil upon her own person and afterwards they sat together, and caressed each other, with tears. Why did they weep? They alone knew — though I might go so far as to say that they had different reasons.

When Jacob sat and mused, with swimming gaze, and all the tales that had written themselves in the lines of his face and weighed down his life with their dignified burden came back and were present in his mind, as they had been on the day when he and his red-haired twin had buried their father; then there was one day, and one story, which possessed beyond all others this power of presentness, having inflicted upon him a defeat so devastating to his senses and so humiliating to his feeling that his soul

for long could not shake it off, and only regained faith in itself with the advent of a feeling that was like a rebirth and resurrection of those shamed and shattered ones. Present, I say, before all, was the story of his wedding day.

They had all, the people of Laban, washed their heads and limbs in the water of the blessed pond, had anointed and curled themselves to their taste, put on their festal garments and burned much fragrant oil, to receive the incoming guests with a sweet savour. And they came, on foot, on the backs of asses, in carts drawn by bullocks and mules, men alone, men with women, even with children, if they could not be left at home: the peasants and cattle-breeders of the neighbourhood, likewise anointed and curled and clad in festal garments; people like Laban, of the same heavy-handed tribe, with the same prosaic habits of thought. They saluted, hand to forehead, made enquiry into the health of all and sundry, and then settled down in house and court, round cook-pots and shaded tables. Water having been poured over their hands and feet, they smacked their lips and fell to upon the lengthy meal, amid loud invocations in praise of Shamash and of Laban, father of the bride and giver of the feast. The banquet was laid in the outer court of the steading, between the storehouses, as well as in the inner court round the altar, on the roof of the house and in the wooden galleries; and round the altar were grouped the musicians hired from Harran — they played on harps, drums and cymbals and likewise danced. The day was windy, the evening still more so. Clouds glided across the moon, hiding her altogether from time to time, a bad omen to many of those present though they did not expressly say

so. They were simple folk, and made no distinction between complete darkening and a cloud passing over her face. A sultry wind went sighing through the steading, got caught in the chimney of the storehouses, made the tall poplars creak and groan, and whirling among the savours of the feast, the odours of the anointed guests and the fumes of the cookery, mingled them all together in gusts of vapour, and seemed to try to snatch the flames from the tripods where nard-grass and *budulhu-gam* were burning. Jacob, when he recalled his wedding day, always recognized in his nostrils that wind-driven mingling of spices and sweat and roasted meats.

He sat with the family among the feasting guests in the upper room, where seven years before he had first broken bread with his stranger kin; sat with the master, his fruitful wife and their daughters at a table heaped up with dessert and dainties of various sorts, sweet breads and dates, cucumbers and garlic, and pledged the guests who lifted their glasses to him and Laban. Rachel, his bride, whom soon he should receive for his own, sat beside him, and he kissed from time to time the seam of her veil that enveloped her in its heavy picture-folds. She did not lift it to eat or drink; it seemed the consecrated one's hunger had been satisfied earlier. She sat quiet and silent, only bending meekly her shrouded head when he kissed her veil. Jacob too sat silent and dreamy, with a flower in his hand, a blossoming twig of myrtle from Laban's well-watered garden. He had drunk beer and date wine and his senses were somewhat clouded; his soul could neither free itself for thought nor rouse itself to observation, but was heavy inside his anointed body, and his body was his soul. Gladly would he have thought,

gladly comprehended how his god had brought all this to pass; how he had brought the beloved in the way of the fugitive, the human creature whom he had but needed to behold for his heart to elect her and love her for all time and eternity — beyond itself, and in the children whom his love would beget. He tried to rejoice in his victory over time, that hard time of waiting, laid upon him, it seemed, in penance for Esau's undoing and his bitter weeping; to lay it at the feet of God the Lord, in thanks and praise, this triumph, for that it was His; God through him and his not unachieving patience having enforced the time, that seven-headed monster, as once the dragon of chaos, so that what had been but inward wish and waiting was now the present, and Rachel sat beside him in the veil, which in a little while he would be permitted to lift. He tried to partake of this joy in his soul. But with joy it is as with the waiting for it; the longer one waits, the less it is pure joy, the more it is filled with practical activities and living needs. And when it comes, that joy so actively awaited, it is not of the stuff of the divine, but has become bodily present and has material weight, like all life. For the life of the body is never pure bliss, but a mixture, in part unpleasant, and if joy becomes the life of the body the soul does also, and is no longer anything else but the body, with the oil-soaked pores, whose affair that once distant bliss has now become.

Jacob sat, and spanned his thighs, and thought of his sex, whose property this joy had now become, and which very soon might and must approve itself mightily in the holy darkness of the nuptial chamber. For his joy was marriage joy and a feast of Ishtar; it was celebrated with

over-eating and drunkenness, wreathed about with the odours of spices — whereas once it had been God's affair and rested in his hand. And as once Jacob had been pained over the waiting, and forced to forget it in life and action, so now he was pained for the sake of God, who was the Lord of life and all the longed-for future, yet, when the hour came to pass, must yield his dominion to the special idols of the physical, in whose sign it stood. And therefore Jacob kissed the little nude figure of Ishtar, lifting the hem of Rachel's veil as she sat beside him, immaculate sacrifice to procreation.

Laban sat opposite, leaning forward with his heavy arm on the table and looking steadfastly at his son-in-law.

" Rejoice, my son and my sister's son, for thy hour is at hand and the day of rewarding, and thou shalt be paid the reward according to law and contract for the seven years that thou hast laboured for my house and my business to the reasonable satisfaction of its head. And the reward is neither goods nor gold but a tender maiden, my daughter, whom thy heart desireth, and thou shalt have her after thy heart's desire, and she shall be submissive to thee in thy arms. I marvel how thy heart may be beating, for the hour is big for thee, truly an hour of life like to be thy greatest hour, great as the hour when in thy father's tent thou wonnest the blessing, as thou hast told me, thou crafty one and son of a crafty woman! "

Jacob did not hear.

But Laban mocked at him with gross words before the guests:

" Tell me, then, son-in-law, hear me and answer how

dost feel? Dost thou quake before the bliss of embracing thy bride? Hast thou not fear as once in that matter of the blessing, when thou wentest in to thy father with thy knees shaking? Didst thou not say the sweat ran down thy thighs for dread and thy voice stuck in thy throat even when thou wouldst win the blessing away from Esau the accursed? Thou happy man, pray that joy take not away thy manliness in the moment when thou needest it most — else the bride might take it ill! "

They all roared with laughter in the upper room, and once more Jacob smiled and kissed the picture of Ishtar to whom God had given the hour. But Laban got heavily to his feet, swaying somewhat, and said:

" Come then, for it is midnight, come up to me and I will put you together."

The crowd pressed close to see Jacob and Rachel kneel down on the paved floor before the bride's father, and to hear how Jacob answered to the questions according to custom. For Laban asked him whether this woman should be his wedded wife and he her husband, and if he willed to give her the flower — to which he answered yes. Asked whether he was well-born, whether he would make rich this woman and fruitful her womb; Jacob answered that he was the son of the great and would fill her lap with silver and gold and make fruitful this woman like the fruit of the garden. Then Laban touched both their foreheads, and stepped between them and laid his hands upon them. Then he told them to stand up and embrace each other and that then they were wed. And he led the dedicated one back to her mother, but the nephew he took by the hand and led him in front of the guests, who crowded after, beginning to sing. They passed down the

brick staircase into the paved court and the musicians left their stand and walked before them. Next came boys with torches and after them children in short smocks with censers hanging between chains. Jacob, led by Laban, walked in the sweet-smelling cloud, with the white blossoming myrtle twig in his right hand. He did not join in the traditional songs that swelled up as they marched, and only hummed a little when Laban nudged him and told him to open his mouth. But Laban sang in a heavy bass and knew all the songs by heart; they were sentimental and amorous ditties about loving couples in general, on the verge of their nuptials, and how on both sides they can scarcely wait. They told of the procession, coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense; and of the bridegroom walking, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals. All this was about the procession in which they were actually moving, but the allusions did not fit Jacob; his mother was far away, he was a fugitive, and he was not leading his beloved into his mother's house and into the chamber of her who had borne him. Just for that reason, it seemed, Laban sang the more lustily, honouring the pattern in the face of all present lacks, that Jacob might feel how different it was. And then the bridegroom spoke, in the song, and the bride gave ardent answer and they sang in turn long rapturous speeches of mutual praise and longing. Their bed was freshly prepared in the panelled chamber; they pointed one another the way thither, promising the greatest pleasure in the union of their nard-scented loveliness. For his left hand would be under her head and his right hand embrace her, and sweeter than wine from

the hills would be their mutual love. Thus they told one another in song, each painting in intoxicated language the other's loveliness. And finally they charged the company to stir not up nor awake from voluptuous slumber either bride or bridegroom until they pleased. They implored the people in song, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, and the company took up the words as they paced and sang them with great heartiness; even the incense-bearing boys sang lustily if without precise understanding. And so they marched, in the windy, moon-darkened night, round Laban's steading, once and twice, and came before the house and before the house door of palm-wood, and Laban pressed through, with the musicians in the lead, and came to the bed-chamber on the ground floor, that likewise had a door, and Laban led in Jacob by the hand. He made light with the torches, that Jacob might see into the room and make out the position of table and bed. Then he wished him blessings on his manhood and turned back to the company that crowded about the doorway. They went away, singing as they went, and Jacob was alone.

After long decades, and in his great age, and even on his dying bed, where he still spoke solemnly of it, Jacob remembered naught more clearly than how he had stood alone in the darkness of the bridal chamber, where it blew, and was draughty, for the night wind burst through the window-openings under the roof and out again through the openings on the side toward the court, getting caught in the carpets and hangings with which, as Jacob had seen by the torchlight, they had adorned the walls, and making a great flapping and clapping. It was the room above the archive and grave chamber, with the

teraphim and the receipts. Jacob could feel through the thin carpet they had put down the ring of the little trap door by which one went down. And he had seen the bed and he went towards it with his hands out. It was the best bed in the house, one of three; Laban and Adina had sat on it at that first meal seven years ago: a sofa on metal-covered feet, with a round headrest of polished bronze. They had put covers on the wooden frame, with linen over them, Jacob could feel it, and there were pillows against the headrest. But it was a narrow bed. On the table beside it stood beer and a little food. There were two tabourets in the room, also covered with stuff, and lamp-stands at the bed's head, but there was no oil in the lamps.

Jacob tried the lamps and discovered their emptiness, as he stood in the wind and the darkness while the train was fetching the bride and filling house and court with the noise of their singing and the trampling of their feet. He sat down on the bed and listened, the flower in his hand. The procession was leaving the house again, with the harps and cymbals at its head, bringing Rachel, his beloved, to whom all his heart belonged, and she walked there in her veil. Laban led her by the hand as he had done Jacob; perhaps Adina was there too, and the music of the wedding songs rose and died away. At last he heard the words:

" My beloved is mine, he is altogether mine;  
I am a garden enclosed, full of pleasant fruits and full of the  
odours of the finest spices.  
Come, O beloved into thy garden!  
Eat of thy pleasant fruits, take unto thee the refreshment of  
their juices! "

The feet of those who sang were before the door, and the door opened a little so that snatches of the song and the music came through, and then the veiled one was in the room, ushered by Laban, who closed the door quickly and they were alone in the darkness.

" Is it thou, Rachel? " Jacob asked after a little while, during which he had waited for those outside to move away from the door. He asks as one says: " Have you returned from your journey? " when the traveller stands there in the flesh and it cannot be otherwise than that he has returned, so that the question is nonsense, only asked that the voice may be heard and the traveller does not answer but can only laugh. But Jacob heard that she bent her head, he knew it from the faint rustling and rattling of the light-heavy veil.

" Thou beloved, little one, my dove, and apple of my eye, heart of my heart," he said fervently. " It is so dark . . . and bloweth. . . . I am sitting here upon the bed, if thou hast not seen it, straight into the room and then somewhat to the right. Come, then, but strike not against the table else a bruise will come upon thy tender skin and also thou wouldst knock over the beer. I am not thirsty for beer, I am only thirsty for thee, my pomegranate. How good that they have brought thee to me and that I sit here no longer alone in the wind. Comest thou now? Gladly would I come to meet thee, but that probably I may not, for it is by law and custom that I hand thee the flower while sitting, and though no one seeth us, yet we will hold to that which is prescribed, that we may be well and truly wedded as we have steadfastly desired through so many years of waiting."

The thought overcame him, his voice broke. Memories

of the time when in patience and in impatience he had arisen for the sake of this hour, laid hold on him mightily and moved him to the depths; and the thought that she had waited with him and now on her side saw herself at the goal of her desires stirred the tenderest emotions of his heart. Such is love, when it is complete: feeling and lust together, tenderness and desire; and while feeling made the tears gush out of Jacob's eyes, at the same time he felt the tension of his manhood.

" Here art thou," he said, " thou hast found me in the darkness, as I found thee after more than seventeen days' journey and thou earnest on among the sheep and spoke: ' Behold, a stranger! ' Then we chose each other among men and I have served for thee seven years and the time lies at our feet. My doe and my dove, here is the flower. Thou seest it and findest it not, and therefore I will guide thy hand to the twig that thou mayest take it, and I give it to thee and thus we are one. But thy hand I keep, since I so love it, and I love the bones of thy wrist, so well known unto me that I know it again in the darkness, and thy hand is to me like thyself, and like thy whole body, but that is like to a sheaf of wheat garlanded with roses. My sister, my love, let thyself down to me and sit by my side and I will move that there may be space for two and would be for three if needful. Yet how good is God, that He lets us be two alone together, thee by me and me by thee! For I love only thee, for the sake of thy face that I cannot now see but saw a thousand times and kissed for very love, for it is thy loveliness that crowns thy body as with roses, and when I think that thou art Rachel, with whom I have often been, yet never thus, and who waited for me and likewise now waiteth for me, and upon my

tenderness, then a bliss cometh upon me stronger than I am, so that it overcometh me. A darkness enfoldeth us, thicker than thy veil which enfoldeth thee, thou purest one, and darkness is bound upon our eyes so that they see naught beyond themselves and are blind. But it is only they, thanks be to God, and not one of our other senses. For we hear each other when we speak, and the darkness cannot part us more. Tell me, my soul, thou too art enraptured by the greatness of this hour? "

" I am thine in bliss, dear lord," she softly said.

" That might have been Leah who spoke, thy older sister," he answered. " Not according to the sense, of course, but in the way of speaking. The voices of sisters are alike, indeed, and words come from their mouths with the same sound. For the same father begot them, upon the same mother, and they are a little distinguished in time and move with separate movement, yet are one in the womb of their origin. Lo, I am afraid, a little, at my own blind words, for I had lightly said that the darkness hath no power over our speech, yet I feel after all that it presseth hard upon my words and sinketh into them so that I fear somewhat before them. Let us be glad of the distinction, that thou art Rachel and I Jacob, and not for instance Esau, my red brother! My forefathers and I, at night beside the flocks, have pondered much upon the person of God, who He is, and our children and our children's children will follow us in our musings. But I at this hour will say and make clear my words, that the darkness may roll back away from them: ' God is the distinction! ' And therefore now I lift thy veil, beloved, that I may see thee with seeing hands; and I lay it carefully upon this chair that is here, for it is priceless with

pictures and shall be handed down through generations, and be worn by beloved ones without number. Lo, here is thy hair, black but comely, I know it so well, I know the fragrance of it, I carry it to my lips and what power hath darkness over it? It cannot come in between my lips and thy hair. Here are thine eyes, smiling night in the night, and their tender sockets and the soft places beneath them where so many a time I have kissed away the impatient tears, and my lips were wet from them. Here are thy cheeks, soft as down and the costliest wool of goats from strange lands. Here thy shoulders, which feel to mine hands larger than I see them in the day, and here thine arms, and here — "

He ceased. As his seeing hands left her face and found her body and the skin of her body, Ishtar pierced them both to the marrow, the bull of heaven breathed and its breath was as the breath of both that mingled. And all that windy night did Jacob find the child of Laban a glorious mate, great in delights and mighty to conceive, and she received him many times and again and again, so that they counted no more but the shepherds answered one another that it was nine times.

Later he slept on the ground beside her, for the bed was narrow and he gave her room and comfort for her rest, sleeping himself crouching beside the bed, with his cheek against her hand that hung over the edge. The morning dawned. Dim red and hushed it stood before the windows, and slowly filled with light the bridal chamber. It was Jacob who first awaked, from the daylight between his lids, and from the stillness; for until deep into the night the feasting had continued, with much laughter and noise in house and court, and only toward morning,

when the bridal pair already slept, had quiet descended. And also he was uncomfortable — though how joyfully — and waked the easier. He stirred and felt her hand, remembered everything and turned his mouth to kiss it. Then raised his head to see his dear one in her slumbers. With eyes heavy and sticky from sleep, still unwilling to focus, he looked at her. And it was Leah.

He dropped his eyes and shook his head with a smile. " Ah," thought he, while even then a chill crept round his heart and into the pit of his stomach, " what madness, what a morning-after mockery! Darkness was hung before mine eyes, and now that they are unblinded they see false things. Are then sisters so mysteriously alike, and show it in their sleep, though no likeness shows itself in their features? Let me look again! "

But he did not look, because he feared to, and what he said to himself was only a panic-struck gabbling. He had seen that she was blonde, and her nose somewhat red. He rubbed his eyes with his knuckles and forced himself to look. It was Leah who lay and slept.

The thoughts tumbled over each other in his head. How came Leah here, and where was Rachel, whom they had brought in unto him and whom he had known this night? He staggered backwards away from the bed into the middle of the room and stood there in his shirt, his fists to his cheeks. " Leah! " he screamed, in a strangled voice. She sat up at once. She blinked, smiled, and dropped her eyelids as he had so often seen her do. One shoulder and breast were bare; they were white and beautiful.

" Jacob, my husband," she said, " let it be so, accord-

ing to the father's will. For he would have it so and so arranged it, and the gods shall give me that to make thee thank both him and them."

" Leah," he stammered, and he pointed to his throat, his breast and his brow, " since when is it thou? "

" Always it was I , " she answered, " and I was thine this night ever since I entered in the veil. And always I was tender towards thee and ready as Rachel, since I saw thee from the roof; and have I not proved it to thee the whole of this night? For say thyself if I have not served thee as well as any woman could, and been strong in desire! And certain am I in my inwards that I have conceived from thee, and it shall be a son, strong and brave, and we shall call his name Reuben."

Then Jacob cast back and bethought himself how he had taken her for Rachel this night, and he went to the wall and laid his arm along it and his forehead on his arm and wept bitterly.

Thus for some while he stood, torn by his emotions, and each time the thought returned, how he had believed and had known her, how all his joy had been delusion and the hour of fulfilment turned to shame, for which he had served and conquered the time, it was with him as though his stomach and his brain turned over within him, and he despaired with his whole soul. But Leah knew no more to say, and only wept likewise, from time to time, as she had done the day before with Rachel. For she saw how little it had been she who had again and again received him, and only the thought that she would now in all probability have a fine son named Reuben came to strengthen her heart.

Then he left her and rushed out of the chamber. He

had almost stumbled over the sleepers that lay everywhere outside in house and court, in the disorder from the feast, on covers and mats or on the bare ground, sleeping off their debauch. "Laban!" he cried, and stepped over forms that emitted surly grunts, stretched out and snored again. "Laban!" he repeated more quietly, for torment and bitterness and the fierce demand for a reckoning did not slay in him all consideration for these sleepers in the early morning after the heavy feasting. "Laban! where art thou?" And came before the master's chamber, where he lay with Adina his wife, knocked and cried: "Laban, come forth!"

"What, what!" answered Laban from within. "Who is it calleth me in the early dawn, after I have been sleeping?"

"It is I. Thou must come out!" Jacob cried.

"Oh, indeed," said Laban. "So it is my son-in-law that calleth, and sayeth I, like a child, as though one could tell from that alone who he is, but I know the voice and will come forth to hear what he hath to tell to me in the dawning, though just then I was enjoying my best sleep." And came forth in his shift, with rumpled hair, and blinking.

"I was asleep," he repeated. "Such a deep sleep and doing me so much good. How comes it thou thyself sleepest not or dost according to thy new state?"

"It is Leah," said Jacob, with trembling lips.

"Of a surety," replied Laban, "and callest thou me in the grey dawn out of beneficent slumber after heavy drinking to tell me what I know as well as thou?"

"Thou monster, thou tiger, thou devilish man!" cried Jacob beside himself. "I tell thee not that thou mayest

know it, but to show thee that I know it and to bring thee to accounting in my torment."

"Take care of thy voice above all then/' said Laban, "that thou lowerest it considerably: that I counsel thee, if thou lettest not thyself be counselled by the plain circumstances. For not enough that I am thy uncle and father-in-law, and thy master to boot, whom it beseemeth not to breathe upon with cries of murder, but also house and court lie full of sleeping guests, as thou seest, who in a few hours will go out with me to the hunt and take their pleasure in the wild and in the reedy places of the swamps, where we will set snares for birds, the partridge and the bustard, or slay a wild boar, that we may pour out a tribute of liquor to him. Thereto my guests strengthen themselves in slumber, and I mar it not, and in the evening the drinking bout shall go on. But thou, when on the fifth day thou issuest out of the bride's chamber, shalt join with us in the pleasures of the chase."

"No pleasures can there be for me in the chase," answered Jacob, "and my poor senses do not set that way, which thou hast confused and brought to shame so that they cry out from earth to heaven. For thou hast deceived me beyond all bounds, with cruelty and shamelessness, and hast privily brought in Leah to me, thy elder daughter, in the place of Rachel for whom I have served thee. How shall I then deal with thee and with me? "

"Hearken now," said Laban, "there are words which thou hadst best not take upon thy tongue and shouldst shame thyself to utter them aloud; for in Amurruland there sits as I know a shaggy-haired man who weeps and tears his fleece and seeks after thy life, and he it is

might well speak of deception. It is unpleasant when a man must blush for another man because he blusheth not for himself, and thus standeth it at the moment between thee and me because of thy ill-chosen words. Sayst thou I have betrayed thee? In what respect? Have I brought in unto thee a bride who was no longer unspotted and unworthy to mount the seven stairs into the arms of the god? Or have I brought thee one deformed and incapable in body or who cried out at the hurt thou gavest her, and was not willing and serviceable to thee in thy lust? Is it after this fashion I have betrayed thee? "

" No," Jacob said, " not after such a fashion. Leah is great in conceiving. But thou hast gone behind me and duped me, and made it so that I did not see and took Leah for Rachel throughout the night, and I have given to the wrong one my soul and all the best of my strength, so that it repenteth me beyond my power to utter. This, thou wolf-man, hast thou done unto me."

" And thou callest it betraying and shamelessly likenest me to wild beasts and evil spirits because I held with the custom and as a righteous man did not presume to reject that which is sacred and traditional? I know not how such things are in Amurruland or in the country of king Gog, but in our land we give not the younger before the elder; that would be to smite tradition in the face, and I am a respectable man and law-abiding. Thus did I what I did, and dealt wisely against thy unreason and like a father who knoweth what is owing to his children. For thou hast bluntly affronted my love to my eldest born, saying to me ' Leah speaketh not unto my manly desires/ And therefore hast thou not deserved a correction and called down upon thee an admonishment?

For now thou hast seen whether she speaketh to thy manly desires or no! "

" I have seen nothing at all," Jacob cried. " It was Rachel whom I embraced."

" Yes, so the dawning hath proven," answered Laban mockingly; " but the truth is that Rachel, my little one, hath nothing whereover to complain. For the reality was Leah's but the intent was Rachel's. And now have I also taught thee the intent for Leah, and whichsoever thou embracest in the future there will be the reality as well as the intent."

" Wilt thou then give me Rachel? " Jacob asked.

" Of a surety," answered Laban. " If thou wilt have her and pay me the legal price, thou shalt have her."

But Jacob cried:

" I have served thee for Rachel seven years! "

" Thou hast," responded Laban with dignity and solemnity, " served me for a child. Wilt thou now have the second, as would be agreeable unto me, then must thou pay again."

Jacob was silent.

After a little he said: " I will obtain the buying price and see to it that I contribute the dowry. I will borrow a mina of silver from people with whom I deal in trade, and I will likewise pay for presents to hang on the bride's girdle; for some possessions have naturally, and without my will, cleaved unto me in this long time, and I am of more substance than when I first wooed for Rachel."

" Again thou speakest without any delicacy," answered Laban, with a smug shake of the head, " and foolishly bringest things to speech which it were better

to bury in thy bosom; thou shouldst rather be glad if others also keep silent and dwell not upon them to rebuke thee for them, instead of shouting them aloud and making it so that a man must be ashamed for thee since thou art not for thyself. I will hear nothing of unexpected possessions and provocations of that sort. I will have no silver of thee as dowry and no gear, from whomever it be, as presents for the bride, but rather shalt thou serve me for the second child as long as for the first."

" Wolf-man! " cried Jacob, hardly restraining himself. " And thou wilt give me Rachel only after another seven years? "

" Who hath said so? " countered Laban, superiorly. " Who hath even so much as suggested such a thing? Thou alone pratest without any reason and in thy haste comparest me to a werewolf; for I am a father and I will not that my child pine after the man until he is old. Go thou now to thy right place and keep thy week and thine honour. Then shall the second be given thee in all stillness, and thou shalt serve me as her husband other seven years."

Jacob hung his head and was silent.

" Thou art silent," Laban said, " and canst not bring it over thyself to fall at my feet. Truly I am curious, whether I shall yet succeed to awaken thy heart to thankfulness. That I stand here in the dawning in my shift, disturbed out of my most needful slumber and deal with thee, it seems is not enough to engender in thee such a feeling. I have not mentioned yet that with the second child thou receivest likewise the second maid which I bought. For to Leah I give Zilpah as dowry, and to **Rachel Bilhah, and two-thirds of the mina of silver that**

I give thee shall be reckoned in. Thus thou hast four wives overnight and a women's house like the king of Babel, thou that satest so lately barren and forlorn."

Jacob still kept silence.

"Thou cruel man," he said at last, with a sigh. "Thou knowest not what thou hast done unto me; thou knowest and thinkest not on it, I must believe, nor can have any imagining of it in thy iron heart. I have squandered my soul and all the best of me upon the wrong woman this night, and that crusheth my heart together at thought of the right one for whom it was meant and I shall have to do with Leah all the week, and when my flesh is weary for I am only human, and it is sated and my soul all too drowsy for high feelings, then shall I be given the right one, Rachel, my treasure. And thou thinkest it is good so. But that can never be made good, which thou hast done to me and to Rachel thy child, and even unto Leah, who sitteth there upon her bed in tears because I had her not in my mind."

"Dost thou mean," Laban asked, "that after the marriage week with Leah thou wilt have no more manhood left to make fruitful the second? "

"Not that, may God forbid," answered Jacob.

"All the rest is whimseys and moonshine," concluded Laban. "Art satisfied with our new contract, and shall it be so or no between me and thee? "

"Yea, it shall be so," said Jacob, and went back to Leah.

#### OF GOD'S JEALOUSY

SUCH, then, are the tales of Jacob, written in the mien of the grey-haired man, as they passed before his swim-

ming gaze, that got entangled in his eyebrows, when he fell into his solemn musing, either alone or with other people — and his look gave them a start, so that they nudged each other and whispered: "Hush, Jacob is thinking of his stories!" Many of them I have already told and put in their proper light, even some which lie further ahead in point of time, such as Jacob's return to the west and the events thereafter; but seventeen years rich with incidents and episodes remain to be filled in, of these the most important being Jacob's double wedding with Leah and Rachel, and the birth of Reuben.

But Reuben was Leah's and not Rachel's; Leah bore to Jacob his first son, who later trifled away his birth-right, being like water for instability, it was not Rachel who conceived and bore him, the bride of Jacob's affection did not present to her lord this child, nor, according to the will of God, Simeon, Levi, Dan or Judah, or any of the ten ending with Zebulun; although at the end of the wedding feast, after Jacob had left Leah on the fifth day and somewhat refreshed himself by going bird-shooting with the company, Rachel was brought in unto him — upon which event I will not further dwell. For I have already told how Jacob received Rachel; as the result of Laban's chicanery he first received her in Leah, and it was in fact a double wedding that was held, the marriage with two sisters, one of whom he actually married but the other in intent — and in this sense what do we mean by actually? For from this point of view Reuben was after all Rachel's son, conceived by union with her. And yet she that was so ready and willing went empty away, and Leah rounded apace, and folded her hands

in contentment over her burden, with her head meekly on one side and her lids dropped to hide her squint.

She was delivered on the bricks, and displayed great talent, it was a matter of a couple of hours, perfect child's play. Reuben shot out like a stream of water, and when Jacob, being hastily summoned, came in from the field, for it was the time of the sesame harvest, the infant was already bathed, rubbed off with salt and wrapped up in swaddling bands. He put his hand upon him, and in the presence of all the household he said: " My son." Laban made a congratulatory speech. He adjured Jacob to be as untiring as himself, to add a new name three years running to his credit — and the newly delivered cried out joyfully from her bed across the court: Twelve years running, without pause, she would be fruitful. Rachel heard it.

Rachel could not be got to leave the cradle, it hung from the ceiling by cords, so that Leah could guide it with her hand. Rachel sat at the other side and looked at the child. When it cried she got up and gave it to her sister, who put it to her swelling, milk-veined breast; looked on greedily as it suckled, growing red and steamy with satisfaction; and watching pressed her hands against her own delicate bosom.

" Poor little one," Leah would say to her. " Fret not thyself, thy turn will come. And thy prospects are far better than mine, for it is thee upon whom the master's eyes are turned, and for once that he cometh to me there are four or six times that he is with thee, then how canst thou fail? "

But whatever the prospects for Rachel, it was Leah, by God's will, in whom they were fulfilled; for scarcely

was she about than she was again expectant, and went carrying Reuben upon her back and Simeon in her belly; and felt hardly sick as he began to wax, and found it no matter for sighing that he made her greatly misshapen; but was sturdy and of good cheer up till the end, and worked in Laban's fruit garden until her hour came and her face changed and she gave order for the bricks to be set up. Then came forth Simeon with the greatest ease, and sneezed. He was admired of all, and most by Rachel, and what anguish it gave her to admire him! For the matter stood a little differently this time, indeed: consciously and undeceived Jacob had begot him upon Leah, he was hers entirely and beyond a doubt.

And Rachel — how was it with the little one? How blithely and earnestly she had looked in her cousin's eyes, with what courage and loving readiness for life! How confidently she had hoped and felt that she would bring forth to him children in both their likenesses, even sometimes twins! And now she went empty away, while Leah rocked her second born. How came this about?

The letter of the tradition is all we have, when we seek to explain this melancholy fact. Briefly it says: "And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren." Just for that reason. It is an attempt at explanation, as good as another, a hypothesis, for we have no direct and authentic utterance of El Shaddai as to the meaning of his decree and doubtless one never existed. It would be proper, however, to reject the interpretation if I knew a better one; but since I do not, I prefer to consider this one as essentially correct.

The kernel of it is that God's dispensation was not

primarily directed against Rachel, nor in Leah's favour. Rather it constituted a discipline and an admonishment for Jacob himself, who, that is, was therein instructed that the soft and sentimental sovereignty he permitted to his feelings, the arrogance with which he cherished and promulgated them, were looked upon by Elohim with much disfavour — notwithstanding that this very tendency to selection, and unbridled indulgence in arbitrary favouritism, this pride of feeling which would not submit itself to judgment but rather required all the world to take it at its own valuation, might be referred back to a higher prototype, of which it was in fact the mortal counterpart. Do I say although? Precisely because Jacob's glorification of his feelings was a duplicate of the other, it was punished. Anyone undertaking to speak on this point must take heed to his words; but even after the most scrupulous examination of the words I have quoted, there is no doubt that the motive power of the measure was God's jealousy of a privilege which, as He sought to make clear by this humiliation of Jacob's feeling, he regarded as his sole prerogative. I may be blamed for this interpretation, and it will hardly escape the objection that so petty and passionate a motive as jealousy is inapplicable as an explanation of divine decrees. But those who feel the offensiveness of the interpretation are free to regard the decree as a relic, spiritually unabsolved, of earlier and less disciplined stages in the development of the divine essence — primitive manifestations, upon which I have earlier sought to cast some light: I mentioned, for instance, the facial type of Yahu, warrior and weather control, lord of a swarthy troop of sons of the desert who called themselves his soldiers,

which displayed harsh and violent traits as distinct from any holy ones whatever.

The bond of God with the human spirit active in Abram was a bond for the purpose of mutual sanctification, a bond in which human and divine necessity were so mingled that one can scarcely say from which side, human or divine, the original impulse went out; but a bond, in any case, the existence of which betrays that the sanctification of God and that of man represent a dual process in which both are most intimately "bound up." Else, one might ask, why a bond? God's command to men: "Be holy, even as I am holy!" already assumes the sanctification of God in man; it really means "Let me become sanctified in thee and be thou also sanctified." In other words, the purification of God from the gloomy and violent deity into the sanctified one includes if we work it backwards that of man too, in whom it is consummated by God's urgent wish. This inward link, however, between the two situations, and the facts that God only attains His true dignity by the aid of the human spirit, and that man, on the other hand, only becomes worthy by contemplation of the actuality of God and its reference to Himself—precisely this highly connubial combination and reciprocity of relations, sealed in the flesh, and vouched for by the ring of circumcision, makes it understandable that precisely jealousy, as a survival of God's passionate and unsanctified stage, has remained longest with Him, either as jealousy of idols or perhaps of His prior right and prerogative of extravagant feeling—which is at bottom the same thing.

For what was that uncontrolled feeling of one human

being for another, which Jacob permitted himself for Rachel, and later, perhaps even intensified, for her firstborn, but idolatry? Jacob's experiences with Laban may still, in part, be rightly understood as a just retribution for Esau's sufferings and fate, as a squaring of accounts with him in whose favour the balance had inequitably been weighed down. But on the other hand when one considers Rachel's sad destiny, and after that remembers all that young Joseph had to bear, so that it was only by exceeding shrewdness and adroitness in his dealings with God and man that he managed to give things a turn to the good at last, one feels convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that what we are dealing with is jealousy of the purest water and in the most literal sense; not merely general and with respect to a prerogative, but highly personal jealousy of the objects of the idolatrous feeling by which it was roused to an avenging rage — in a word, with passion. We may call it a primitive survival, if we will; the fact remains that only in passion does the turbulent word of "the living God" rightly test and fulfil itself. After we have heard the whole story we shall realize that Joseph, however much his weaknesses injured him, possessed more understanding for this livingness of God, and knew better how to take skilful cognizance of it, than his father who begot him.

#### OF RACHEL'S DISTRACTION

LITTLE Rachel, of course, knew nothing of all this. She hung on Jacob's neck and said to him: "Give me children, else I die." He answered: "Little pigeon, of what avail is all this? For thine impatience maketh thy hus-

band likewise to feel impatient, and I should not have thought that I could ever have such a feeling against thee in my heart. Truly it hath no reason that thou shouldst hang about me with prayers and tears. Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of thy womb? "

He put it off on God, by way of saying that the fault was not his, and that he had given ample evidence that he was not to blame — for was he not fruitful in Leah? To advise the younger sister to turn her prayers to God was the same as to say that the trouble lay at her door, in which, as in the vibration of his voice, he betrayed his impatience. It was natural that he should be irritated, for it was silly of Rachel to implore him for something for which he himself felt equal longing without making his disappointed hopes a reproach to her. Still, one must needs make excuses for the poor child, for if she remained barren, she had the worse end of it. She was friendliness itself, but it was more than her woman's nature could bear and not feel jealous of her sister; and envy is a solvent to the emotions in which much else besides admiration unfortunately comes to the surface, and the reaction simply cannot be the best in the world. It could not but undermine the sisterly feeling between the two — in fact it already did so. Leah's maternal status outweighed the advantage of her infertile co-wife, whose appearance was so much that of a virgin that the other must have been a hypocrite to be able to betray in her manner no trace of any consciousness of her superior worth. In the accepted and thoughtless phrase, the wife who had blessed her husband with children was the "beloved," the other the "unloved" wife; a terminology

hateful to Rachel's ears, and utterly false to boot; it was only human that she could not be content with the fact, but must bring it to speech and utter it. It unfortunately came to this, that she would refer, with flashing eyes and paling cheek, to Jacob's never concealed preference and his more frequent visits at night — a sore point with Leah, of course, who, when it was touched upon, could only answer with a shrug that at least they did her no good. Thus sisterly tenderness was at an end, and Jacob stood embarrassed between the two.

Laban looked gloomily on. He rejoiced that the daughter whom Jacob had scorned should now come to honour; but he suffered for Rachel, and also he began to fear for his shekels. The law-giver had set down in writing that if one wife went childless the father-in-law must return the money, for such a marriage was only a mistake. Laban hoped that Jacob had not understood this, but he might learn it any day, and when there was no more hope for Rachel, Laban or his sons might be faced with the prospect of paying Jacob in cash for his seven years' service. The thought lay heavy in Laban's belly.

Therefore, when in the third year of her marriage Leah was again expectant, being big this time with the boy Levi, and on Rachel's side there was no stirring whatever, it was Laban who came forward with the suggestion that there were certain measures which might be taken; in fact he demanded that something be done and introduced into the conversation the name of Bilhah, saying that Jacob might lie with her that she might bear upon Rachel's knees. It would be a mistake to suppose that Rachel had suggested, much less advocated, this after all rather obvious resource. Her feelings with re-

gard to it were much too mixed for her to do more than simply acquiesce. But it is true that she was on close and friendly terms with Bilhah, her maid, an attractive little thing, before whose charms Leah had later to abandon the field entirely; and her craving to possess the dignity of motherhood drove out all the natural disinclination she must have felt for acting as once her stern father had acted, and introducing with her own hands a substitute into Jacob's bed.

Actually the affair was done the other way round: she led Jacob by the hand to Bilhah, who had scented herself beyond all limits and whose little head was swimming with bliss; having given the child a sisterly kiss and said to her: " Since it must be so, sweetheart, I am glad that it is thou. Be mother of thousands! " The exaggeration was simply an expression of her wish that Bilhah might be receptive in her mistress' place — which the child straightway was, announcing the success of the manoeuvre to her mistress, that the latter might tell her husband and parents. Bilhah bore the increase of her body in the ensuing months with little less stateliness than Leah hers, and Rachel, who was full of tenderness for the child from now on, and often put her ear and her caressing hands to Bilhah's rounding form, could read in the eyes of all observers the increased respect which her sacrifice earned for her.

Poor Rachel! Was she happy? By means of a recognized resource in such cases, she had to a certain extent weakened the force of the divine decree. But her yearning heart was confused by the fact that her merit was waxing in a stranger's body. It was a half-merit, a half-joy, a half-self-deception, sanctioned by tradition since

needs must, but without flesh and blood confirmation in Rachel herself; the very children would be only half-real, the sons whom Bilhah would raise up to her and to the husband whom she so fruitlessly loved. Rachel's had been the pleasure, another's would be the pain. That was convenient, but it was a sham and an abomination as well — not in her thoughts, for they consented to the law and the custom; but to her straightforward and valiant little heart. In these days she wore a bewildered smile.

But she performed, piously and joyfully, all that was granted and prescribed for her to do. Bilhah gave birth upon her knees, as the custom demanded. She embraced her from behind with her arms, and hours long she shared in the labour, the shrieking and the groans, midwife and parturient in one. It was not an easy birth, Bilhah laboured for a full four and twenty hours, and at the end Rachel was almost as worn out as the mother after the flesh — and that was a gratification to her soul.

Thus came into the world that scion of Jacob who was named Dan, only a few weeks after the birth of Leah's Levi, in the third year of marriage. But in the fourth year, when Leah was delivered of him whom she named Judah (praise God), Bilhah and Rachel with their united powers presented to the husband their second son, and called his name Naphtali, for it seemed to them that he would be a wrestler. Thus Rachel had, in the name of God, two sons. And after this there were for the time no more.

## THE DUDAIM

JACOB had spent the first years of his marriage almost entirely in Laban's court, leaving to the under shepherds and hirelings the care of the flocks in the meadows, though he visited them from time to time, took a muster of their charges, and received the increase in animals and goods, which belonged to Laban, and yet not all, sometimes not even the larger share. For a good deal outside and even in the courtyard, where Jacob had erected several new buildings to store his goods, already belonged to Laban's son-in-law; so that in time one might have spoken of the intermingling of two flourishing businesses, and a sufficiently complicated calculation of interests, which Jacob obviously oversaw and controlled, but which had long since got beyond Laban's power to disentangle, though he would never have admitted as much — partly because of fear to expose his lack of understanding, partly because of the old anxiety lest he vex the blessing in the body of his overseer by meddling and criticizing in his affairs. Things were going too well to risk that; he must wink at any irregularities he saw, and in truth by now he scarcely dared to open his mouth in matters of business — so obvious and overwhelming was the evidence that Jacob was indeed the very child of his God. Six sons and " water-pourers " he had raised up to himself in four years, double that which Laban had been able to do in the near neighbourhood of the blessing. His respect, if secret, knew no bounds, the only abatement of it was due to Rachel's barrenness. One must give the man his head, and only be grateful that

it seemed not to occur to him to break off and set out on his wanderings.

The thought of return, of a resurrection from this pit and underworld that was Laban's country had actually never been remote from Jacob's thoughts — as little now after twelve years as it was after twenty-four. But he took his time, in the organic consciousness that he had time to take (for he was to live to a hundred and five) and had got out of the habit of connecting the idea of leaving with the time when Esau's wrath might be supposed to have died down. Furthermore a certain rooting of his life in the soil of Naharina had necessarily come about; for he had lived through much in this spot, and the things a man goes through in a place are like roots which he sinks into the ground. But in the main Jacob's reasoning was that he had not yet taken enough advantage from his sojourn, was not yet heavy enough in goods. The underworld afforded two kinds of things: filth and gold. He had made acquaintance with the filth: in the shape of the cruel waiting and the even crueller deception with which the demon Laban had rent his soul in twain on the bridal night. And he had begun to lade himself with the riches — but not enough, not in abundance; whatever there was to take he must pack, and Laban must still bleed gold. They were not yet quits, the man must be even more thoroughly cheated — not for the sake of Jacob's revenge but simply because it was fitting that the biter should be bit — though our Jacob had not as yet seen the effective means of carrying out the decree.

All that put him off, and his business occupied him. He was now much abroad in field and steppe, absorbed in breeding and trading on his own and Laban's account;

which might be, among others, a reason for the check in the flow of blessings in the shape of progeny; although his wives and their children, as well as Laban's growing sons, were often with him at the sheep-pens, and lived there in tents and huts. Rachel had now become jealous of Bilhah, by whose help she had achieved sons of her own; she no longer suppressed her feeling, but forbade intercourse between master and maid, both of them readily bowing to her command. She herself remained barren into the fifth, then into the sixth year — or forever, as it unhappily seemed; also Leah's body lay fallow — very much to her vexation, but it simply rested one year and then two, so that she said to Jacob:

" I know not what it can mean nor what sort of disgrace I am visited with that I am now empty and useless. If thou haddest only me it would not happen nor had I remained two years unblest. But my sister is all unto our lord, and taketh my husband from me, so that hardly can I help cursing her although I love her. Perhaps this strife it is that weakeneth my blood so that I bear no fruit and thy God thinketh no more of me. But what was pleasing unto Rachel pleaseth me too; take then Zilpah, my maid, and lie with her that she may bear upon my lap, and I shall have sons through her. If then I am already unworthy before thee, yet I will still have children in any case, for they are like balm upon the wounds which thy coldness makes."

Jacob scarcely denied her grievance. He told her that she too had worth in his eyes, but his words bore the stamp of indifferent politeness. In this he was blameworthy; could he not bring himself to show a little kindly feeling towards this woman, even though he had suffered

so sorely through her means? Must every kind word he gave her seem to him like treachery towards his own cherished feelings? The day would come when he should bitterly repent the arrogance of his heart, but that day was still far off, and before it came his feeling was still to be vouchsafed its highest triumph.

Leah had probably made the suggestion about Zilpah for form's sake, as another way of hinting that Jacob should pay her more frequent visits. But the loftiness of Jacob's feeling made him ignore or fail to see the point; he simply said that he was willing to avail himself of Zilpah's aid in breaking the dam in the stream of progeny. Rachel, of course, could not refuse her consent, especially after the high-bosomed Zilpah, who had a certain likeness to Leah and never found much favour in Jacob's eyes, came humbly and begged permission of the favourite. Then Leah's maid, in meekness and slavish compliance, received the master, conceived, and gave birth on the knees of her mistress, who helped her to groan. In the seventh year of marriage, the fourteenth of Jacob's sojourn, she bore Gad and commended him to fortune; likewise in the eighth and fifteenth the sweet-toothed Asher. Jacob had now eight sons.

At this time, near the birth of Asher, occurred the episode of the *dudaim*. It was Reuben who had the luck to find them — he was eight at the time, a swarthy, muscular lad, with inflamed eyelids. He already shared in the work of the early harvest, for which Laban and Jacob had come from the shearing, and which made the household labourers and hired hands to pant. Laban, the sheep-breeder, who when Jacob first came had sowed nothing but one sesame field, now after the coming of

the water planted barley, millet, morel and in particular wheat. His wheat field, enclosed in a clay wall and scored with irrigation ditches, was his most important one. It was six acres in extent, undulating over a shallow rise of ground, and its loam was rich and strong. If Laban let it lie fallow from time to time, as he never failed to do according to the time-honoured rule, it bore more than thirty fold.

This year was a year of blessing. The pious labour of planting, of the plough and the scattering hand, of the hoe, the harrow and the water-pail, had been rewarded from on high. Before the ears formed, Laban's cattle had had rich green pasturage; no gazelle had pilfered the fruit nor had locusts covered the land nor floods wrenched it away. The harvest stood rich in I jar and Jacob, although known to be no farmer, this time gave evidence of the blessing in this sphere as well, and by deed and word brought about a thicker sowing than usual; with the result that though the kernels were somewhat fewer in the ear, yet the whole yield was larger — enough larger, that Laban, as Jacob tried to make clear to him with figures, reaped an advantage, even though a fixed share fell to his son-in-law.

They were all working in the fields, even Zilpah, who gave suck to Gad and Asher in the intervals of work; only the daughters of the house, Leah and Rachel, had remained home to prepare the meal. The harvesters swung their scythes among the corn, their bodies glistening with sweat, singing hymns as they worked; they wore sun-shields made of reed, and aprons of sheep-skin round their loins. Others cut straw or bound the sheaves, loaded them upon asses and ox-carts, which bore the

blessing to the threshing-floor, where it was threshed by oxen, winnowed, sifted and stacked. The boy Reuben had shown himself a man among the labourers; now in the golden afternoon his arms were tired, and he sauntered away to the margin of the field. There, by the clay wall, he found the mandrake.

It needed a sharp eye, and a trained one, to have seen it. The coarse oval leaves showed only a little above the soil, invisible to any but an instructed gaze. It was by its berries, the *dudaim* themselves, dark-coloured and about the size of hazel nuts, that Reuben knew what was underneath, in the earth. He laughed, and praised God. He seized his knife, drew a circle round and dug until the root hung only by slender threads. Then he uttered a two-worded charm for his own protection and pulled out the root with a quick jerk. He had thought that it would shriek, but nothing happened. And yet it was a proper and well-shapen little sprite that he held by the topknot; white like flesh, with two legs; the size of a child's hand, bearded and covered all over with fibrous hairs. It was a kobold, fit to make you laugh with amazement. The boy knew its properties; they were many and useful, but in particular, Reuben knew, they were good for women. Therefore he thought at once of Leah, his mother, and ran home to fetch it her.

Leah was delighted. She praised and complimented her eldest, gave him a fistful of dates, and warned him not to boast of the matter before father and grandfather. " Silence is no sin," she said, and it was not necessary that everybody should know what they had in the house; it was enough if all should reap the benefit. " I will bide the time," she finished, " and get from it all that it has

to give. Thanks, Reuben, my eldest-born, son of the first wife, thanks that thou hast had her in mind. There are others that think not of her. From them hast thou thy lucky hand. Go now thy ways."

Thus she dismissed him and thought to keep the treasure for herself. But Rachel, her sister, had been watching and seen all; who was it later used to peep about just so, and then prattle to his own undoing? It was in her flesh and blood, along with her many charms, and she passed it on to her offspring. She said to Leah:

"What hath our son brought to thee?"

"My son," said Leah, "hath brought me nothing, or the merest trifle. Wast thou by chance hereabouts? For he brought me a beetle in his childishness and a bright-coloured stone."

"He hath brought thee a little earth mannikin, with the leaves and the fruit," Rachel said.

"Yes, he brought me that too," responded Leah. "Here it is. See how plump and stocky it is. My son found it for me."

"Ah, yes," cried Rachel, "thou'rt right, it is firm and fleshy, and hath many *dudaim*, full of seed." She had folded her hands against her pretty cheek, almost she had stretched them out in entreaty. She asked:

"What wilt thou make of it?"

"Put a little shirt on him, of course," answered Leah, "after I have washed and anointed him, and lay him in a basket and wait for him to bring blessing on the house. He will frighten the demons of the air, that none of them enters into a man or into a beast in the stall. He will foretell the weather and find out things that are hidden for the present or that lie in the future. It will make

a man proof against weapons if I put it in his clothing, and will bring him gain in trade and grant him judgment before the judge even though he be in the wrong."

"How thou pratest!" said Rachel. "Know I not myself it is good for all that? But what else wilt thou do?"

"I will cut off the top and the berries and make a brew that putteth to sleep him that smelleth thereat, and if he smell longer he shall lose his tongue. It is a strong infusion, my child, and who taketh of it too much be it man or woman shall die the death, but a little is good against snakebite, and if one must be cut in his flesh it is to him as though it were the flesh of another."

"But all that is as nothing," Rachel cried, "and of what thou hast above all *in* thy mind, of that speakest thou not. Ah, dearest little sister, and dear Leah," she cried, beginning to wheedle her, and to beg with her hands as a child does, "little vein of my eye, thou stateliest among daughters! Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrake, that I may be fruitful, for my discontent at my lack consumes my life, and I have such shame of mine own unworthiness! Seest thou, my doe, my golden-haired among the swarthy, thou knowest the virtue of the brew, and how it can bewitch men, and is like the dew of heaven upon the barrenness of women, that they may blessedly conceive and give birth with ease! Thou hast in all six sons, and I but two, which are not mine, what then are the *dudaim* to thee? Give them me, my little wild she-ass, if not all then a morsel therefrom, that I may bless thee and fall at thy feet, for my desire is like a burning fever!"

But Leah pressed the mandrake to her breast and looked at her sister with threatening, squinting eyes.

" What sauciness is this? " asked she. " Cometh here the favourite and hath peeped and spied and will have my *dudaim*? Is it a small matter that thou takest my husband, daily and hourly, and wouldst thou take away my son's mandrake also? It is beyond all shame."

" Must thou speak so hatefully," responded Rachel, " and canst not speak otherwise even though thou wouldst? Put me not beside myself by thus wrenching the truth, for I would be tender with thee for the sake of our childhood days. Sayest thou I have taken from thee Jacob, our husband? Thou thyself hast taken him from me, in that holy night when thou didest secretly with him, instead of me, and in his blindness he poured into thee Reuben, whom I myself should have received. And he would be now my son, if all had gone well, and would have brought me the stalk and the root, and if thou hadst asked of me I would have given thee."

" How thou talkest! " Leah replied. " So thou wouldst have received my son? Why then hast thou not since that time conceived and wilt make spells and do magic in thy need! Well I know thou wouldst have given me nothing. For hast thou ever when Jacob flattered thee and would take thee to him, said unto him, \* Remember my sister too! ' No, thou hast but pined and languished, and given him thy bosoms that he might play with them and thought of nought at all but thy philandering. Now comest thou and beggest, saying: ' I would have given thee.' "

" Ah, how hateful! " answered Rachel again. " It is all ugly and hateful, what thine own nature driveth thee to say, and I suffer under it, yet for thyself I suffer more than all. For it is a curse to have power to utter nought but ugliness when one opens one's mouth! That I sent not

Jacob to thee when he would come unto me, was by no means because I grudged him to thee, may his gods and the gods of our father be my witness! But I am now unfruitful into the ninth year of our marriage, and I am in despair, and every night that he chooseth me I hope ardently for the blessing and risk not to neglect it. But thou, who mayest easily neglect it now and again, what purposest thou to do? Thou wilt bewitch him with the *dudaim*, and give me not of them, so that he may forget me and thou mayest have all and I nothing. For I had his love and thou hadst the fruit, so there was a kind of justice. But now thou wilt have all, the love and the fruit, and I shall eat dust. So thinkest thou of thy sister."

And she sat down upon the ground and wept aloud.

"I take now my son's mannikin and go hence," said Leah coldly.

Then Rachel sprang up, forgot her tears and cried out in an imploring whisper:

"Do not so, for God's sake, but stay and hearken. He would be with me this night, he hath spoken of it this morning when he left me. 'Sweetest one,' he said, 'thanks for this time. To-day the wheat shall be cut, but after the heat of the day I will come, beloved, and bathe me in the mildness of thy light that is like the moon's.' Ah, how he speaketh, our husband! For his words are like pictures and full of solemnity. Do we not both love him? But for to-night will I leave him to thee for the sake of the *dudaim*. Expressly will I leave him to thee, if thou wilt give me of them, and hide myself away, and thou shalt tell him: 'Rachel will not, she hath no taste for this night for billing and cooing. And thou shalt sleep with me, such were her words.' "

Leah went red and pale.

" Is it sooth," she said, hesitating, " and wilt thou sell him to me for the *dudaim* of my son, that I may say to him ' To-night thou art mine ' ? "

Rachel answered: " Thou sayest."

Then Leah gave her the mandrake, leaves and root and all together, gave it her hastily in her hand, and whispered with heaving breast:

" Take it, go, let thyself not be seen! "

But she herself, as evening came and the people came from the field, went to meet Jacob and said:

" To-night thou shalt lie with me; for our son found a tortoise and Rachel begged it of me at this price."

Jacob answered:

" So I am of the worth of a tortoise and a tabbied box made from the shell? I have no memory of being so resolved to sleep this night with Rachel! so hath she bought the certain with the unsure, and I give her praise. But if ye have so agreed, so let it be. For a man shall not set himself against women's counsel nor kick against their resolved decisions."

# 7

## RACHEL

### THE OIL GAZING

IT was the little minx Dinah who was thus conceived — an ill-fated child. But through her Leah's womb was opened anew, after a pause of four years the sturdy creature came again into action. In the tenth year of wedlock she bore Issachar, the bony ass, in the eleventh Zebulun, who would not be a shepherd. Poor Rachel! She had the *dudaim*, and Leah bore the fruit. God would have it so, and for yet a while; until His will changed or rather reached a new stage, until a further segment of His scheme became plain in time and Jacob, the man of the blessing, was vouchsafed a joy fuller of life and more pregnant with suffering than his time-imprisoned human sense gave him to understand when he received it. Laban, the clod, had very likely been right when he said, in his sluggishness over the beer, that blessing was strength and life strength and nothing else. For it is vain superstition to think that the life of men of blessing is nothing but happiness and shallow well-being. For the blessing is in truth only the basis of their existence, gleaming goldenly through a plenitude of affliction and trial.

In the twelfth year of marriage, the nineteenth of

Jacob's sojourn, no child was born. But in the thirteenth and twentieth, Rachel became expectant.

What a turn that was, what a new beginning! We may fancy the anxious, incredulous rejoicing, and Jacob's weak-kneed exaltation. She was then thirty-one years old, no one still thought that God meant thus at last to smile upon her. In Jacob's eyes she was Sarah, to whom the threefold man announced a son against all the laws of probability; he called her by the name of that early mother, as he sat at her feet and gazed through adoring tears into her pale and twitching face which to him seemed lovelier than ever. But their fruit, the long withheld, at length conceived, the child which had by inscrutable providence so many years been denied to their hopeful longings, it he called, while she was carrying it, by the primitive, archaic name of a youthful god scarcely any longer officially recognized, though beloved among the people: Dumuzi, the true son. Leah heard it. She had borne him six true sons and an equally true daughter.

But she had understood without that. Quite plainly and openly she told her four eldest sons, at that time from ten to thirteen years old, as good as grown, sturdy, competent, manly youths, withal rather ill-favoured and all of them with a tendency to inflamed eyelids:

" Sons of Jacob and Leah, we are undone. If she bear him a son — and as the gods see my heart I wish her joy and health — then the master will look no more at us, neither you nor the little ones, nor the children of the maids, and me least of all, were I ten times the first wife. For that I am, and sevenfold have his God and my father's gods blessed me with motherhood. But

she is the favourite, therefore is she likewise the first and the only one, so proud is his feeling, and he calleth her son, who hath not yet seen the light, Dumuzi, ye have heard it. Dumuzi! It is like a knife in my breast and a blow in my face and like a weal is it in the face of each of you, yet must we endure it. For so is it, my sons. We must be strong, I and ye, and hold our hearts in both our hands that they burst not against the injustice. We must love and honour our master though we were in future worthless in his eye, and he will look through us as though we were air. And her too I will love, and will enforce my heart that it may not curse her. For it is tender toward the little sister, and mindful of our childhood days; but with violence it longeth to curse the favourite, her who shall bear Dumuzi, and so divided are my feelings for her that I am ill and sick of it in my very body and no longer know myself."

Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah caressed her awkwardly. Her red eyes were brooding and she gnawed her under lip. It was then it began. Then that stirred in Reuben's heart the beginning of that sudden angry deed which he was to commit for Leah's sake, and which would be the beginning of the end of his first-born rights. Then that was planted in the brothers' breasts that seed of hatred against the life which was as yet only a seed; the sowing begun of a harvest of unnamable anguish for Jacob, the man of the blessing. Did it then have to be so? Could not peace and blithe good feeling have reigned among the tribe of Jacob, and events have taken a mild and even course of mutual toleration? Alas, no, if that which happened had to happen, and if the fact that it happened is evidence that it must and was to

happen. Very much happens in the world; and as we cannot wish that it might rather have peacefully remained unhappened, we may not curse the passions which are its instrument; for without passion and guilt nothing could proceed.

The great notice that was taken of Rachel's condition was in itself monstrous to Leah and a vexation to her spirit, her own healthy pregnancies having passed with no attention from anyone. But Rachel, through hers, became as it were consecrated — a conception of which of course Jacob was the author, but which infected everybody in the house, from Laban down to the meanest of the stable hands. They all moved about her on tip-toe, and spoke to her only in soft commiserating voices, with head inclined and hands describing curves as though to caress the air about her person. All that lacked was the strewing of palm branches and the laying of carpets that her foot might not strike against a stone. Palely smiling she accepted all the adulation, less out of self-love than for the sake of the fruit of Jacob with which she had at last been blessed and in honour of Dumuzi, the genuine son. But who can tell the difference between meekness and arrogance, in one endowed with the blessing?

Behung with amulets she sat, forbidden to lift hand in house or court, garden or field. Jacob forbade it. He wept if she did not eat or could not keep down what she had eaten, for she sickened from week to week, and it was greatly feared that she was afflicted by some evil spirit of the air. Adina, her mother, plied her with bandages and application of ointments made after some old recipe, whose effect should be twofold: naturally emol-

lient and healing, as well as a charm and protection against evil. She ground up night-shade, garden cress, dog's-tongue, and the root of the plant of Namtar, lord of the sixty diseases, mixed the powder with pure and expressly consecrated oil, and massaged the expecting one round the navel, with an upward motion, muttering as she did so, in a meaningless and mumbled jargon:

" Bad Utukku, bad Alu, go away; bad death spirit, Labartu, Lamashtu, heart disease, gripes, head pains, toothache, Asakku, harmful Namtaru, go away, out of the house, by heaven and earth I conjure you! "

In the fifth month Laban insisted that Rachel be taken to a priest-seer at the temple of Sin, E-hulhul, at Harran, that her future and the child's might be foretold. Jacob held to his principles, giving his voice against it and refusing his co-operation; but that was outwardly. Inwardly he was as eager as the others to hear the prophecy and the first to desire that no time should be lost. Moreover, the prophet in question, the old seer and temple incumbent, Rimanni-Bel — Bel-have-mercy-upon-me — a son and grandson of prophets, was a very popular and experienced soothsayer and oil gazer, who, according to the concensus of opinion, was a master of the art and had a constant stream of visitors. Jacob refused, naturally, to appear before him as a petitioner and sacrifice to the moon, but he was much too curious to hear whatever might be said, from any point of view, of Rachel's condition, not to give way circumspectly to the parents' wishes.

Thus they set forth, Laban and Adina, on the way to Harran, holding on both sides the bridle of the ass upon which the pale and pregnant woman sat; they led it with

care that it might not stumble and shake her, and they dragged behind them the sheep for the sacrifice. Jacob waved them good-bye; he stopped at home, not to afflict his eyes with the pompous abominations of E-hulhul, nor vex his spirit with the sight of the house beside it, where lived the temple prostitutes and love-boys, whose embraces could be hired for the honour of the idol and the payment of a round sum of money. Thus, without personal contamination, he awaited the verdict of the son of seers, the prophecy of the gazing, which the others brought back with them. Clearly it had given them to think. He listened silently to their account of their experience in the temple precincts and before the face of Rimanni-Bel the oil gazer, or Rimut, as he was called for short. "Just call me Rimut," he had said in his mildness. "For indeed I am called Rimanni-Bel, that Sin may have mercy upon me; but I am myself full of mercy for those who in their need and their doubt learn to sacrifice, and therefore shall ye say simply 'Mercy' when ye speak to me, it is shorter and it suits my looks." And then he asked what needful things they had brought with them, and examined the spotlessness of the offering and directed them to buy such and such spices for the burnt-offering at a booth in the main court.

A charming man, this Rimanni-Bel, or Rimut, in his white linen garments and cone-shaped linen cap; already old, but of lithe figure not misshapen by corpulence, with a white beard, a bulbous red nose and twinkling eyes which made one feel merry when one looked at them. "I am well-shapen," he said, "unblemished without and within, like the sacrificial animal when it is well-favoured, and the sheep when there is nought to

say against it. I am of the right height and girth, and my leg is crooked neither out nor in, nor have I lost a single tooth, nor am afflicted with disease of the scrotum nor do I squint. Only my nose is somewhat red, as ye can see, yet out of cheerfulness and mirth, and no other cause, for I am as sober as the purest water. I could come naked before God, as it was once the custom, as we read and are told. Now we stand before Him in white linen, and in this too I rejoice, for it is pure and sober likewise and conformable to my soul. I cherish no envy of my brethren, the exorcizing priests, who do their incanting in a red garment with a mantle, enveloped in terrifying splendour in order to throw into a fright all the demons and lurkers and sprites of the air. They too are useful and necessary and worthy of their hire, but Rimanni-Bel (that is me) would not be one of them, nor one of the priests who do the washing and anointing, nor a possessed nor yet a wailing priest, nor one of those whose manhood Ishtar hath changed into the female, however holy it may be. I bear none of them the least grudge, my own skin fits me too well, nor should I care to practise any other kind of soothsaying than just the oil gazing, for it is far and away the most sensible, the clearest and the best. Just between ourselves, in the augury from inspection of the liver and the oracle of the arrow a good deal of arbitrary choice cometh in, and also the interpretation of dreams and transports is not without sources of error, so that often I have privily to smile. But as for you, father and mother and pregnant child, ye have taken the right road and knocked on the right door. For I am descended from Enmeduranki, who was king of Sippar before

the flood, sage and guardian of the art entrusted to him by the great gods, to look upon oil on water and to recognize, according to the behaviour of the oil, what shall come to pass. From him I am descended in a direct line from father to son, and the tradition is unbroken, for always the father made the son whom he loved to swear upon tablet and writing tool of Shamash and Adad and had him learn the work 'when the son of the seer' down to Rimut, the blithe and blameless (and that is me). And I receive of the sheep, that ye may know beforehand, the hinder part, the fell and a pot of broth, further the sinews and the half of the entrails according to the tables and according to the array. The loins, the right leg and a goodly roasting piece the god receiveth; and what is left we servers of the temple have at the temple meal. Are ye satisfied? "

Thus Rimut, the son of the seer. And they had sacrificed upon the roof that was sprinkled with holy water, and had carried up four jugs of wine and twelve loaves of bread as well as porridge made of curds and honey up to the table of the lord, and had strewn salt. Then they had strewn spices upon the candelabra for the incense and slaughtered the sheep; the offrant held it, the priest slew it, and due offering was made. Very charming it had been to see the old man, Rimut, in the blamelessness of his limbs, perform the final dance before the altar and leap disposedly. Laban and his spouse could not say enough in praise to Jacob, who listened in silence and concealed impatience for the verdict.

Yes, the verdict, the judgment of the oil — it had been rather dark and equivocal, one was not much wiser

having it than before; it sounded both auspicious and threatening, but thus perhaps must the future sound if it speak at all; and it had spoken, at least they had heard a humming, as though through shut teeth. Rimanni-Bel had taken the cedar staff and the bowl, had prayed and sung and poured oil on water as well as water on oil, and observed the pictures made with the oil, with his head on one side. Two rings had come out of the oil, one large and one small, indicating that Rachel, the sheep-breeder's daughter, would probably bear a son. Out of the oil when shaken a ring had come on the east and had remained; the woman in travail would recover her health. Out of the oil when shaken a bubble had come: her protecting deity would stand by her in her hour of need, for it would be hard. The creature would escape out of its need, for the oil had sunk and risen when water was poured in, it had divided and joined again; thus the creature, though after sore suffering, would become whole. But since the oil, when water was poured, had gone down and then come up again and clung round the edge of the bowl, so indeed the ailing would arise, but the healthy belong to death. " But not the boy! " Jacob could not refrain from crying out. No, for the child there seemed to be a reverse process, according to the oil — but just here the matter became unclear to human understanding. The child would go down into the pit yet still live, it would be like the seed-corn that bears no fruit, save it die. This, Rimut assured them, was unquestionably the meaning of the oil in parting when he poured in water and then joining again and glistening peculiarly on the side towards the sun, for this signified the lifting up of the head

from death. It was not very clear, the soothsayer had said, he himself did not understand it, he would not pretend to be wiser than he was; but whatever it meant it was reliable. But with respect to the woman: she would not see, according to the testing and the counter-testing, the star of her son when it stood at its highest; let her then beware of the number two. For it was in any case an unlucky number, but in especial for the daughter of the sheep-breeder, and according to the oil she should undertake no journey in the figure two, else she would be like an army that reacheth not the head of the field.

Thus the speech and the muttering — Jacob heard it and nodded his head, at the same time shrugging his shoulders. What was to be said to it? It was of some weight, having reference to Rachel and her child, but after all one must rely on oneself and leave to the future to make what it would out of its mutterings. Destiny and the future kept to themselves a free hand. Much might happen and not happen, and it would always be possible to make it fit the prophecy afterwards and say: " So that was what it meant." Jacob mused for several hours over the nature of oracles in general, and talked about it to Laban, who was not receptive. Was an oracle by its nature the revelation of a future in which nothing could be altered, or was it like an admonishment to caution and a warning to human beings to do their part, that a threatened misfortune might not happen? That presupposed that the destiny and the decree were not fixed, that it was given to men to alter them. But if this were the case, then the future did not lie outside of man, but within him, and how then could one read it?

Moreover it had often happened that the misfortune that had been announced had been prevented by appropriate measures, or even without these measures could not have happened — which reduced both destiny and warning to a mockery and the sport of demons. The oil had said that Rachel would, after hard labour, be delivered of a son. But if she were neglected while in labour, if no incantations were said, the necessary anointings not carried out, how then would destiny act to bring about the fulfilment of its prophecy? But then was it not sinful to try to bring in a good end contrary to destiny?

Laban had no use for such quibbling. It was ill-considered, he said, tortuous, over-refined and carping. The future was the future; that was to say, it was not yet and so was not fixed, but it would one day be, and then it would be so and so; thus it was in a certain way fixed, that is according to its property as future, and that was all there was to say about it. Yet judgments about it were enlightening and edifying to the heart, and these soothsayers were hired and paid to dispense them, and they studied for years, under the protection of the king of the Four Regions at Babel-Sippar on both sides of the river Euphrates, favourite of Shamash and beloved of Marduk — the king of Sumeria and Akkadia, who dwelt there in a palace whose foundations were fathoms deep and in a throne-room of unnamable splendours. Therefore Jacob was not to carp.

Jacob had already fallen silent. Against Nimrod of Babel he cherished in his heart a profound suspicion inherited from the original wanderer. It did not make the pronouncement he had heard any the holier that

Laban invoked that mightiness in its favour, or that his father-in-law would never lift a finger without taking a soothsayer's advice. Laban had paid for the judgment with a sheep and all sorts of edibles for the moon idol, and just on this account would be bound to rely on what he heard. Jacob, who had not paid, took a more detached view; but he on his side was pleased to have heard something without paying for it, and as for the future, at least in one point it was already settled: whether Rachel's child was a boy or a girl. The decision had already been made, in her womb — only one could not see it. There was such a thing, then, as a fixed future, and it was strengthening to the faith, after all, that Rimanni-Bel's oil had pointed to a boy. And also Jacob was grateful for the practical advice which the prophet had given, for as a priest and temple incumbent he had some knowledge of healing and had not been sparing (though there seemed to be a contradiction here, as between his two characters, since no healing could be any good against the future) of advice and counsel for the accouchement; mingling charms and invocations with medical prescriptions in a most edifying manner.

It went hard with little Rachel. Long before her hour — that came so near to being her last one — the treatments began: she had to drink bad-tasting draughts, for instance a great deal of oil in which was pounded up a stone efficacious in pregnancies; she had to wear poultices of bitumen, swine's fat, fish and herbs, yes, whole pieces of unclean animals which like the poultices were bound upon her body with cords. When she slept a kid-offering was always at her head, that the greedy demons might take it and leave her alone. Near her by day and

night there stood a clay doll in the image of the swamp-born Lamashtu, in its mouth the heart of a suckling pig, which was meant to lure away the demons from the body of the pregnant one into the image; every three days one smashed it with a sword and buried it in the corner of the wall, meanwhile taking care not to look behind one. The sword was thrust in a brazier of burning coals, which Rachel had to have beside her, although the season was already very warm and they were near the month of Tammuz. Her bed was surrounded by a little wall of pap, and the three heaps of grain in her chamber were likewise put there by direction of Rimanni-Bel. When the first pains began they hastened to smear the sides of the bed with the blood of a sucking pig and the house door with plaster and bitumen.

### THE BIRTH

IT was summer; the month of Tammuz, master of the herds, the mangled one, was already advanced some days. Since the great moment when he knew that his true and most beloved wife was expectant, Jacob had never stirred from her side; he had shared with his own hands in her care and treatment, renewing the bandages and ointments, and even once smashing and burying the image of Lamashtu: treatments and practices which were not commanded by the god of his fathers, but, above and beyond all the idols and soothsayers, might come from him after all, and in any case were the only ones there were to follow. Rachel — pale and wasted, heavy only in the body, where her fruit insensate and pitiless sucked up all her strength and her juices to

its own advantage — would often carry his hand to where he might feel the muffled movements; and he would speak to Dumuzi through the fleshly veil and tell him to take heart and come forth into the daylight, but in so doing to take care how he climbed over the hills that the dear shepherdess might anguish as little as possible. And now, when she gave a wry little smile and said shortwindedly that she felt it near, he fell into great excitement, called her parents and the maids, told them to make ready the bricks, and bustled aimlessly to and fro, his heart great with supplications.

No praise could be too great for the readiness and courage which Rachel displayed. Valiantly, joyously, resolved to bear and to endure greatly, she entered upon the work of nature. And this not for the sake of increased outward respect nor because she would now no longer be the childless and unloved wife of the popular phrase; but out of a much deeper, a more physical sense of honour — for not only human society has its sense of honour, the flesh knows one too and a better one, as Rachel learned when scatheless and for honour's sake she became a mother through Bilhah. The smile she wore when her trial began was other than that bewildered one which the painful conscience of her flesh had then painted upon her face. The lovely short-sighted eyes alight with happiness rested in Jacob's eyes, to whom she should now bear a child in honour; this was the hour to which in open-eyed readiness for life she had looked forward when the stranger, the cousin from afar, had first stood before her in the fields.

Poor Rachel! So glad she was, so full of good will for the work of nature — and nature showed her so

little good will in turn, made it so hard for the brave sufferer! Impatient for motherhood as she had been, sincerely convinced of her gift and aptitude, Rachel was probably in the flesh much less made for maternity than Leah the unloved; so that the sword of death hovered over her when she was brought to bed, and even at the second time it fell upon and slew her. Can nature so strive against herself, so mock the confidence and proud desire which she herself has emplanting in the heart? It seems so. For Rachel's joyousness was not acceptable, her trust was given the lie — such was the lot that fell to her ready and willing heart. Seven years had she and Jacob waited in hope, and then for thirteen more been incomprehensibly disappointed. And now, when nature had at last and finally granted the longed-for boon, she asked a harsher price than Leah, Zilpah and Bilhah together had paid for all their maternal honours. Thirty-six hours, from midnight to midday and again through a whole night to the next middle-day the frightful labour went on, and had it lasted even an hour or a half-hour more it would have left her breathless. Even at the beginning Jacob grieved to see her disappointment, for she had dreamed of a swift, triumphant finish and now nothing stirred. The first indications proved deceptive; long pauses supervened after the early pains, empty, silent and fruitless hours, in which she did not suffer, but felt weary and ashamed. Often she said to Leah: "With thee, sister, it was another matter," and Leah had to admit, with a quick glance at her husband, that this was so. Then anguish would seize upon the sufferer, crueller and longer each time, yet when it passed, seemed to have been all in vain.

She went from bricks to bed and from bed to bricks; the hours, the night watches, the times of the day came and went; she blushed and groaned for her unableness. Rachel shrieked not when her pains took her and would not let her go; she bit her teeth together and obstinately did her part; she would not frighten her lord, whose soft heart she well knew, and who in the pauses of exhaustion kissed her hands and feet in the distraction of his soul. Her fortitude helped her not at all, it was rejected. And after it was exhausted she shrieked indeed, wild and frenziedly, so that one would not have known her for the little Rachel. For at this time — the second morning had then come — she was no longer in her senses, one could tell it by the hideous howling, for the voice was no longer hers, it was the demons yelling, and the sucking pig's heart had had no power to lure them away from her body into the puppet.

They were unavailing pangs, that merely held the precious sufferer in a gripe of relentless torture, so that the shrieking mask that was her face went blue and her fingers clutched the air. Jacob ran through house and court, knocking against everything, since he had his thumbs in his ears and his eight other fingers before his eyes. He called on God — no longer for a son, he had no longer any thought of him, but only that Rachel might have a peaceful death and lie quiet and released from these hellish torments. Laban and Adina, whose draughts and anointings and strokings had borne no fruit, in deep dejection muttered invocations and amid the shrieks chanted prayers to Sin the moon-god, reminding him how once he had sustained a cow in labour, and might now so untie the knots of this woman's body

and aid the pangs of the sufferer. Leah stood bolt upright in a corner of the room, her arms at her sides, hands lifted at the wrists, and gazed silently with her squinting blue eyes at this life-and-death struggle of Jacob's beloved.

And then came forth out of Rachel a final shriek, the last furious demonic yell, such as one cannot twice shriek without dying and not twice hear without losing one's mind — and then Laban's wife had something else to do than chant about Sin's cow, for Jacob's son had issued forth, his eleventh and his first, issued out of the dark and bleeding womb of life — *Dumuzi-absu*, true son of the abyss. It was Bilhah, mother of Dan and Naphtali, who came running, white-faced and laughing, out to the court whither Jacob had rushed, and with flattering tongue announced to the master that unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given and that Rachel liveth; and trembling in every limb, he dragged himself to the bed, fell down beside it and wept. She was covered with sweat, transfigured as by the hand of death, and she was singing in breathless exhaustion. The gateway of her body was torn, she had bitten through her tongue, and she was weary unto death. Such was the reward of her joyful readiness.

She had no strength to turn her head, nor to smile, but she stroked his brow as he knelt beside her, and her eyes went towards the hanging cradle in sign that he should see the child was alive and lay his hand upon his son. The infant had been bathed, it had stopped screaming, it was swaddled and slept. It had smooth black hair upon its little head that in issuing had torn the mother; long lashes and tiny hands with well-shaped

nails. It was not then beautiful — one cannot speak of beauty in so young a child. And yet Jacob saw as he had not seen in Leah's children nor observed in the sons of the maids, saw at first glance, what filled his heart, the longer he looked, full to overflowing, with reverent rapture. There was about this newborn babe something ineffable, a clear-shining loveliness, equability, sympathy, divine charm, of which Jacob, if not to understand, yet thought to recognize the essence. He laid his hand on the child and said: " My son." But as he touched it, it opened its eyes, which then were blue and reflected the radiance of its birthday sun shining high in the heavens; with its tiny, strangely complete little hand it laid hold on Jacob's finger, holding it in a gentle clasp as it fell asleep. Rachel, the mother, slept too, a profound slumber. But Jacob stood there bent, a prisoner to his tender feeling, and gazed upon the brightness of his little son, perhaps an hour, until it nestled and whimpered for its food, and Jacob lifted it over.

They called the boy Joseph, which being interpreted means increase — as when we name our sons Augustus. His whole name, with God, was Joseph-el, or Josiphya; but liking to think that the first syllable also had reference to the most high they spoke to him as Jehosiph.

#### RING-STRAKED AND SPOTTED

AND now that Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob was in a high and feeling mood, speaking only in a voice that trembled with emotion; and the self-satisfaction he showed was really culpable. The babe had been born at about midday, and the sign of the virgin had risen in

the east; Jacob knew that it corresponded to Ishtar, the planetary revelation of divine femininity, and he insisted on seeing in Rachel, the mother, a heavenly virgin and mother-goddess, a Hathor and Isis with the child at her breast; while his son was a marvel and anointed one, whose appearance was bound up with a season of blessing and rejoicing, and who would be nourished there in the strength of Yahu. He stands convicted of arrogance and lack of proportion. Mother and child are of course holy; but the most rudimentary regard for certain sensibilities should have prevented Jacob from making them into an image, in the most offensive sense of the word, and of little Rachel an astral divine maid. He knew, of course, that she was not a virgin, in the everyday meaning of the word — what sort of arrangement would that have been! When he used the word it was only in a mythical and astrological sense. But he insisted upon the allegory with far too evident delight, tears of self-indulgence standing in his eyes. And since he was actually a shepherd and the beloved of his heart was named Rachel, a ewe, what more natural, or even more charming, than that he should call her babe "the lamb." But the tone in which he spoke of the lamb that had come forth out of the virgin was by no means jesting; rather it seemed to claim for the little rascal in the hammock the sanctity of the immaculate firstling and sacrifice of the flock. All the wild beasts, he said in his fervour, would attack the lamb, but it would conquer them all, and peace would come over all the earth and upon angels and men. And he called his son a branch and a shoot from the tenderest root, connecting it in his over-poetic soul with the image of the spring of the world and

the beginning of that time of blessing in which the heavenly youth would strike down the mighty with the staff of his mouth.

These were all emotional exaggerations. But yet in Jacob's mind the coming of the blessing-time had, in so far as it was a matter of his own personal time, a very practical meaning. It meant the blessing of riches. Jacob was convinced that the birth of a son to the true wife was guaranty that his business affairs, however much or little they had secretly profited while he had been serving Laban, would now take a steep and decisive upward trend; that the filthy underworld would after this unre-servedly bestow all the treasures of gold which it possessed. With the thought, indeed, was bound up a higher one, from the realm of feeling: he envisaged his return, treasure-laden, to the upper world and the land of his fathers. Yes, the coming of Jehosiph was like a turning-point in the course of his life, which ought strictly speaking to have coincided with his departure out of Laban's kingdom. But that could not be, it was in itself not advisable. Rachel could not travel; the recovery from so frightful a childbirth was slow and difficult and left her pale and weak; nor was the exhausting Eliezer journey of more than seventeen days to be thought of for the infant. It is surprising, it is almost ridiculous, to see how lightly these matters are sometimes decided and dismissed. Thus we are told that Jacob spent fourteen years with Laban, seven and seven; at the end of which Joseph was born and then he departed for home. And we are told expressly that at the meeting with Esau at the ford of Jabbok, Joseph came near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. But how could a babe at

the breast draw near and bow? At that time Joseph was five years old, and these five years it was that Jacob still lived with Laban after the twenty, and indeed under a new contract. He could not leave, but he could behave as though he meant to go at once, and thus put pressure on the clod Laban, for he could be got at in no other way than by exploiting the stark necessities of business life.

So then Jacob spoke with Laban and said:

" Let my father and uncle graciously incline his ear unto my words."

" Before thou speakest," Laban hastily broke in, " rather hearken unto me, for I have that which is pressing to say. We can no longer go on as we are, and I cannot for long endure the absence of legal regulation in the affairs of men. Thou hast served me seven and again seven years for thy wives according to our contract which is laid up below with the teraphim. But since some years now, I think since six, contract and document are out of date, and there is no law any more, only use and routine, so that no one any longer understandeth where he is. Thus is our life become like a house that is built without any level, and is, to speak openly, like the life of beasts. I see clearly, for the gods have given me eyes, that thou comest for a reckoning, since thou hast served me without conditions or contracted reward, for thou hast stored up all kinds of goods and possessions which I will not count, since now they are thine, and when my sons Beor, Alub and Muras have made long faces over them, lo, I have rebuked them. For it is a labour worthy of its hire, yet must it be governed. **Therefore let us now go and make a new contract for**

another seven years and thou wilt find me ready to treat with any condition which thou art minded to make."

"It cannot be," Jacob said, shaking his head. "Alas, my uncle wasteth his precious words, and need not have wasted them had he first listened to me. For I speak not to Laban in the matter of new contracts but in the matter of leave and permission to depart. Twenty years have I served thee, and thou thyself must needs bear witness how I have performed my service, for I myself may not for the sake of seemliness take the words in my mouth which alone are fitting to use. Yet it would be fitting that thou shouldest use them."

"I deny it not," said Laban; "that thou hast served me well and without reproach cometh not here to speech."

"And am grown old and grey in thy service, without need," Jacob went on, "for Esau's anger is long since spent and the ground therefore that I have left my home. The childlike nature of my brother the huntsman retaineth no longer any memory of the ancient tales. Years since might I have gone at any hour into mine own land, but I did it not. And why did I it not? To give the ground therefore there are but words to use and the using of them would not be seemly for me since their quality is praise. But now Rachel, the heavenly maid, in whom thou art grown lovely, hath borne me Dumuzi, Joseph, my son and hers. Him will I take, with my other children, sons of Leah and of the maids, and mount and ride that I come into my land and my place and at length take thought for my own house as I have so long done only for thine."

"That I would regret, in the truest sense of the word,"

answered Laban, " and what I can do that I will, that it may not come to pass. Let my son and nephew speak freely and unfeignedly what he demandeth in the way of new conditions, and I swear to him by Anu and Ellil that he will find me well inclined towards any reasonable demand."

" I know not what thou wouldst find reasonable," Jacob said, " considering what were thy possessions when I came hither and how they have extended under my hand, so that even Adina, thy wife, was drawn into the circle of growth and with unhoped-for vigour brought thee three sons in thy grey old age. Thou couldest have spoken, yet wouldst thou not speak, therefore will I also be silent and go."

" Speak and thou wilt remain," responded Laban.

Then Jacob named his condition, saying what he would have as the price of his staying another year or so. Laban had expected much, but not this. In the first moment he was staggered, and his mind wrestled with the problem first of understanding the demand and then of giving the needful counterstroke.

It was the famous story of the speckled and spotted sheep, told a thousand times by fireside and fountain, a thousand times celebrated in strophe and antistrophe in honour of Jacob, the shepherd, and as a master-stroke of ingenuity and shrewdness — this story, of which Jacob himself, in his old age, as he sat musing, could not think without a smile that curled the thin lips through his beard. In a word, Jacob asked for the pied sheep and goats, the speckled black and white; not the ones already born — we must understand the matter aright —•but the speckled and spotted ones which should be

dropped in future from Laban's flocks; they should be his hire and be added to the possessions which he had for long stored up and accumulated in his uncle's service. It was a matter of dividing between master and man the sheep which were bred from now on though not precisely in equal halves, for the larger half were white and the smaller pied, so that Jacob's request was in the nature of selection. Yet both well knew that the pied were fat and fruitful more than the white, and Laban said so at once, with mingled anger and respect for his nephew's cleverness and audacity.

" *Thou* thinkest of things! " he exclaimed. "A man might be stricken in sight and hearing at thy demands. So thou wouldst have the speckled, the excellent fat ones? Not that I have as yet said no, for I gave thee free to ask, and I keep to my word. If this be thy condition and thou persistest in it, otherwise thou wilt go hence and tear away my daughters from my heart, Leah and Rachel, thy wives, that in my old age I behold them no more, then be it as thou wilt. Yet must I frankly admit that the matter goeth to my heart."

And Laban sat down as though he were taken with a palsy.

" Hearken," said Jacob. " I see that my condition smiteth thee sore, and is little to thy liking. But since thou art own brother of my mother, and hath begotten Rachel, the starry virgin and my true and most beloved wife, so I will condition my condition that it may be less frightful to thee. Let us then pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and put them aside from the white, so that the ones

know nothing of the others. And after that what is dropped speckled, that is my hire. Art thou satisfied? "

Laban sat and blinked.

"Three days' journey," he suddenly cried out. "Three days' journey shall be set between the white and the pied, and there shall be separate breeding and tending between them, so that the ones know nought of the others, for so I will have it. And so it shall be sealed at Harran before the judge and laid by below with the teraphim and it is my absolute condition."

"It is harsh for me," said Jacob. "Yea, it is harsh and oppressive. Yet from the beginning have I been aware that my uncle thinketh with sternness, strictly and unbendingly in business matters. And therefore I accept."

"Thou dost well," Laban answered, "for never should I have departed from it. But hearken and tell me, which herd thinkest thou to pasture and to let pass under thy staff for thine own person? The speckled or the white? "

"It is lawful and natural," Jacob said, "that each shall guard his own, from which he shall have the profit; I will take then the pied ones."

"Not so," cried Laban then. "By no means. Thou hast made thy demand and it is a mighty one. But now it is my turn and I will ask what seemeth to me the least and cheapest for the honour of the business. Thou agreest with me anew in this contract. But if thou art my servant then the interest of the business demandeth that thou guardest the sheep that shall profit me, the white ones, not the ones that shall drop for thee, the parti-coloured ones. Beor, Alub and Meras, my sons,

whom Adina so proudly bore in her old age, they shall tend the parti-coloured sheep."

"H'm," Jacob said. "So be that also, I will not obstinately set up my will against thine, thou knowest my mildness."

Thus the bargain was struck, and Laban knew not the role he played, nor how he was being fooled to the top of his bent. He was too slow-witted to see the point. He wanted above all to cling to the blessing, and reckoned that its effect would be strong enough to outweigh the natural superiority of the speckled sheep. He knew that the white flock, from which, after the parting of the herds, pied yearlings were not to be expected, would propagate more freely under Jacob's care than would the coloured ones under the faithful but heavy hands of his sons. Clod that he was! He reckoned, indeed, on the blessing, but without enough foresight to imagine the issue of Jacob's shrewdness and inventive spirit, to say nothing of even dreaming of the plan which stood in the background of his son-in-law's demand and concessions: the sagacious reasoning, based upon extended previous experiment, which was at the bottom of it all.

For we must not think that it was only after the bargain was struck and with intent to turn it to his advantage, that Jacob hit upon the deep device by means of which he bred his sheep ring-straked and speckled. The idea had originally been without thought of gain, a play of imagination, and tested in a scientific spirit. The bargain with Laban had to do only with its application. It went back to the time before Jacob's marriage, when he had been an expectant lover, and his interest in breeding had been keenest and warmest; had originated, in

fact, out of sympathetic divination and emotional inspiration. One can really not praise enough the intuition which showed him how to make nature confess one of her most miraculous secrets, and to confirm his discovery by experiment. He discovered the phenomenon of shock in pregnancy. He found out that when the female was in heat the sight of the parti-coloured animal affected the lamb which she then dropped, so that a parti-coloured animal was the result. I must emphasize the fact that his curiosity was entirely abstract; that the pleasure was entirely intellectual, with which he set down a record of the successes he achieved. Instinct taught him, however, to conceal from Laban and from everybody else this insight he had gained into sympathetic magic; but the thought of turning his knowledge to his own profit was a secondary one, and only crystallized when he came to drive the *new* bargain with his father-in-law.

To the shepherds, in their songs, the result was everything, the apparatus of a very clever piece of over-reaching. How Jacob had snapped his fingers at Laban's precautions and systematically robbed him of his own; how he had taken rods of green poplar and of the hazel tree, and "pilled white strakes" in them and set them before the flocks in the gutters when they came to drink, where they were accustomed to copulate; how the flocks conceived before the rods and brought forth lambs and kids, ring-straked, speckled and spotted although they themselves were white; and how Jacob had done this especially at the spring running, whereas the later and less productive animals might be Laban's; all this the shepherds said and sang to the accompaniment of their lutes, and held their sides with laughter over the priceless trick.

For they had not Jacob's piety nor his knowledge of mythology, and did not know the sense of duty which guided his action: first that he might be helpful to God the King in carrying out His promise of riches, and secondly because that devil Laban had to be deceived, who had deceived him in the darkness with the stately but dog-headed Leah, because the saying had to be fulfilled which said that one did not leave the underworld save laden with the treasures which lay there so richly spread forth among the filth.

Thus, then, it was: there were three flocks, the white, tended by Jacob, the brown and parti-coloured, watched over by Laban's sons, and Jacob's own flock, accumulated in the course of trade during these years, tended by his own servants and under-shepherds, to which from time to time were added the coloured yearlings dropped by the parti-coloured herd and the bewitched white one. And it was after this fashion that the man grew so heavy with possessions that it was the talk and the admiration of the whole region — the number of cattle, and maid-servants, and menservants, and camels and asses, the man called his own. In the end he was much richer than Laban, the clod, or than all the owners of businesses who had been invited to his wedding.

#### HOW THEY STOLE

A H, how Jacob remembered — how deeply, how clearly! Everyone realized it, who saw him standing sunk in solemn musing, and everyone took care to check his own manifestations in reverence for this many-layered burden of life and history. For the situation of Jacob the

rich man had become precarious — God Himself, El, the highest, had perceived that the blessing was become out of sheer size unwieldy, and given him corresponding instruction in his face. It came to his notice, in other words, and was only too easy to believe, that his brothers-in-law, Laban's heirs, had a certain disposition towards him, expressed in grumbings repeated by the under-shepherds and servants, who heard them from his cousins' people at chance meetings in the courtyard. The fact that they had a ring of truth did not make them less disquieting. This man, Jacob, a distant cousin of ours, so he says, came hither before our time, a beggar and a fugitive, with nought but his skin; and our father in his goodness sheltered and cherished this good-for-nothing for the sake of the gods. And now, lo, the turn that things have taken before our face and eyes! He had fed himself on our flesh and blood and taken our father's goods unto himself, and is waxed fat and rich so that it is a stench in the nostrils of the gods, for it is robbery in their sight and defraudeth the heirs of Laban. It is time that something be done to re-establish justice in one way or another in the name of the gods of the country, Anu, Ellil and Marduk, not to forget Bel Harran, to whom we pray after the custom of our fathers, whereas our sisters, alas, the wives of this stranger, hold in part with his God and the Lord of his tribe, who teacheth him to make magic that the spring lambs are dropped speckled and our father's property passeth to him according to a vile contract which they made. But we shall see who is to prove stronger on this ground and in these plains, when time proveth all: the gods of the country, who have dwelt here for ages, or his god, who has no house but Beth-el, and

that is nought but a stone on top of a hill. For it might be that something would happen to the man, on the side of justice, and that a lion might tear him in pieces in the fields, which would not be a lie, for we are like lions in our wrath; Laban, our father, indeed is too faithful to his contract and feareth it where it lieth below with the little gods of our house. But one might say to him that it was a lion and he will be satisfied. Indeed this robber from the west hath strong sons, two of whom, Simeon and Levi, can roar that it maketh one to quake. But to us too have the gods given bronze in our arms, though we are children of an old man, and we could strike unexpectedly, without notice, at night when he sleepeth and say it was the lion — the father would believe it easily.

Thus Laban's sons talked among themselves, talk not intended for Jacob's ear, but brought to him by the under-shepherds and servants whom he hired. He shook his head over it, full of objective disapproval, for without the blessing of Isaac, he reflected, these youths would have no breath of life in their nostrils — to it was owing all of Laban's prosperity, and they ought to feel shame at plotting thus against him who was in truth the source of their being. But aside from this he felt disquiet, and from that hour onwards he tried to read Laban's countenance and learn how it stood with the master of the house in the matter; whether he would be disposed to believe that it was a wild beast who had killed Jacob, if his sons said so. He searched the man's face when he came out upon his ox to see after the breeding, and found that he must search again; rode himself to the steading to discuss the shearing and studied the heavy face anew. And behold, it was no more towards him as it had been

the day before and the day before that; it did not respond to his searching gaze, the features seemed to sag and not one time did the man raise his eyes to Jacob, but they were averted and downcast as he discussed the most necessary matters with his son-in-law; so that after this second reading it was clear and certain to Jacob that not only would the man believe in the ravening beast, but he would thank it in his heart.

Then Jacob knew enough and he heard God's voice in a dream as soon as he fell asleep, and it said: " See that thou goest hence," and urged him: "Pack up all that thou hast, and rather to-day than tomorrow, and take thy wives and thy children and all that has grown unto thee through Me in all this time, and roll away heavily homewards in the direction of the Mount of Gilead, and I will be with thee."

The command was in general terms; consideration and arrangement of the details were the part of man, and in silence, cautiously, Jacob began to set in motion his flight out of the underworld. And first he sent for his wives where he was in the fields, Leah and Rachel, daughters of the house, to consider with them and be assured of their attachment. As for the concubines it was not a matter of their consenting for they would obey.

" Thus is it," he said to them when all three squatted before his tent together, " and so and so. Your later brethren seek after my life for the sake of my goods, which are yours and the inheritance of our children. And when I search in your father's face to learn if he would shield me from their evil counsel, I find that he looketh not at me, as he did yesterday and the day before, but rather not at all, letting the one half of his face hang

down as though he were stricken nor will the other half know anything of me. But how is this? For I have served him with all my powers. Three times seven and four years long, but he hath betrayed me and made my hire according as he would, and saying it is the harshness of the life of trade. But the God at Beth-el, the God of my father, hath not permitted him to do me any harm, rather hath He turned all things in my favour. And when it was said: the pied yearlings shall be thy hire, lo the rams leaped and the whole herd bare speckled, so that your father's possessions were turned from him to me. Therefore shall I now die, and it shall be said a lion hath eaten him. But the Lord at Beth-el to whom I have anointed the stone, he will that I should live and grow old, and therefore He hath commanded me in a dream to take what is mine and go secretly across the water into the land of my fathers. I have spoken. Speak ye now."

It proved that the women were with one voice of the opinion of God — how should they be otherwise? Poor Laban! Probably he would have lost even if it had been anything like a choice that was set before them, as was hardly the case. They were Jacob's. Their purchase price had been paid in fourteen years. Under normal circumstances their master and purchaser would long ago have taken them from the house of their fathers into the bosom of his own tribe. They had been the mothers of eight of his children even before nature at length acted, and Jacob made finally fruitful the earliest wooed and rightful bride. Should they let him go, with the sons and with Dinah, Leah's daughter, in order to hang upon their own father? Should he flee alone with the riches which his God had turned aside from their father to him and

their children? Or should they betray the plan to their father and brothers that he might be lost indeed? All impossible. Each one more impossible than the rest. And besides they loved him, yes, they had vied in love for him since the day of his coming, and no moment had ever been better than this for each to be more devoted than the other. They clung to him on both sides and spoke both at once:

" I am thine! How the other feeleth, I know not and ask not. But I am thine, where thou art and whither thou goest. Stealest thou away, then steal me with thee and all that Abraham's God hath given thee, and may Nabu, the guide and the god of thieves, be with us! "

" Thank you," Jacob replied. " Thanks to you both equally. The third day from to-day Laban cometh out to the shearing of his flock. Thereafter he journeyeth three days' journey, to shear his speckled sheep, with Beor, Alub and Muras. And when he is gone I will gather together my flocks which are in the midst between here and there, the herds which God hath given me, and the sixth day from now, when Laban is far off, we shall all draw off heavy laden and go towards the river Prath and towards Gilead. Go, for I love you both almost alike. But thou, Rachel, apple of my eye, have a care for the lamb of the virgin, Jehosiph, the true son, that the journey may not be hard for him, and look that thou provide warm coverings for the cold nights, for the shoot is tender as the stock from which it sprung with so much anguish and pain. Go, then, and do according to my words."

Thus, and in yet more detail, was the flight appointed, on which Jacob in his old age looked back with the same mixed feelings of excitement and cunning. But he was

always moved to remember, and talked about it to the day of his death, what Rachel, the little one, had done in her sweet simplicity and slyness. She did it quite alone, no one else knew, and not until afterwards did she confess it to Jacob; not to burden his conscience with her act, that he might swear with a pure heart before Laban. And what was it she did? Since they were stealing away, and all the world stood in the sign of Nabu, so stole she likewise. When Laban was gone to the shearing, and all was quiet in the house, she descended through the trap door into the grave-chamber, where the receipts were, took Laban's little house gods, the teraphim, one after the other, by their bearded and their feminine little heads, stuck them under her arm and in her girdle, held a pair in her hand and slipped back unseen into the women's quarters, to cover up the images among the household goods and take them upon the thievish journey. In truth there was much confusion in her little head — it was precisely that which moved Jacob so, when he heard of it, with emotion and concern. For according to her confession she was won over through her love of him to his God the Highest and Only One, and had abjured her childhood's gods. Yet in her secret heart she was still partly idolater, at least she thought it better to be on the safe side. At all events, she took away Laban's soothsayers and counsellors that they might not give him knowledge of the fugitives' route, and kept them as protection against pursuit, which in the local view was one of their virtues. She knew how Laban leaned upon these little men and these little Ishtar women, how highly he treasured them; yet she stole them from him for Jacob's sake. No wonder Jacob kissed her moist-eyed, when she

confessed the deed, and only reproved her quite mildly and incidentally for her muddle-headedness and because she had made him to forswear himself with a bodily oath before Laban, when the latter had overtaken them; for he had blindly staked all their lives that the gods were not under his roof.

### THE PURSUIT

THE TERAPHIM did not in this instance display their efficacy as protectors — perhaps because they did not want to turn against their lawful owners. That Yitzchak's son had fled, with his wives and their maids and their eleven offspring and all their goods, and of course gone westwards, Laban learned on the third day; he had scarcely reached the place where the speckled and pied sheep were to be sheared when he heard it from the servants and watchers who had in fact expected a better reward than they got for their loyalty, for Laban all but beat them. The furious man hurried home, where he discovered the theft of the idols and thence took up the pursuit, with his sons and a band of armed men.

Yes, it was just like twenty-five years before, on Jacob's journey hither, when he had had Eliphaz at his heels; again he saw himself pursued, more formidably even than before, because this time the pursuing forces could move far lighter than his long train of cattle, pack-animals and ox-carts, crawling along like a worm in the dust. In the alarm he felt when the spies and listeners in his rear announced the approach of Laban, there was mixed a sort of mental gratification at the correspondence and the symmetry. Seven days, so it is stated, did

Laban need to overtake his son-in-law; Jacob had the desert, the worst part of the journey, behind him, he had already reached the wooded heights of the mount of Gilead, whence he had only to descend into the valley of the Jordan, where it flows into the Sea of Lot or the Salt Sea — when his start was used up and he had to face the meeting and the explanation.

The scene, the unchanging landscape, river, sea and misty mountain range are silent witness and sworn warrant for the truth of these stories which made Jacob's thoughts so weighty and his mien so awe-inspiring when he mused. I relate them in detail, circumstantially, as they can be proven to have happened here, in abiding harmony with mountain and valley. Here it was, it all fits, I myself went down into the depths and looked from the western shore of the evil-tasting sea of Lot, saw all with my own eyes, and that it is in order and agrees one part with another. Yes, these bluish heights in the east, beyond the lye, are Moab and Ammon, the lands of the children of Lot who were thrust out, whom his daughters bare to him. Far off to the south, beyond the sea, glimmers Edom, Seir, the goatland, whence Esau rushed wildly off to meet his brother and met him at Jabbok. And the Mount of Gilead, where Laban overtook his son-in-law, and its local relation to the Jabbok river whither Jacob afterwards came. It is all quite right. The name of Gilead, on the eastern side of the Jordan, was probably used by extension much further north, as far as the river Warmuk, which unites its rushing waters with the Jordan not far from the sea of Chinnereth or Gennesareth. But more precisely the name applies to the heights which extend westward and eastward on both shores of the Jabbok,

and from them one goes down to its thickets and the ford which Jacob chose for his train. But he stopped behind for the night and experienced that remarkable adventure which made him limp somewhat in his walk forever after. How clear it is, moreover, that since here the entry followed into the hot *ghor* of the stream, he did not at once turn off with his weary train of human beings and animals actually into his own native district but went straight through westwards into the vale of Shechem at the foot of Gerizim and Ebal, where he hoped to come to rest. Yes, it all agrees in itself and bears evidence in the long run to the truth of the shepherds' songs.

It will forever remain unclear how the clodlike Laban felt in his mind during his hot and panting pursuit; for his bearing when he reached his goal was indeed a most pleasant surprise to Jacob, whose mind later revelled in its beautiful correspondence with Esau's unhopèd-for mildness at their meeting. Yes, Laban's state of mind had been obviously just as confused as the red one's. He snorted with rage, and took up arms against the fugitive; but afterwards more mildly characterized Jacob's conduct as folly, and during the conversation with his nephew admitted that a god, the god of his sister, had visited him in a dream and threatened him on his life not to speak otherwise than friendly with his son-in-law. That might all be, since it would be quite enough for Laban to hear of Abram's and Nahor's god in order to ascribe to him just as actual an existence as to Ishtar or Adad, even though he did not reckon him among his own. But whether he, though not of the faith, did actually see and hear Yeho, the one and only, in his dream, remains doubtful. Teachers and commentators have confessed

themselves baffled, and it is more likely that he clothed in the garment of a vision certain feelings and fears which came over him on the way, certain considerations which made themselves felt in the silence of his soul. Jacob would be no wiser than he in the matter, but would acquiesce in that way of putting it. Twenty-five years had taught Laban that he had to do with a man of blessing; his rage is comprehensible, considering that by his departure Jacob was removing the blessing for whose sake Laban had sacrificed so much; but no less comprehensible is it that his first intention of confronting Jacob in force was on the way weakened by his misgivings. There could be no objection to Jacob having taken the daughters of Laban with him. Jacob had bought them, they were his, body and soul, and Laban himself had once upon a time jeered at the beggar who had nowhither to lead them in the wedding procession from the house of their parents. Times were changed indeed, for now the gods had granted this man to plunder him, Laban! In setting out in pursuit, he had not consciously the intention of taking away the plunder by force of arms, but was vaguely urged to soften the blow of losing all that had passed out of his hands into Jacob's by at least parting friends with the lucky thief — it would certainly be better for him if he did so. There was only one matter which still enraged him and which he would certainly push to a settlement: the theft of the teraphim. This was the clear and definite motive among all the vague ones which urged him on: he must have back his household gods — and if the reader has conceived in his heart the smallest stirring of sympathy for the Chaldaean man of business and keeper of contracts, he may feel a little

pang over the reflection that Laban never did get them back!

The meeting of the fugitive and the pursuer took place quite quietly, with a strange lack of unpleasantness; considering Laban's mood when he set out one would have expected a clash. Night fell upon Gilead, and Jacob had just made his camp on the damp plateau, pegged out the camels, and herded the sheep and goats together to keep warm, when Laban silently came on like a shadow, set up his tent nearby, and disappeared into it for the night without more ado.

But he left it early and went with heavy tread to Jacob's, before which the other somewhat aimlessly awaited him. They touched forehead and breast and sat down together.

"It rejoiceth my soul," so Jacob began the somewhat delicate interview, "to behold once more my father and uncle. May the hardships of travel not have availed to lessen his bodily well-being!"

"I am strong beyond my years," Laban replied. "Surely thou knewest it, to have laid upon me this journey."

"How so?" Jacob asked.

"How so?" Laban repeated. "Man, bethink thyself what thou hast done to me, stealing away like a thief from me and our contract, and robbing me of my daughters as by the sword. For in my way of looking at things thou shouldest always have remained with me, according to the contract, which hath cost me blood, but yet I have held to it as is thought right in our land. But if thou sufferest it not but covetedst so vehemently to go, why then hast thou not opened thy mouth and spoken like a

son? Even so late might we have made good what at the right moment thy circumstances prevented thee in, and have accompanied thee in state with harps and cymbals by land or by water according to the custom. But what hast thou done? Must thou then always steal by day and by night and hast thou no heart in thy body and no bowels of feeling that thou hast not granted to my old age to kiss my children for the last time? But I will tell thee what thou hast done, thou hast dealt with great folly, such is the word that occurs to me to describe thy dealings. And if I would, and if yesternight a voice had not come to me in a dream, and it was it may be the voice of thy God, and counselled me not to meddle with thee, thou canst believe me that my sons and my servants have enough iron in their arms to make thee pay for thy folly in stealing away like a thief! "

" Yea," Jacob replied, " what is true must remain so, and the sons of my master are boars and young lions and would long since have done to me after their kind, if not in the day, then at night when I lay asleep, for thou wouldst willingly have believed that it was a ravening beast, and greatly have bewept me. Askest thou why I have gone away in silence and made no speeches? Should I then not have feared before thee that thou wouldest not agree but would have taken away from me my wives thy daughters or at least have laid upon me new conditions for the permission to depart and have wrested from me my goods and possessions? For my uncle is hard and his god is the ruthless law of business dealings."

" And why hast thou stolen my gods from me? " cried Laban suddenly, and the angry veins stood out finger-thick on his brow.

Jacob was speechless, and he said as much. But at bottom his soul was lightened that Laban put himself in the wrong by such a mad assertion — it counted in his favour.

" Gods? " repeated he, in amazement. " The teraphim? Thou meanest that I have taken thy images from the chamber? But that is the greatest matter for laughter that I have heard in my life. Take thy reason to thy aid, man, and consider with what thou reproachest me! What worth or value could they have for me, thy idols, the clay images, that I should make myself guilty for the sake of them? For I know that they were turned upon the wheel and dried in the sun like to other household gear, and have no power enough to make a slave brat's nose stop running when it hath a cold. But as thou seemest to have lost them, it were better not to praise them too highly before thee."

Laban responded:

" That is all only false and cunning of thee, to do as though thou settest no value upon them, that I may believe thou hast them not. But no man can ascribe so little worth to the teraphim as not to steal them gladly, that is impossible. And since they are no longer where they were, then it must be that thou hast them."

" Hearken now unto me," said Jacob. " It is very good that thou art here and hast not found it hasty to steal after me so many days in this matter; for it must be made plain to the uttermost, I, the accused, demand it. My camp is open unto thee. Go thou through, where thou wilt and search. Turn everything out without fear and according to thy pleasure; I give thee a free hand. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods let him not live; whether it

be by me or by my seed, let him be slain here straightway before all eyes, and let it happen by fire, by the sword or by burial as thou choolest. Begin thy search here with me and search carefully, for I insist that the matter be done thoroughly."

His heart was light because he could put off everything on the teraphim, so that there should be no talk save of them, and he would be able to play the injured party at the end. He did not dream how slippery the ground was beneath his feet and how he measured himself against death. For his innocent Rachel was the guilty one; but by her great shrewdness, with the utmost skill and resolution, she came off scatheless from the folly that she had done.

For Laban answered and said: " So let it be then," and getting up eagerly he began to make search of the camp for his images. We know exactly the course it took: at first he was very zealous and thorough, but as the hours went by in vain hunting he grew tired and disheartened. The sun got very hot and though he was without an upper garment, in a shirt open at the throat and with his sleeves rolled up, the sweat rolled down under his cap and his face got so red that one might have feared an apoplexy for the stout, elderly man — and all on account of the teraphim! Had Rachel no heart at all for her father that she could let him be so tortured and mock him with so straight a face? We must remember the power of suggestion and communication that went out from Jacob's significant personality and his spiritual conceptions upon all those about him, especially upon those who loved him. By the power of

his spirit and his self-will Rachel herself played a divine part, that of the virgin of the skies and mother of the blessing-bringing boy; she was the more inclined to see the rest of the world, her father included, through Jacob's eyes and to acquiesce in his appointed role therein. For her as for her beloved, Laban was a betraying devil and demon of the black moon, who at length himself suffered betrayal, in grander style than his own; and Rachel never blinked an eye at the sight, for it was a pious, significant and predestined event which here went forward, in which even Laban played his part with more or less awareness and consent. She had as little sympathy with Laban as Isaac's people with Esau at the time of the great hoax.

Laban had come up at night and gone to Jacob early next morning, no doubt to demand of him that which she had with her. The father had got up from the interview and begun to search — this was reported to her by the little maid she had sent to spy, who in her haste held up her skirt between her teeth to run the faster so that she was quite bare in front. "Laban is hunting," she announced in a loud whisper. Then Rachel made haste and took the teraphim, which were wrapped in a cloth, and carried them out in front of her black tent, where Leah's riding camel and her own were picketed, highly bred animals possessing a grotesque beauty, with wise little serpents' heads on top of their swaying necks, and feet like cushions, so that they did not sink in the sand. They lay on straw which the servants had strewn plentifully for them, arrogantly chewing the cud. Rachel thrust her stolen gods among their straw, buried them

entirely in it and sat down on the place she had disturbed, in front of the animals, so that they looked over her shoulder as they chewed. Thus she awaited Laban.

He, as we know, had begun looking in Jacob's tent, turning his son-in-law's gear upside down, shaking the rugs, pulling the mattress from the stretcher bed, turning over shirts, mantles and woollen covers; upsetting the box that held Jacob's game, which he loved to play with Rachel, the evil eye, so that five of the little stone figures were broken. His shoulders twitching with rage he had gone thence into Leah's place and then into Zilpah's and Bilhah's, sparing none of their women's matters in his search, trembling so that he stuck himself with their pins and smeared his beard with the green dye which they used to lengthen the corners of their eyes; so clumsy was he made by his eagerness and his consciousness that to be ridiculous was his role in life.

So he came to where Rachel sat, and spoke:

" Greeting and good health, my daughter. Thou hadst not thought to see me."

" May I see thee in health," she responded. " My father seeketh? "

" I seek stolen goods," said Laban, " throughout all your huts and herds."

" An evil matter," she nodded, and the two camels looked over her shoulder with sly and arrogant smiles. " Why doth not Jacob, my husband, help thee in thy search? "

" He would find nothing," answered Laban. " I must hunt alone and broil myself in this scorching sun on Gilead's mount."

" Yes, yes, a grievous matter," she said again.

" There is my dwelling. Look about within it, if thou must, and deemest it fit. But take care of my pots and spoons, already thy beard is somewhat green."

Laban stooped and went in. He soon came out again to Rachel and the camels, saying nothing, but sighing.

" Were there no stolen goods within? " she asked.

" Not to my eye," he answered.

" Then they must be elsewhere," said she. " Of a surety my lord hath wondered why I stand not up before him as would be respectful and mannerly. It is only that I feel myself somewhat unfit, and am hindered in the freedom of my movement."

" How then unfit? " Laban desired to know. <sup>44</sup> Art thou then hot and cold by turns? "

" Not so, I am only indisposed," she answered.

" But wherein? " he asked once more. <sup>44</sup> Hast thou a bad tooth or a boil? "

<sup>44</sup> Indeed, my lord, it is naught but the custom of women that is upon me, and I have my periods," she answered, while the camels smiled more mockingly and arrogantly than before over her shoulder.

" Naught else?" said Laban. " It counteth not, rather I am even glad for thee, that thou art not pregnant, for thou hast little gift for child-bearing. Blessings on thee! I must search my goods."

With which he left her and hunted until the afternoon, when the sun was declining and he was almost worn out. Then he came back to Jacob, tired, dirty and undone, with hanging head.

" Well, and where were the images? " Jacob asked.

" Nowhere, it seemeth," the other replied, lifted his arms and let them fall.

"It seemeth," Jacob sneered — for now he knew where he stood and that he could say what he liked. "Sayest thou seemeth to me, and yet wilt not take it for proof of my guiltlessness, that thou hast nothing found after ten hours' search, turning my camp upside down and rooting about in thy rage to slay me or one of mine? All my gear thou hast tumbled; certainly I gave thee free permission, but that thou hast done it was surely lacking in tact. And what hast thou found of thine own? Lay it down before me and accuse me before thy people and mine and let the public voice choose between us! And how hast thou befouled and overheated thyself, and all to destroy me! And what is my trespass? I was young when I came unto thee and I am now of ripe years, even though as I hope long life may still be vouchsafed unto me. So much time have I spent in thy service and have been unto thee a head-servant such as the world hath not seen; so much my anger letteth me not to say, though my shame should shut it up within me. I have found water, so that thou wast free of Isullanu's sons and couldst throw off the yoke of the bankers, and thou hast blossomed like the rose in the valley of Sharon and stood in fruit like to the date palm in the low-lying plains of Jericho. Thy goats have dropped twofold and thy sheep twins. And may I be struck down if ever I have eaten a ram of thy flock, for I have cropped grass with the gazelles and drunk at the watering place of the cattle. Thus have I lived for thee and served thee fourteen years for thy daughters and six years for nothing, and again nothing and five for the outcasts of thy flocks. And in the day the heat consumed me, and I have shivered with the frost at night in the plains,

and for carefulness my sleep departed from mine eyes. But if any mischance touched the flocks, or a lion stole upon them, then might I not swear to my own guiltlessness, but I must pay for the loss, and thou diddest as though I stole from thee day and night. And thou hast changed my wages according to thine own will and put Leah off upon me when I thought to embrace my rightful bride, and that shame I shall feel in my limbs the rest of my life. And except the God of my father, the almighty God, had been with me, surely thou hadst now sent me empty away. But God would not that His blessing be mocked. Never hath He spoke with a stranger, but to thee He spake for my sake and rebuked thee yesternight, that thou shouldst not deal with me other than in friendly wise. And shall I call that speaking friendly when thou comest and ravest that I have stolen thy gods? But since thou findest them not despite thy much search, then must the loss be only apparent."

Laban sighed, and was silent.

"Thou art so shrewd, and so false," he said, wearily, "and I can make no head against thee, nor should any one try since thou wilt but set him in the wrong. But when I look about me, I am as in a dream. All that I see is mine, daughters, children, flocks and waggons and beasts and men, they are mine, but they have passed over into thy hands I know not how, and thou takest away all before mine eyes, till I am as in a dream. But lo, I am peaceably minded and I would make a covenant with thee, that we may part in peace and I may not be consumed all the days of my life on thy account."

" That is good to hear," Jacob answered, " and better than when thou speakest of ' seemeth ' and suchlike complainings. For what thou sayest is after mine own heart, for behold thou didst beget for me the maid, the the mother of my son, in whom thou art become lovely, and it were despicable that the fruit of Laban should be strange in my sight. Only that it might be less hard for thee have I stolen away and taken mine own with me, but that we should part in friendliness is dear to my heart, that I may then think of thee in a peaceful mind. And I will set up a stone — shall I? — for I do it with willing heart. And four of my servants and four of thine shall make a cairn for a meal and a pledge, that we may eat in the sight of God and make a covenant before Him. Art thou content? "

" Thou sayest it," quoth Laban, " for truly I see nought else."

Then Jacob went and set up a fine tall stone straight upright, that God might be in their midst; but eight men heaped up the heap of stones for the covenant out of all kinds of rubble and small boulders and they sat down upon it together and ate a dish of mutton with the whole fat of the tail in the midst of the dish. But Jacob let Laban eat almost all the tail fat and only tasted of it. So they ate together in the open air and made the contract together over the heap between them with eye and hand. Laban swore by his daughters, for he did not know what else; Jacob had to swear by the God of his fathers and the fear of Isaac, that he would not mistreat his wives nor take any others but them: the stone-heap and the meal were witness. Laban did not concern himself greatly over his daughters, but

pitched upon them out of yearning to conclude matters with the man of blessing, in order to get some sleep.

He spent that night also on the mountain with his daughters. Next morning he embraced them, said a last blessing over them and turned his face homewards. But Jacob gave a sigh of relief and another followed of anxiety over new cares. For, sayeth the proverb, if a man have outrun a lion, he is like to meet a bear. Next came the red man.

#### BENONI

Two women were expectant in Jacob's train, when after the grievous happenings at Shechem he went down towards Beth-el and thence onwards in the direction of Kirjath Arba and Isaac's house; two who have a place in history, that is, for among the slave women one does not distinguish — there might have been several, we cannot tell. Pregnant was Dinah, that unhappy child; she was pregnant from Sichem, the unblest, and over her fruit there hung a harsh decree, and she rode shrouded from view. And pregnant was Rachel.

What joy! But moderate your exultation, remember and be still. For Rachel died. God would have it so. The sweet thief, she who had met Jacob at the fountain, looking with fearless childlike gaze from among Laban's sheep, she was brought to bed again upon this journey and survived it not, even as the first time she had hardly done so; her breath went from her and she died. The tragedy of Rachel is the tragedy of valour rejected.

One has barely courage to enter into Jacob's feelings at this time, when the life of his heart's bride was

quenched and she went hence as a sacrifice to his twelfth son; one is reluctant to imagine how his reason was struck down, and the soft self-will of his emotions trodden deep into the dust. "Lord," he cried, as he watched her die, "what dost Thou?" Well might he so cry. But the perilous thing was, alarming even to contemplate, that he did not surrender his wilfulness, his arbitrary indulgence of feeling, when Rachel died, nor bury it with her in that hastily dug grave by the wayside; but as though he would give notice to the Almighty that He might expect to gain nothing by cruelty, he transferred it, in all its arrogant luxuriousness, to Rachel's firstborn, the beautiful nine-year-old lad, Joseph, loving him with a twofold and altogether provocative preference, and thus offering another exposed side for fate to strike at. One wonders whether the feelingful man actually and consciously despised a life of peace and repose, knowingly challenged destiny and wished for nothing else than to live among alarms and with a sword hanging over him. Such arrogance is obviously an accompaniment to excess of feeling, for such excess presupposes readiness for pain, and everybody knows that nothing is more unthinking than love. The contradiction in nature which here obtains is precisely this: that they are soft souls who choose this life, not formed to bear that which they have drawn upon themselves; whereas they who could have borne it never think of exposing themselves, and thus nothing can happen to them.

Rachel had counted thirty-two years when in devoted agony she had given birth to Joseph; thirty-seven when Jacob broke the dusty bolts and took her away. She was

forty-one when she became again expectant, and in that state must depart from Shechem on their journey. It is I who say it, for with her and among her people it was not the practice to make such reckonings. She would have had to think a long time to be able to say, even approximately, how old she was — it was in general not an important question. In the eastern world the chronological awareness of the occidental is almost unknown; it is much simpler there to leave time and life to themselves and the darkness, not subjecting them to systems of measuring and counting; a man is so little prepared for a question concerning his personal age that the questioner may be surprised by a shoulder-shrug and an answer that wavers among whole decades: forty or seventy, perhaps! Jacob too was very unclear over his own age, and did not mind it. Certain periods spent in Laban's service were, it is true, precisely reckoned, but others not; moreover he did not know, and did not care, how old he was when he came. As for Rachel's age, the abiding present of their loving companionship prevented him from noting the natural changes which time, whether watched and reckoned or no, must effect in her beautiful and well-favoured person, changing the charming young girl into the ripe woman. For him, as usually happens, Rachel was still the bride of the well, who with him had endured the seven years of waiting while he kissed the impatient tears from her eyes; he saw her with longsighted eyes, as a blurring of the picture his gaze had first drunk in, the essentials of which could never have been touched by time, the friendly night of the eyes, the short-sighted habit of drawing them together, the too-thick nostrils and the

little nose, the formation of the corners of the mouth, her touching smile, that very special way in which the lips lay against each other, which was reproduced in the idolized boy — but above all the archness, gentleness, stout-heartedness that lay in her character, the expression of clear-eyed readiness for life, which even at the well, at the first glance, had made Jacob's heart to swell in his bosom, and which came out so clearly again in the camp at Shechem when she told him of her condition.

" May He add children," that was the meaning of the name which, weary almost unto death, she had given to her firstborn. And now that another one was to be added she had no fear, she gloried in once more enduring all that she had before endured, for the sake of her wifely honour and for the increase. And here a strange organic forgetfulness of women probably came to her aid; for many a woman who in childbed swears never to know her husband again, that she may never repeat those pangs, is pregnant again within the year, for the memory of the pains escapes the sex in the strangest way, Jacob, on the other hand, had by no means forgotten the hell he had endured, and revolted from the thought that after nine years' lying fallow Rachel's body should again be subjected to that paroxysm. For her credit's sake he rejoiced, also because now the number of his sons would be raised to the temple of the zodiac — that was a fascinating thought. Yet again, it disturbed him to think that a younger successor was making bold to follow the declared favourite; for the youngest always tends to be the favourite, and already he was conscious of something like jealousy for Joseph's sake, that min-

gled in his parental expectation and made him from the first not particularly glad over Rachel's state — as though, indeed, a presentiment hovered over him.

It was still the time of the winter rains in Chisleu, when she told him. The tragedy of Dinah was still far in the future. He surrounded the expectant mother as before with all his love and care. He held her head in despair when she was sick, and cried out on his God as he saw her dwindle and grow pale, and only that part of her wax where the gross and natural selfishness of the fruit displayed its unconscious cruelty. The thing in the womb was bent on growing; pitilessly and heeding nought else it drew sap and strength into itself at the expense of her who bore it, it fed upon her unthinking either for good or for evil; and if it had known how to express its notion of the state of affairs — or even had had one — it would have said that the mother was only a means to its own activity, nothing but the tower of its strength and nourishment; she would be left behind, a useless husk or shell, after it had issued forth, which was the centre and significance of the whole proceeding. Of course it could not say anything like that nor even think such things; yet unmistakably such was its meaning, and Rachel smiled and assented. Not always is motherhood so utterly synonymous as this with sacrifice — it should not be. But in Rachel nature showed herself of this mind, had done so clearly in the case of Joseph though not quite so openly and terrifyingly to Jacob as now.

His bitterness against his eldest sons, those refractory Dioscorides, for the deed of Shechem, was largely on Rachel's account. It would never have occurred to him

to set out upon a journey with that fragile and pregnant woman, in whom now only her fruit was strong. But now these mad youths had forced it upon him with their notions of honour and of revenge. Precisely now these insensate creatures had had to strike down men in their rage and maim cattle in sheer love of mischief! They were Leah's children, like Dinah in whose cause they raged. What did they care for the ailing state of their father's true and favoured wife or their father's concern on her account? Never had one such thought crossed their reckless minds. But now it was come to this, they must all away. It was already eight moons and more since Rachel had told him: eight counted moons and Rachel-moons, while she grew and diminished, while the child in her grew and she declined. The round year had begun in blossom anew, they were in Ellul, the sixth month, midsummer heat. It was not a time to travel, but no choice was left. Rachel must mount. He chose an ass, an intelligent beast — so as not to expose her to the rocking motion of the camel. She sat far back on the animal, where the motion was least, and two donkey-boys led it, on pain of a beating if they let it stumble against a stone. So they set out with the flocks. Their goal was Hebron, whither the larger part of the caravan should proceed at once; but for himself, his wives and a certain retinue Jacob proposed a brief sojourn at Beth-el, where he should find sanctuary against pursuit and attack, and where he would gladly rest once more in memory of that night of exaltation and the dream of the ascending stair.

This was Jacob's mistake. He had two passions in life: God and Rachel. Here they came in conflict; and

yielding to the spiritual he brought down disaster upon the earthly one. He might have gone straight to Kirjath-Arba, reaching it in four or five days of steady travel. If Rachel had died there, at least she need not have gone hence, helpless and wretched, like a beggar by the wayside. But he paused for several days with her at Luz, at Beth-el on the hilltop, where once he had slept so poorly and dreamed so high. For now too he was in danger and extremity and was minded to have his head lifted up again from on high and hear the utterance of mighty things. The Gilgal was undisturbed, with the blackish stone in the centre. Jacob showed it to his people, and pointed out the spot where he had slept and been found worthy of his extravagant vision. But the stone which had lifted up his head, and which he had anointed, was no longer there — and this vexed him. He set up another, sprinkling it with oil; and spent the whole day in various sorts of devotions, libations and burnt offerings, with which he took the most careful pains, for he was minded to make this spot, which he recognized as a Place of the Presence, far beyond what local significance attached to it, worthy and fitting for worship; and to build not only an earthen hearth, where nourishment for Yah might ascend in smoke, but also to hew an altar out of the rock that crowned the hilltop, with steps leading up to a platform in which there should be hollowed out a basin for libations with little troughs for them to run off. That took some trouble, and Jacob gave much time to directing the work. His people looked on, and listened to his orders; likewise folk came up out of curiosity from the town of Luz and lying or squatting filled the free space before the altar and watched

the proceedings of this roving priest and seer, with thoughtful faces and murmured exchange of opinions. There was nothing strikingly new in what they saw, though it was clear to them that this dignified stranger was bent on interpreting the usual in an unusual and even irregular sense. For instance, he pointed out the horns at the four corners of his sacrificial table and told them that they were not moon horns, not the bull horns of Marduk-Bel, but the horns of rams. This was a surprise, they discussed it among themselves. When he addressed the Lord as Adonai, they supposed for a long time that he meant the lovely one who had been mangled and had arisen; but later they were convinced that he referred to somebody else. The name of El they did not hear. That He was called Israel was a mistake, that was the name of the man himself, personally, and the name of the sect whose shepherd he was. Then for a while it was thought that he himself was the god of the rams' horns or gave out so to be; but that was set right later. One might not make a picture of God, for though He had a body He had no form, He was fire and cloud. Some of them accepted that, others rejected it. In any case it was plain that the man Jacob's thoughts about his God were highly significant, even though a sort of anxiety, or actually pain, was visible in his wise and solemn presence. He looked wonderful up there, when he slew the kid with his own hand, let the blood run down and smeared with it the horns which were not moon horns. Likewise wine and oil were richly poured out before the Unknown, and bread brought — the stranger must be rich — a fact which spoke in his favour as well as in his God's. He burnt the best pieces of the kid,

the smoke whereof smelt sweet of *samim* and *besamim*; from the rest a meal was prepared, and it was partly to be able to partake of this, if also because the wanderer's personality had won them over, that several of the townsfolk declared their readiness to sacrifice to the God of Israel, though only as subsidiary to their own inherited worship. In the course of these proceedings and advances, most of the natives had been bewitched by the incredible beauty of Joseph the youngest son of Jacob. They kissed their finger-tips when he appeared, clapped their hands above their heads, feasted their eyes and almost burst with laughter when with ingratiating shamelessness he called himself the favourite of his parents, on the ground of his mental and bodily charms; enjoying his childish conceit with that pedagogic irresponsibility which characterizes our relation to other people's children.

Jacob spent in retirement the later hours of this day, preparing himself for the revelations which might be vouchsafed him in the night. And they came to pass, though not with the overwhelming vividness of that early experience. A voice — great, abstract, vague and elevating — spoke to him: of fruitfulness and the future, and of the fleshly bond with Abram, and most impressively of all of the name which the sleeper had wrested with strength and anguish at Jabbok, and which he forcibly confirmed to him, as it were forbidding him his old and original one and blotting it out and giving authority to the new. It filled the listener's heart with a stirring sense of new beginnings, as though a cut had been made and the old fell away and time and the world stood renewed. So much did all this express itself

in his manner next day that he was avoided of all. In his deep absorption he seemed to have forgotten Rachel's state, and nobody made bold to remind him, least of all the sufferer herself, who in her affectionate modesty subordinated to his musing her own great need of going on. At last he gave the order.

From the Mount of Olives near Jebus, also called Urushalim, where a Hittite man named Putichepa administered the government and took the taxes in the name of the Egyptian Amun, one might have looked down — and very likely did so — upon the little train of tiny figures winding down from Beth-el through broad, rolling country that lay parched in the summer heat; it passed by Jebus on its left and took its way south towards the house of Lahma or Beth-Lahma. Jacob might well have wished to turn in at Jebus, to enquire of the priests about the sun-god Shalim, a local deity here in the west, after whom the town took its second name. For it stirred him to hear talk even about false and foreign deities, and contributed to his inward labours upon the image of the one and only God. But the story of Shechem and what his sons had done to the garrison and Beset their captain, might very easily have come to the ears of Amun's deputy, the shepherd Putichepa; it seemed wiser to the traveller to practise discretion. On the other hand, at Beth-Lahma, the house of bread, he could discuss with the incense burners of the Lahma the origin of this manifestation of the arisen and the nourisher, in whose cult even Abram in his time had shown a friendly interest as in a possibly related faith. He rejoiced to see the town greeting him from its site. It was late afternoon. The western sun, sinking

beneath a bluish wall of storm-cloud, sent down broad rays and bands of light across the mountainous landscape, so that the little hill-settlement glistened white in its radiance. Dust and stone were kindled by the soft and solemn brightness; it filled Jacob's heart with a proud and pious sense of the divine. On their right, behind a wall of loose stone, ran violet-tinted vineyards, while small fruit orchards filled in the spaces between the rubble on their left. The distant ranges paled to shadow in a sort of translucent glimmering. A very ancient, mostly hollow mulberry tree bent athwart the road, its trunk supported by a pile of stones. They were just passing it, when Rachel slipped from her ass in a faint.

Hours before the pains had begun, at first slight, but she had not liked to disquiet Jacob and interrupt the journey, and had said nothing. Now on a sudden her agony was so great, so rending, that it deprived of her senses the frail receptacle of the sturdy fruit. Jacob's tall, splendidly caparisoned dromedary came to its knees unbidden, to let its rider dismount. He cried to an old slave Gutah, a woman from beyond the Tigris, learned in women's matters, who had aided many a labour in Laban's house before now. They laid the sufferer under the mulberry tree and dragged up mattresses. Perhaps it was the aromatic herbs they gave her to smell, it may have been fresh pains, that brought her round. She promised not to faint again.

" I will be alert and I will labour, from now on," she gasped. " For I would hasten and not make the train to tarry, my dear lord. Alas, that it hath come upon me now, so near the goal! But one chooseth not one's time."

" It mattereth not, my dove," answered Jacob softly. And involuntarily he murmured an invocation, such as at Naharin one sent up to Ea in time of need: " You have made us, may then illness, swamp fever, ague and all misfortune be far from us." And the midwife repeated other such sayings, and hung about the sufferer a well-tried charm of her own in addition to those she already wore; as the pains came on again in fury, she talked to Rachel in her broken Babylonian tongue:

" Be consoled, thou fruitful one, and endure the rage of the attack. For thou shalt have this son likewise to the other one, so much in my wisdom I can see, and thine eye shall not run out ere thou beholdest him, for the child is quick indeed."

Quick indeed it was, that centre and significance of the whole, and decidedly it thought its hour to have come; it strove towards the light, it sought to throw off the maternal husk. It gave birth to itself, as it were, rudely storming the narrow womb, without help from her who had so blissfully received the seed and nourished it in her body, but was powerless, despite so much sincere good will to bring it forth. It was of no avail that the old woman prattled instructions and arranged her limbs, showed her how to breathe, to hold her chin and her knees. The next spasm of anguish destroyed all ordered effort; under the sore punishment she flung herself about regardless, streaming cold sweat, and biting her blue lips. " Oh, oh," she screamed, and called in turn upon the gods of Babel and Jacob's God. Night came on, the moon's silver boat swam up above the hills, and waking from a fainting fit she said:

" Rachel will die."

All those about her cried out — Leah, the maids and all the other women, and flung up their arms in prayer. Then the monotonous murmur rose again and louder than before, like a swarm of bees, with which almost unbroken they had accompanied Rachel's labour. Jacob, holding her head in his arms and hearing her despair, only managed after a long pause to utter dully: " What sayest thou? "

She shook her head, with an effort after a smile. There came a pause, while the attacker seemed to take counsel with himself in his hole. The midwife half approved this pause, and thought it might last some time; and Jacob suggested that they employ the interval to make a light stretcher and carry Rachel to Beth-lahma to the inn. But Rachel would not have it so.

" Here it hath begun," she said, stiff-lipped, " here let it end. Who knoweth if there be room for us at the inn? The midwife is wrong, for lo, I shall begin again, Jacob my husband, to bring thee our second son."

Poor wretch, there could be no hope of her helping, she knew it even when she spoke the words. What in her heart she thought, and knew, she had already said; and again, in the course of the night, between two periods of martyrdom, she let her knowledge and her secret thought be seen again, as with stiff lips, already swollen from the weakness of her heart, she spoke of the name they should give their second child. She enquired of Jacob what he thought, and he answered:

" Lo, he is the son of the one and true wife, and he shall be called Benjamin."

" No," said she, " be not angry, for my thought is better, and Ben-oni shall his new life be called. So shalt

thou name the new lord whom I bring thee, and he shall be in memory of Mami, who made him beautiful in thine and in her image."

Jacob's skill in far-flung spiritual associations made him understand her almost without pausing to reflect. Mami, or the wise Ma-ma was a folk-name for Ishtar, mother of the gods and shaper of men, of whom it was said that she made the male and the female babe lovely after her image; Rachel in her mother-wit and weakness mingled the person of the divine creatress and her own motherhood, the more readily that Joseph oftentimes called her Mami. But for the initiated, whose thought took the right way, Ben-oni meant Son of the Dead. Yet she no longer knew that she had betrayed herself, already, and took this way to make Jacob understand the truth in time, that he might not feel too sore a shock and lose his reason.

" Benjamin, Benjamin," he wept and said. " Not Ben-oni." And then it was that he directed upwards into the silvery light of those worlds above their heads, almost as a confession that he understood, his question: " Lord, what dost Thou? "

To such questions there is no answer. Yet it is the glory of the human spirit that in this silence it does not depart from God, but rather learns to grasp the majesty of the ungraspable and to thrive thereon. Beside him the Chaldaean women and slaves chanted their litanies and invocations, thinking to bind to human wishes the unreasoning powers. But Jacob had never yet so clearly understood as in this hour, why all that was false, and why Abram had left Ur to escape it. The vision vouchsafed him into this immensity was full of horror but also

of power; his labour upon the godhead, which always betrayed itself in his care-worn mien, made in this awful night a progress not unconnected with Rachel's agonies. And quite in the spirit of her love it was, that Jacob, her husband, should draw spiritual advantage from her dying.

The child came into the world towards the end of the last night watch, when the heavens were palely brightening with the dawn. The old woman had to wrench it by force from the poor womb, for it was choking. Rachel could shriek no more, she had fainted. Much blood came, such a loss that the pulse in her wrist throbbed no longer, but flickered thinly. She lived another hour. But she saw the living child, and smiled. When they brought her Joseph, she did not know him.

The last time she opened her eyes was when the east had begun to redden and the morning shone in her face. She looked up in Jacob's face that bent over her, her lids contracted a little and she said indistinctly:

" Ah, behold, a stranger! Why, then, should I let thee kiss me? Is it because thou art the cousin from afar off and we are both the children of one forefather? Then kiss me . . . and the shepherds by the well rejoice, saying ' *Lu, lit, lu!* ' "

He kissed her, trembling, for the last time. She said again:

" Lo, thou rollest away the stone for me, Jacob, my lover, with the strength of thy man's arms. Roll it now away from the grave, and lay therein the child of Laban, for I leave thee to go hence. How all burdens have been taken from me, childbearing, lifebearing, and it is the night. Jacob, my husband, forgive me that I was un-

fruitful and brought thee but two sons, but yet two, Jehosiph, the blessed, and the little one, the son of death. And ah, I am sore to go from them. And from thee too, Jacob, I am sore to part, for we were the right ones for each other. And now thou must muse alone and learn without Rachel who God is. Learn, then, and farewell. And forgive too," she breathed, "that I stole the teraphim." Then death passed over her countenance and put out its light.

The humming of the exorcists ceased at a sign from Jacob's hand. They all fell upon their faces. But he sat, her head still in his arms, and his tears fell silently and unquenchably upon her breast. After a while they asked him if they should not now make a bier and carry the dead to Beth-Lahma or Hebron to bury her.

"No," he said, "here hath it begun, here it shall end. Where He hath done it, there shall she lie. Dig a grave and hollow it out by the wall. Take fine linen from the pack to shroud her, and choose a stone, at once for the grave and to her memory. Then Israel will go onwards, without Rachel and with the child."

While they dug, the women loosed their hair and bared their breasts, and mixed dust with water to defile themselves for the mourning, and sang to the music of the flute the lament, Woe for our sister, smiting their foreheads and striking their breasts. But Jacob held Rachel's head until they took her from him.

When the earth had closed above the beloved, on the spot where God had taken her, by the wayside, Israel passed on, and made a stage at Migdal Eder, an ancient tower. There Reuben sinned with Bilhah, the concubine, and was cursed.

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 Parma, 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 alphabets 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 types are capable.*

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