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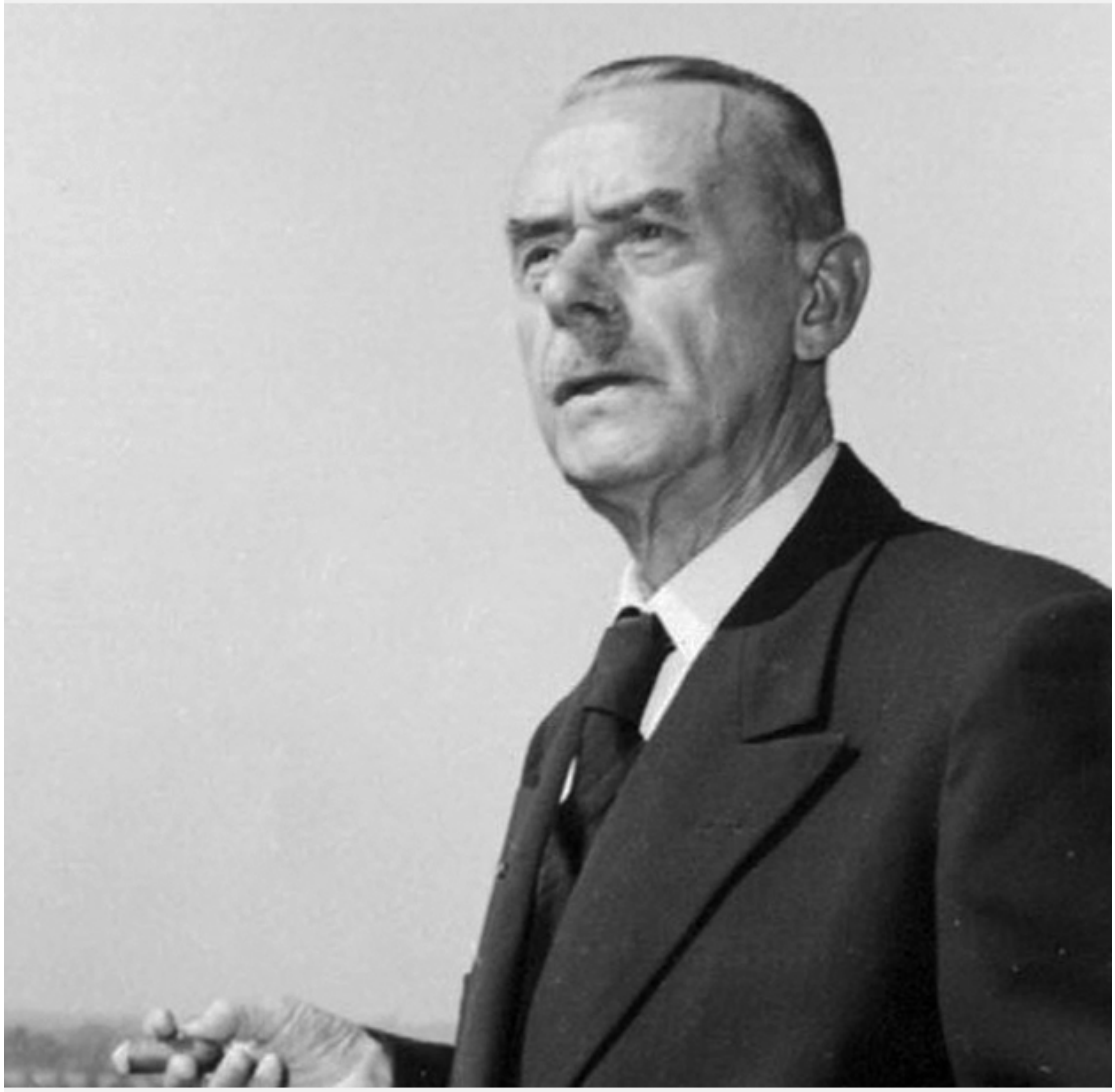

Series Sixteen

The Complete Works of

THOMAS MANN

(1875-1955)

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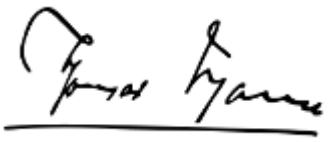

Version 1

The Complete Works of

THOMAS MANN

By Delphi Classics, 2026

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Complete Works of Thomas Mann

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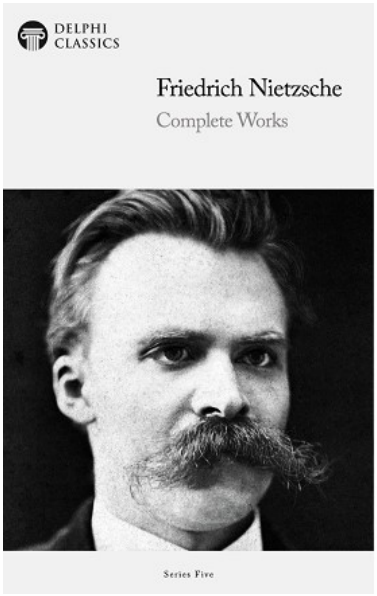

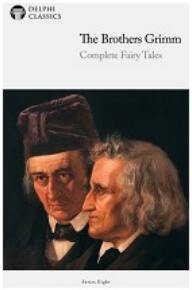

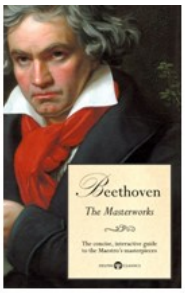

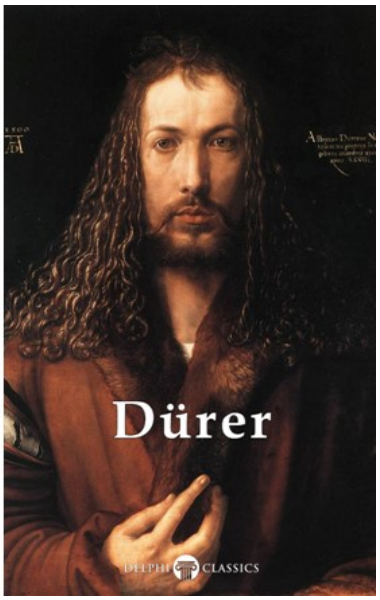

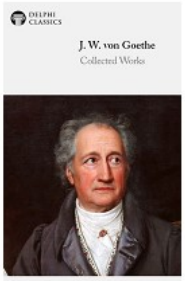

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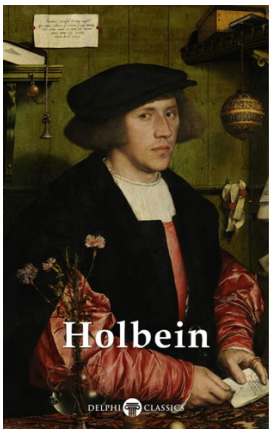
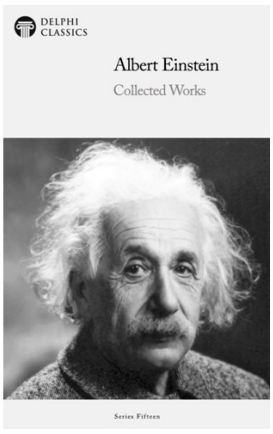
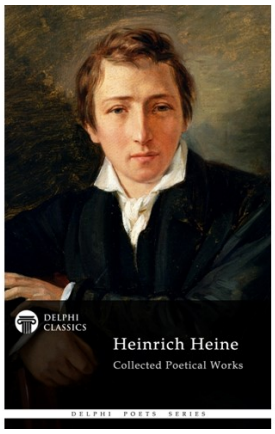
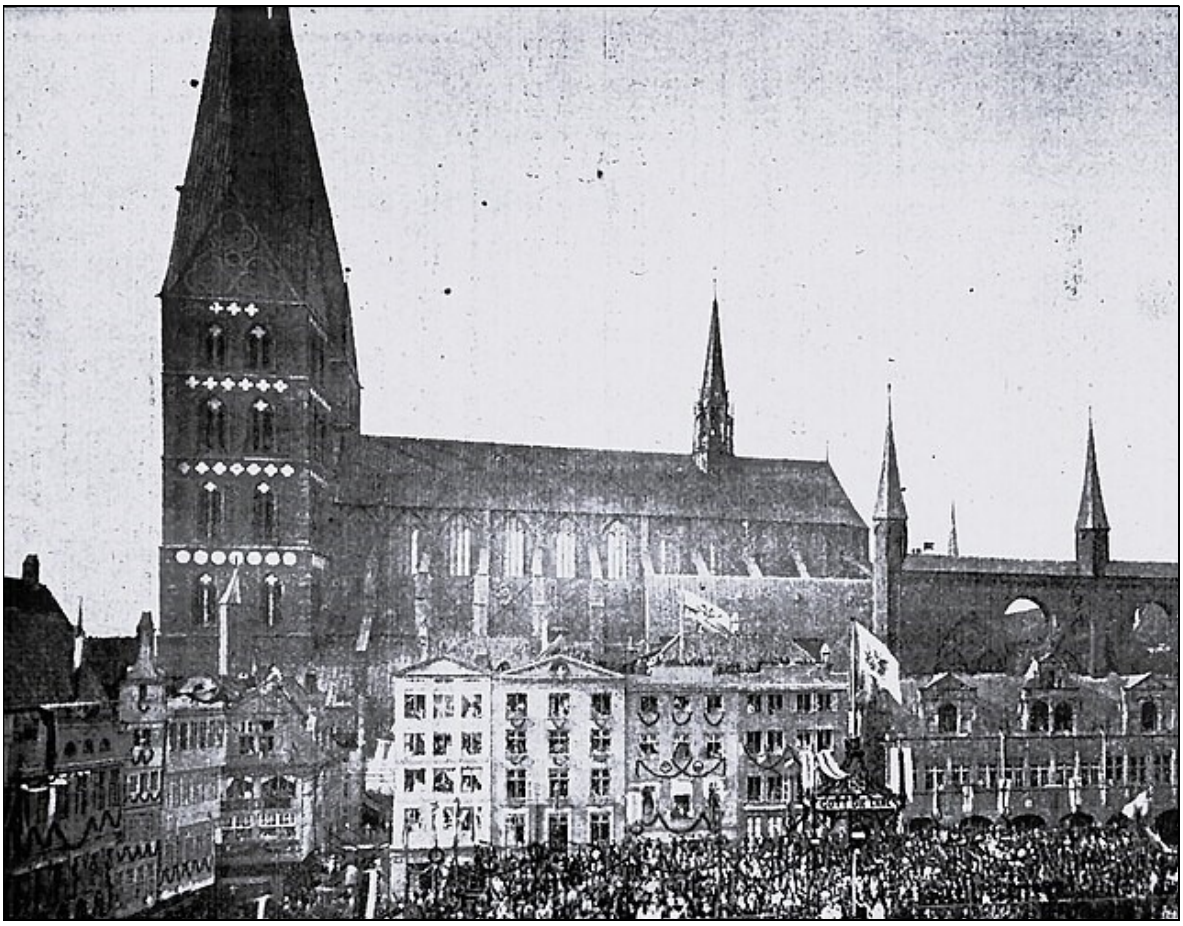






Joseph and His Brothers Series

Lübeck, a city in Northern Germany — Thomas Mann's birthplace



The city in 1871, four years before Mann's birth

Mann as a child, c. 1884

The Tales of Jacob (1933)

Original German Title: 'Die Geschichten Jaakobs'

Translated by Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter, 1934

First published in 1933 in Germany by S. Fischer Verlag and translated into English by H. T. Lowe-Porter for publication by Martin Secker in London in 1934, *The Tales of Jacob* forms the first part of a tetralogy written over the course of sixteen years, from the mid-1920's until the early 1940's. The complete work, *Joseph and His Brothers*, also includes *Young Joseph* (1934), *Joseph in Egypt* (1936) and *Joseph the Provider* (1943). The four-part novel is a retelling of the biblical tale of Joseph from the *Book of Genesis*. *The Tales of Jacob* opens with a prelude entitled "Descent into Hell', in which Mann seeks to situate the story within a historical, theological and mythological perspective. He proceeds to introduce many of the themes that are explored across the tetralogy.

The Tales of Jacob is predominantly a retelling of the story of Jacob, Joseph's father. It includes the tale of him stealing his brother's birthright and his subsequent flight from home. It relates how he laboured for his uncle, Laban, for years in exchange for being permitted to marry Rachel, Laban's daughter, only to be deceived into marrying Laban's other daughter, Leah. He is forced to endure many trials and hardships, but ultimately, he and Rachel are united and Joseph is born. In *Young Joseph*, the author shifts the focus away from Jacob to his sons: he examines why there is such a strong rupture and feeling of discord between Joseph and his brothers that they physically attack him and sell him as a slave to the Egyptians.

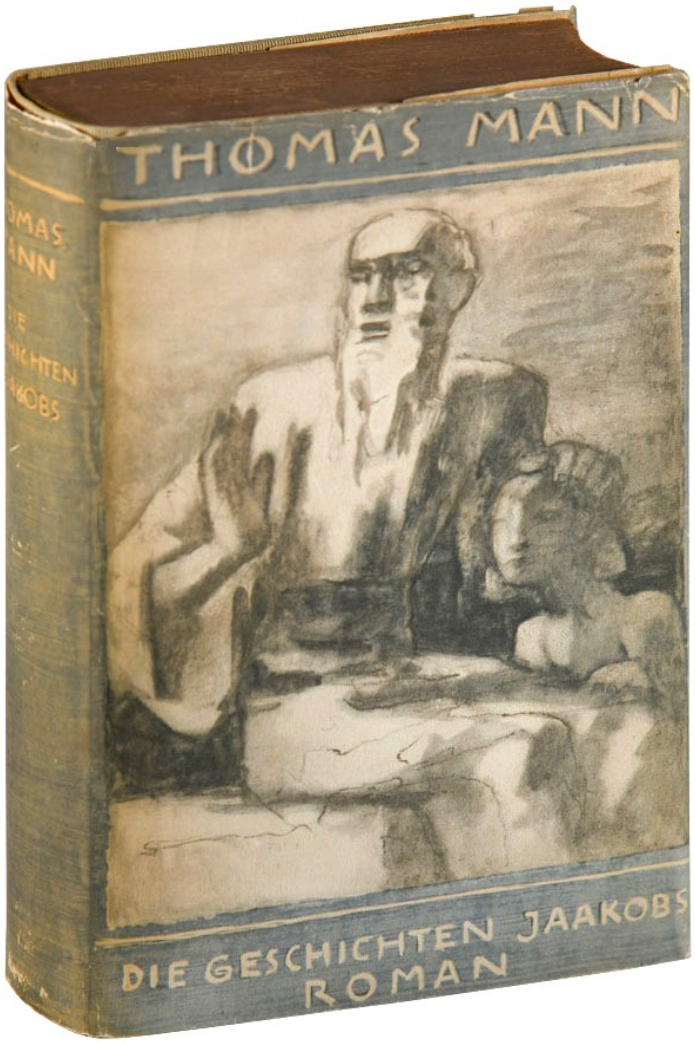
Joseph in Egypt is a highly detailed depiction of Joseph's induction and initiation into Egyptian culture after being sold into slavery. It commences with his long journey from Shechem to Egypt, during which he is forced to contemplate a completely different life in a new land with an unknown master. Mann maps the geographical and psychological aspects of his journey before detailing his arrival and life as Potiphar's servant.

The longest of the four volumes, *Joseph the Provider* begins with Joseph's imprisonment after false accusations made by Potiphar's wife. It then traces his rise to the position of administer and advisor to the Pharaoh and his wise management of grain that prevents the population starving followed by his reconciliation with his family. Mann considered *Joseph and His Brothers* to be his magnum opus and dedicated many years to completing the novel. The work is challenging and highly complex, as the author weaves together the mythological, psychological, theological, geographical and historical strands of the multifaceted narrative.

For more than two decades, the American translator Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (1876-1963) had exclusive rights to translate Mann's works from German into English, which were granted to her in 1925 by the publisher Alfred A. Knopf. In her essay *On Translating Thomas Mann*, Lowe-Porter discussed translating his novels and expressed thoughts on translating generally. She wrote, for example, that in translating the second volume of Mann's Joseph series, *Young Joseph*, she had "been forced—since the English version was for both markets [British and American]—to emasculate the style, in some degree, taking care to write only what would be acceptable literary usage on both sides of the ocean". For decades, Lowe-Porter's

translations of Mann were the only versions that existed in the English-speaking world. Mann himself expressed his appreciation to Lowe-Porter for her work, nicknaming her “die Lowe”, while adding the caveat, “insofar as my linguistic knowledge suffices!”

Mann in his Munich study, close to the time of publication



The first edition

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Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (1876-1963) was an American translator and writer, best known for translating almost all of the works of Thomas Mann for their first publication in English.

Prelude. DESCENT INTO HELL

1

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 unresearchable 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 the Upper Retenu, in his father's tents at Hebron, shaded by terebinths 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 conviction 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 adventurousness 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 Chaldæa, 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 greatness. 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 vision 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 Chaldæa 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 excluded 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 Chaldæan 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 had already been forms of existence which looked up to the Creator in admiration and 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 æon 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. Me 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 Asshurbanipal, 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 rôle 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 Asshurbanipal, a sovereign much addicted to the written word and the established view, an "exceeding wise one," in the Babylonian phrase, and by 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 Asshurbanipal'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 the 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 maid, 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 brilliance 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 Amurruland, 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 produced a civilization capable of that high emprise, the cultivation of the vine.

Where then do they lie in time, the beginnings oh 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 Græco-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 Chaldæan 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 particular 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

Hermopolis, 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 excepted, 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, revivified 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 Chaldæan 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.

6

PARALLEL with the story of the Flood is the tale of the Great Tower. Common property like the other, it possessed 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 Chaldæans, 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 Chaldæans 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 Midgals 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 tinctured 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 Chaldæans.

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.

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, markets samê 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 Naharam, 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, Enpnrates 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 situated 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 unmistakable 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 archæology 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 selfdeception, 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.

A VERY ancient tradition of human thought, based upon man's truest knowledge of himself and going back to exceeding early days whence it has become incorporated into the succession of religions, prophecies and doctrines of the East, into Avesta, Islam, Manichæanism, 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 befell 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 rôle 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 rôle 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 rôle as slayer and grave-digger 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 willfully 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 Shemmæl, 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 Shemmæl 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 Shemmæl, 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 it self 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 confidingly 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 prophesier; 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 Chaldæan 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 storyteller makes many a station, roving and relating, but pauses only tent-wise, 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!

Chapter I. BY THE WELL

ISHTAR

IT WAS BEYOND the hills north of Hebron, a little east of the Jerusalem road, in the month Adah; 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 hurt the eyes, 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 silvery 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 eves 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 rôle 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 Mesopotamia, 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 æsthetic 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 eves. The curling lips suggested a proud 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 contour 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 — Abirarn — 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 at hand, 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 wool 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 rôle 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 absentminded, 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 Mesopotamia, 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 Jebshe, 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 Jebshe 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 Jebshe 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 Jebshe 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 Jebshe 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 Jebshe 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 Shamush, 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 Elvon, 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 Jebshe. 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 his 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 emplanted 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 reverenced 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 Jebshe 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: Jebshe 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 ard 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 presence 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 "idolatrous." 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 longstanding 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 had 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 thirst after blood and seek 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, dryeyed, 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 untouchable 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 rôle 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 himself 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 Jardên" (he pronounced the words 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 reminder 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 Shemmæl 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.’ 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.’ 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 unsilenced 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 rôle; 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 — depending 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 again. 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 pardhing 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 freshflowering 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 carried 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?"

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 on 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 meekest 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 puttest 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 shouldest 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, fingering 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 unhoped 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 Chaldæa 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 Josephs 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 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 lookest 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 '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: 'I am Melech, the Bull god of Baalim. Bring me thy firstborn!' But when Abram hasted 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 sigh 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 Benjamin, 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 my 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

"AH, 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 Nœmah, 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. That was Hanoch the boy, 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 Hanoch 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 Terah, Hosannah! Who begot Abram at Ur in Chaldæa 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 begat 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 entirely 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 rams came down in grateful abundance.

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