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JONAH

Books by
ROBERT NATHAN



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JONAH :: :: *by*
ROBERT NATHAN

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NEW YORK :: :: :: :: :: 1925

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To
ALICE AND ARTHUR CARNS

Shreve

4 Sept '55

JONAH

I

IN those days there were prophets in Israel. They lived in the desert, beyond the Jordan, in caves and in rude huts made of clay and mats. There were many holy men among them, whose ears had been pierced by the sweetness of God's voice and whose eyes had been dazzled by the fiery appearance of His angels. They were like the saints to whom in later times the Virgin Mary used to come with eyes melting with tenderness, and who used to perform such astonishing miracles in the desert near Thebes. Theirs was an holy and severe life, made anxious by the sins of the Jews, whose punishment they prophesied in tones of great bitterness and haunting sadness.

Surrounded by gloomy rocks, they beheld visions, and conversed with angels. They

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shared their meals with the lions of the desert, with such birds and beasts as foxes, gazelles, snakes, mice, and ravens. Many of these were holy beings; more than human, but less than divine, they were obliged to eat, and devoured with shy and reverent looks the food set apart for Jehovah.

It was a life of poverty, of danger, and of glory. In the silence of the desert the prophets drew together in an austere community. Those returning from lands across the Jordan brought back news to the Schools. It was said that Amos of Tekoa had spoken at Bethel; standing in the presence of King Jeroboam, surrounded by the proudest nobles, he had prophesied the doom of Israel. Two angels attended him while he spoke, and collected the drops of moisture which fell from his brow.

Thereafter an earthquake, followed by a drought, destroyed the crops of Israel and Judah.

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When Jonah, the prophet, heard this news, he left his hut in Golan, and taking his stick and a gourd filled with water, set his face southward toward the Land of Tob. He walked from dawn to dusk; his thoughts were grave, and his expression serious. As evening fell he found himself beside a little pool in the desert; here he sat down to rest. The sky was green with early night; the evening star, smaller than the moon and silver as a distant sea, sailed above Sharon. Before him lay the desert, heavy with silence, drenched with the cold dew of evening. Jonah shivered, and drew his cloak closer about him.

As he sat there, his head bowed upon his hand, a fox came out of a hole and, seeing Jonah, exclaimed,

“There is the man of God.”

Touched and astonished at this mark of recognition, Jonah offered the little animal some meal with which he had expected to

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make his own supper. Then the fox lay down beside Jonah and remarked,

“I am not a theologian. So I do not understand the wars of Judah and the other tribes. However, I would like to ask you something. When I go down into my hole, God goes down after me. What I want to know is this: is He a Jew, or a fox?”

Jonah answered as he had been taught in the Schools: “God has the appearance of a man. From His beard, which extends to His feet and is divided into thirteen portions, fall drops of gracious balm; and from His mouth proceed the names of all things. His angels also appear as men, with long white wings, and faces shining with light.” And he gazed at the little animal in a kindly manner.

“Well,” said the fox, “a beard or a tail, that is merely a matter of direction.” So saying, he put his head down between his paws, and fell asleep. Jonah also slept,

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watched by the stars, and by an angel, who said to him just before dawn:

“Arise, Jonah, and hasten to Bethel. Say to King Jeroboam, ‘Against the insolence of Hamath, Israel shall prevail once again.’”

Jonah immediately awoke, and gave thanks to God. Then he took leave of the fox, who said to him, “I dreamed that God was a raven, and was giving me some sharp pecks with His beak.”

In the gray light of dawn Jonah started toward the hills which guard the Jordan. He breathed the pure air of the desert, sweet with desert flowers, fresh and cold as water; he lifted his face to the western sky, into which night was retreating like a storm; and his heart sang.

“God will redeem Israel through me,” he thought.

At noon he entered the valley of Jezreel, on the other side of the Jordan. There the fig trees were in blossom, and their scent

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mingled with almonds in the air. At every village he saw roadside altars above which were erected rude copies of the golden bulls of Tyre. The afternoon sun cast sinister shadows behind them, and Jonah averted his face as he went by.

He stayed that night near Joseph's Well, in the cottage of a poor herdsman. A faint and holy glow illuminated one corner of the kitchen where the prophet lay, while the wide wings of seraphim, like slow birds, beat overhead through the darkness. In the morning the herdsman, who had not slept all night, hurried out to purify himself in the river from such close contact with divinity.

When Jonah arrived at Bethel, he went at once to the house of the High Priest Amaziah. A servant admitted the prophet, dusty with travel, into the presence of his master. And Jonah gazed proudly and without fear at the priest.

Amaziah, High Priest of Israel, was a

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churchman; therefore he disliked confusion. For that reason also he detested the prophets who he felt were unable to understand the problems of administration. Seated upon a bench of ivory, he gazed wearily at Jonah before addressing him in these terms:

“I do not know your name, but from your gloomy countenance covered with hair, I can see that you are a prophet from Golan, or the Land of Tob. And I suppose that you have come, like all the others, to tell me that God admires Judah more than Israel. In that case I must say to you what I said to Amos: ‘Go south, to Jerusalem, and prophesy in Judah, because what you have to say does not amuse me.’”

Jonah replied simply, “I must speak at Bethel, because that is what God told me to do.”

But he added that he did not intend to prophesy another earthquake, as Amos had done. “What I have to say,” he declared,

“concerns Israel, and Hamath in the north.”

At this the High Priest looked pleased. “So,” he said; “well, that is better.” And he regarded Jonah with a kindlier expression.

But presently he burst out again in an exasperated voice: “You prophets do not understand the difficulties of my position. You imagine that because I am High Priest, I should be able to control the forms in which the people of Israel worship the Divinity. Nothing is more improbable, seeing that every one has his own idea of what is truly noble.”

To this outburst Jonah replied, with dignity: “Still, the God of the Jews does not look like a bull, or a little dove. It is a sin to worship such things.”

Amaziah gave utterance to a long sigh. “My son,” he said gently, “I see that you are like all prophets, which is to say that you are impractical. Otherwise you would know

that it is impossible not to worship the Divinity in some form or other. And since He refuses to reveal Himself in His proper form, one is left to imagine Him in any form one pleases. That is a great mistake, in my opinion; but it is God's mistake, not mine. I cannot help it if the inhabitants of Dan, who are mostly farmers, admire the dignified mien of a bull, or if the villagers of Asher, who are lazy and uxorious, choose to worship the Divine Power in the form of a dove."

"The dove and the bull," declared Jonah, who remembered what he had studied in the Schools, "belong to the moon and to the sun. God, having created man in His Own image, necessarily has the form of a man. He is bearded; and His face shines with wisdom and benevolence. He also created the animals, but He created them in the image of animals. That is the important thing to remember in dealing with such matters."

But Amaziah replied that Jonah was an

idealist. "You will understand," he said, "when I tell you that idealism is something to which close attention to the disputes and duties of the Temple does not dispose me. We churchmen are obliged to be practical. The important thing is that there should be uniformity. And that is impossible where one person must be right, and the other wrong. I am not here to help men argue, but to help them agree. Many trees bear fruit upon this earth, my friend; the leaf is different, but a tree is a tree. So let us all be right, or at least as many of us as possible."

Jonah remained silent and gloomy; he respected the Law, and did not know how to reply to Amaziah. The old priest regarded him in a more genial manner, and continued:

"However, these pastoral matters need not concern you. You are a prophet, not a priest, a messenger, not an interpreter.

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That is something you prophets could learn to your advantage.

“Tell me what tidings you bear the King. You speak of Hamath, and the Aramæans; is it possible that you know of some conspiracy in the north of which your rulers are ignorant?”

Jonah replied that as far as he knew, the Aramæans were peaceful, and their army was unprepared. “An angel appeared to me in a dream,” he declared. “This angel was more beautiful than I can say, and had long white wings which kept up a slow movement in the air. I could wish that the women of Israel had such wings, which lend to the figure a charm that cannot be described. The beauty of that angel caused my heart to overflow with grief and longing.”

And he remained silent, lost in painful memories. He resumed:

“In a voice of heavenly sweetness I was

told to arise, and bidden to say to King Jeroboam, 'Against the insolence of Hamath, Israel shall prevail once again.' When I awoke I found on the ground a white feather which shone like snow. I picked it up, and put it beneath my cloak." And he held out to Amaziah a white feather about a foot long.

"Here is the proof," he said, "of what I have told you."

Amaziah reverently received the angelic token, which he put to his nose and carefully tasted with his tongue, before remarking, "It does not surprise me, seeing the marvelous economy of Heaven, that the wings which support the angels should be not unlike those on which the snowy herons sail so majestically above the hills. However, as the king and his nobles might consider this feather a trifle too light to support so august a body as an angel through the air, let me place this sacred relic in the Tab-

ernacle, and give you, instead, the feather of an eagle, which has a more important look. Do not draw back in dismay, my son; in dealing with simple minds, a certain amount of ingenuity is needed. It is a characteristic which has distinguished the Jews in the past even more than their valor. I have only to remind you of David's treaties with the Philistines, and the manner in which the heroic Jael divorced the head of Sisera from his Canaanite body. It is upon such stratagems as these, added to the irresistible power of the Lord, that the glory of Israel depends."

He sat for a brief space, his head sunk forward upon his breast in meditation. Presently he said thoughtfully:

"After all, there is nothing like a war to draw together a nation's diverse elements. The trouble with Israel is that her wars have been so often civil wars. Civil wars are of no value, since they destroy uniformity; they

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are, besides, inclined to be a little half-hearted, seeing that the vanquished do not expect to be plundered, raped, and murdered with the same methodical energy by their own people as by strangers."

And he added humbly, "Is it likely that God in His infinite wisdom should see this any less clearly than I do?"

When Jonah had supped on lettuce, olives, and wine, he left his host and went out to walk in the city. The night was cold, and the odor of the streets mingled with the sweet aroma of earth. He filled his lungs with the clear air of the hills, stained by the smoke of fires and the sour smell of wine; he heard about him in the gloom the lazy hum of the city, the faint, sharp chime of voices, far-off cries, the crowing of a cock, the creak of a water-wheel.

He thought, "Here is thy home, O Israel, in the land of thy God."

And he gazed in silence and with a heart

overflowing with reverence at the sky, blue with night, above the roofs of Bethel.

In the morning, pale but confident, he presented himself before the king.

Seated upon a golden throne in his palace of broadstone, his hair and beard glistening with oil, and surrounded by proud and bearded nobles, Jeroboam listened with attention to what the prophet had to say.

Then he asked for the opinion of Amaziah, who stood at the side of the throne. The old priest hesitated a moment, before replying in a grave voice:

“Who am I to question the will of the Almighty? A war against Aram is a holy war, since God Himself desires it. This prophet speaks in a voice of heavenly wisdom. I foresee that your soldiers will rush with impetuous enthusiasm upon a foe by no means prepared to defend himself. I shudder to think of such carnage. However, your commands are mine, O King.”

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So saying, he withdrew. Jeroboam then passed around a large feather given him by Jonah as proof of his prophetic mission. A noble who looked after the royal falcons remarked,

“This indeed must be the feather of an angel, for it is larger than that of an eagle, which it favors in color, although it is more divine in appearance.”

The king next asked for the opinion of Ahab, who owned a great deal of land bordering on the country of Aram. This prince, whose beard curled like an Assyrian’s, spoke without hesitation in favor of war. In a dry voice he declared,

“It stands to reason that God would prefer His own people to have the pasture lands which obviously belong to them, according to geography, history, and the opinion of every right-minded person. I only wonder that He did not think of it before.”

The young prince Absalom, who had

more than fifty wives, exclaimed in ringing tones,

“I am in favor of war, to teach these barbarians to know and worship the God of the Jews.” And he held up his sword, the handle of which was carved to represent the Adonis of Sidon, to whose inexhaustible vigor the prince sacrificed, every spring, a ram and a cock.

This speech of Absalom’s was received with acclaim by the nobles. The next day the armies of Israel, led by the king, and accompanied by more than a thousand priests of Adonis, Astarte, Kemosh, Melcarth, the local Baalim, and the Holy Ark, set out for the frontiers of Aram.

II

NIGHT came gently down over Israel. The darkness of earth slid like a shadow across the rocks stained by the sunset. Calm and deep the sea of Cinnereth reflected the stars whose lights gleamed upon the trans-Jordanic hills. There the desert slept; while in the north the lights of Tyre shone upon the sea.

The village herds returned from their pastures. Then the roads of Zebulon resounded with the tonk of bells, as the cows with sweet-smelling breath wound down from the hills. The day was over, and their stalls awaited them. Melancholy and austere, they parted from each other without regret.

Aaron, the brother of Jonah, walked behind them. In his hand he carried a rod with which he beat now and then upon the flanks

of the animals nearest him. Then they rushed forward, clumsily, to avoid the blows which fell upon them without force.

The young man enjoyed this hour of the day, when he strode home through the village, driving the herds before him. He was proud to be in charge of the village cows. His mother also was proud of him; she foresaw an important future for him. "Always do your best," she said. "However," she added, "do not tire yourself out. And in case of robbers, or a lion, please come home; and do not make a fool of yourself."

"Well," the young man would say, twirling his stick, "we'll see about that."

Aaron did not think that his brother led a very sensible life. To live all alone in the desert seemed to him a nonsensical thing to do, and he felt sure that his mother agreed with him. Else why did she shake her head so sadly, and heave such a sigh, when she spoke of her eldest son? As a matter of

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fact, she relived in Jonah, but very faintly, the dreamy, mild, religious ecstasy of her maidenhood. That was all over for her now; life had long ago got down to being practical. Besides, one did not hear so much about God as when she was a girl. Still, she remembered the beauty of those times, when her heart beat with joy and love, when a sweet unrest brought her to her knees, and she felt through her prayers the breath of holiness upon her cheek.

No, one did not hear nowadays so much about God. Take Aaron, for example: as he came home from the pastures at evening, he bent his head before the golden bull which adorned the wayside shrine. In the spring he enjoyed the feasts of the Passover; and he also enjoyed the celebrations in honor of Astarte and Adonis, in company with the other young men of the village. The problems of theology did not concern him; he simply wished to enjoy himself, and to get

on in the world. To do that, one did something about it; one began by taking care of the village herds. Then one could look confidently to the future, and leave God to dispute with other people about what He looked like.

When the last of the cattle was safely housed, Aaron turned back to his own home, and entering the yard gate, walked toward the kitchen from whose open door a rosy glow spread over the yard. Jonah was at home; and Aaron stood a moment in the doorway, gazing with a smile at his mother, who was preparing supper. Deborah kept one eye on the oven, and the other on her elder son, who, with a small cake of bread in his hand, was relating to her some incidents of the Aramæan campaign. She wished to know if Hamath was as large as Salem, or Bethel.

“It is larger than Bethel,” replied Jonah, “but not as large as Jerusalem.” Deborah

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sighed happily; it was something to have traveled as much as that.

“The armies of Aram,” said Jonah, biting into the coarse bread, “were drawn up in a truly terrifying array. I saw a number of men seated upon ostriches, so I knew that we were obliged to battle against demons. Not in the least frightened, our men rushed at the foe in an irresistible manner. Nevertheless, they would have been beaten, and were already in flight, when the High Priest Amaziah appeared upon a nearby hill, and announced that the King of Aram with all his generals had been consumed by a thunderbolt. At this our men decided to turn once more upon the foe, who retreated in confusion, and we rushed triumphantly forward into the enemy’s camp, where we surprised and killed a number of generals, including the King of Aram, and his High Priest.

“When our victorious armies arrived at

the gates of Hamath, Prince Absalom came out to greet us, accompanied by the women of the town bearing flowers and bowls of wine for our thirsty soldiers. This noble prince, disguised as a Syrian, had left the battle-field before the armies had begun to fight, and had gone quietly off to prepare our welcome in the city, where he knew a number of prominent people. It is faith joined to foresight of this nature that has made Israel great."

He was silent; the light from the oven glowed upon his face, which shone with enthusiasm and love. He thought to himself, "All Israel resounds with my glory. There is a new prophet; and his name is Jonah."

And he added, humbling himself before God,

"I understand that this is Your doing."

Anxious that Deborah should know of his part in his country's history, he mumbled shyly, with his mouth full,

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“The King considers me a greater prophet even than Amos of Tekoa.”

“Well,” said Deborah sensibly, “why not?” Coming up to Jonah, she smoothed his hair with her hand, and gazed at him anxiously. “What a trouble you are to me,” she said gently; “making wars and such mischief. Well . . .”

Seeing her younger son standing in the doorway, she called to him: “Come in, Aaron, here is your brother Jonah. He has just made a war. Tschk . . . you would think there was nothing but fighting in the world.”

Aaron came into the room, and went up to Jonah with frank curiosity. He wished to know all about it, and he asked innumerable questions. When he learned that Jonah had not brought home any gold ornaments, or rich shawls, he was disappointed.

“No, really,” he exclaimed, “what is the

good of a war like that?" And he sat sulkily down in a corner.

But Deborah took Jonah's part. "No, Aaron," she said, "that would be all right for you; if you made a war, I should expect you to come home with something, a colored shawl for me, or some gold bracelets. But Jonah is different; and living in the desert, the way he does, gives him ideas. Better a war far away, like this one, than like what we used to have in your father's time, right under my nose, killing and fighting all day long."

She turned to Jonah with a sigh. "Why," she exclaimed, "did you choose the Aramæans to make a war with? Such wild people." She shook her head ruefully. "Always trouble," she decided; "never what would be sensible.

"At any rate," she wound up, "perhaps you'll settle down now for a while and let

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your mother look after you, instead of living all alone in a desert with foxes.

“Ak, what an old coat you have.”

She went back to her oven with a smile; cheerful and loving, she found in everything some cause for satisfaction, or at least hope, if she was given time enough. And she sang now, under her breath, as she always did when she was disturbed or happy—for happiness or sorrow, either one, disturbed only a little her amiable, confused spirit:

*“Men dead long ago
Have set me like a tree.
Let the wind blow,
What is that to me?
My roots are in their dust,
My roots are deep, I trust.
My son is at my knee.”*

Jonah looked at her with a gloomy but tender expression. “Mother,” he said,

“what is the matter with my coat? Because it is old? It does me very well. Must I also be a beauty, to suit you?”

After supper Deborah’s brother David came in to see Jonah. He also wished to know about the war, concerning which he had heard rumors.

“Well,” he said to his sister, “so we have actually a prophet in our family. I congratulate you. We could afford to give a little party in honor of this.”

And he looked around him with pride.

“No, really,” cried Jonah; “what an idea.” He blushed to think of it. But his uncle peered angrily at him from under his shaggy eyebrows.

“So,” he said slowly, “that is the kind of prophet you are, then. You think only of yourself, but what about your family? Do you imagine we have so many opportunities to give feasts, and call in the neighbors? Or have you done something to be ashamed of?”

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When an honor comes to us, that is the time to talk about it."

Aaron agreed with his uncle, although he did not see what they had to be proud of. "We are no better off than before," he complained, "seeing that Jonah brought home nothing with him from the war."

"What?" exclaimed Uncle David. "What a pity." He wagged his old head meditatively. "There it is," he said; "times change, whether you like it or not. When I was a young man it was entirely different. Feasts, festivals . . . I can tell you, we knew how to enjoy ourselves. And what is more, we were religious; it was not like to-day. At any rate, children were respectful, and considered their parents; when they went to a war, they brought something home."

And he lamented the decay of Israel's greatness.

But Deborah put in a good word for her son. "If he brought me nothing," she said,

“it was because he knows that really I am satisfied with what I have, and besides there was nothing there which caught his fancy.”

“The old days are no more,” said David, and relapsed into gloomy silence.

Aaron, who had been growing restless in his corner, got to his feet. “Mother,” he said, “I am going out for a while, to see some of my friends.”

“Again,” cried Deborah, “so soon, when your brother has just come home, and Uncle David is here? Aaron, no . . .”

“I will go with him,” said Jonah quietly; “I should like to visit old Naaman, who lives at the edge of the village. Do you remember, Mother, how I used to go there when I was young; and I have not seen him in many years.”

“Yes,” said Deborah with a smile, “it is true; I remember, you were always there; whenever I could not find you, I had only to look for you in Naaman’s house, and there

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you were. Go along, but do not be late; and"—she added in a whisper—"when you come home I will have some food set out for you."

She turned sternly to her younger son. "Aaron," she said, "please do not get into any fresh mischief with your friends. Perhaps you would do better to go with your brother; it would do you good for a change instead of running up and down the village with nobody knows who."

Her gaze followed her sons with tender anxiety across the threshold.

"So thin he looks," she murmured; "and his cloak is so tattered; really, I am ashamed. But what can I do; I have nothing; and he is so proud, besides."

And she smiled at her brother, with a tear shining in her eye.

Jonah and Aaron walked along in silence, under the dark boughs of trees. At last Aaron remarked: "Well . . . you see . . .

you have made a start now with things. The desert is all very well for old men. But what sort of life is that, after all?"

And in an embarrassed manner he took his leave of Jonah, and went off to join his companions, whose voices could be heard raised in youthful laughter among the shadows.

Jonah stood leaning upon his staff in the darkness. A few lights gleamed among the trees, whose branches bent above him as though to envelope him in their quiet embrace. The odors of night crept around him; he remembered his youth, spent in this village, and he felt in his heart a longing for that lonely boy whose only friends had been an old man and his own dreams. So much of life had gone by, yet here he was again, wearier, wiser, still led by hopes, of what he did not know, hurt by memories, but why he could not tell. He heard the voices of Aaron and his friends fading in the distance; he knew that in the shadows young lovers whis-

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pered together, although he could not see them. All about him trembled the happy laughter of youth, the peace of age, the quietness of rest after labor. The sky of heaven, shining with stars, bent upon his home a regard of kindness; and the wind, moving through the sycamores, spoke to him in the accents of the past.

Bowing his head upon his breast, he thought, "Jonah, Jonah, what have you done with your youth?"

Slowly, and with halting steps, he approached the house of Naaman, at the village edge.

III

HE found his old teacher seated beneath an acacia tree whose branches perfumed the air. A beam of light from the house, falling among the leaves, touched Naaman's white hair and his long, snowy beard with a gentle gleam. That was how his pupil had remembered him, the picture of wisdom and peace. He greeted Jonah with affection, but without surprise.

"It is you, my son," he said. "I am glad to see you again. Your fame has spread, for I heard of you, no later than to-day, as the young prophet who had inspired the king at Bethel."

And he added gayly, "Come, sit here beside me, and tell me about yourself. As you see, my tree is blossoming again. Thus,

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at the end of my life, it is vouchsafed me to behold each year the return of spring and the marriage of earth with the Eternal One.”

“I do not know what you mean by the Eternal One,” said Jonah; “for all the gods are immortal and eternal. It is only you and I, Naaman, who grow older each year. But I am glad to see that you are well, and to know that your tree is blossoming.”

Naaman replied gently, “My son, you have traveled, and you have learned something. Have you not learned that there is only one God? Did you not learn that in the desert, Jonah?”

“No, Naaman,” said Jonah gravely, “I have not learned it. I have been in the desert, where God is. And I have also been in Tyre in the month before our Passover, when the quail return in great numbers to mourn the death of a god. I will tell you something about Tyre: there, before they

are married, the maidens sacrifice their hair to Astarte. You should travel, Naaman, and hear of other gods.”

“I do not need to travel,” replied Naaman; “here in this quiet garden the sun sets and the moon rises; the breeze of evening whispers through the leaves of my acacia tree, and I see through the branches the stars which have not changed; I hear the voices of cicada, shrill and sad, as when I was a boy, I hear the herds winding down from the hills. All is as it was and as it will be; and my heart overflows with love and peace.”

Jonah shrugged his shoulders. “That is all very well for you,” he repeated, “but when one goes about, as I do, one sees many strange things. In Aram, for instance, there are gods which look like snakes. But it is possible to charm them with a flute. What has that to do with the God of the Jews?”

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“Were you not also in Aram?” asked Naaman quietly. “Yet you are a Jew.”

“I was with the army . . .” said Jonah.

But Naaman broke in, continuing: “Do you imagine that God would be content with a few tribes and a strip of sea-coast on this earth, which He created with so much trouble? Such an idea is highly improbable. Moreover, there is a regularity about the seasons which would be impossible in the case of a number of gods.”

But Jonah shook his head. “That is all nonsense, Naaman,” he said. “I cannot understand it. Why should God send the Jews to take the country and the flocks of the Aramæans, if they already belong to Him? And if there is no other God but Israel’s God, then who created the other people of the earth? You see into what difficulties an idea of this sort inevitably leads you. There is no doubt that our God is the true God, but to say that He is the only God does not

seem to be justified, in the light of history.”

“What do we learn from history?” asked Naaman. “Little enough and nothing to our credit. The golden calf of Og has grown to be a bull. Well, so much for history.”

But Jonah replied discontentedly, “That is all very well theologically speaking, but you lose sight of the problems of administration.” And he repeated to Naaman what Amaziah, the High Priest, had told him.

“After all,” he said, “men must worship God in some form or other.”

But Naaman replied with grave anxiety:

“That is not the voice of Jonah that I hear. My son, do not let yourself be persuaded by those to whose ears the divine speech has never penetrated. God does not speak in the Temple, but in the silence of the heart. The hearts of His prophets are His tabernacles. There, in the quiet, in the hush of lonely piety, He speaks to Israel in

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tones of sorrow and command. Let us keep His tabernacles holy and austere. Go back to the desert, Jonah; and do not meddle with the affairs of this world.

“Go back to the desert, my son.”

Jonah remained silent for a moment, gazing out at the soft spring night with its faint shine and shadow of leaves. At last he said slowly, “Well, of course, after a while . . .” But he thought to himself, “Must I hurry? A little holiday will not do me any harm.

“I thought,” he said doubtfully to Naaman, “that I might stay a few days with my mother, who is growing old, and who after all does not see so much of me.”

But Naaman shook his head. “My son,” he said, “you cannot have both heaven and earth. If you are so fortunate as to count angels among your friends, it is because you have no mother and no brother. Be lonely, and content; and do not turn back to this life

so full of passion and injustice. Grief and joy are not for you, Jonah; they are nothing for a prophet. The desert is your home; do not go too far away from it."

"You are right, Naaman," said Jonah, after a while; "one must not get too far away from the desert." He rose to go, helping himself to his feet with his staff. "Good-by," he said, "my teacher and my friend. Once again you convince me, a little against my will. As of old, I leave you, filled with a peace which is not entirely happy."

And embracing his old teacher, he set off for his mother's house through the night.

IV

PRINCE AHAB lived in a palace of stone and fragrant cedarwood, on a hill above the village of Gath-Hepher, and almost within sight of the little cottage occupied by Jonah's mother. The prince, whose large holdings in the North had increased in value due to the success of the war in Syria, surrounded himself with every luxury. Nevertheless, in the midst of jewels, silks, slaves, and the richest perfumes, he himself remained simple and straightforward. Of a martial, almost to say gloomy appearance, he affected the stern manners of the Assyrians, with whose thick gold fringes he decorated his cloak and his girdle. He was heavy, but he was vigorous and active; like the nobles of Assur, he took endless pleasure in hunting, for which he im-

ported blooded falcons and swift horses from Iran. He lived in the saddle; and he complained of the degeneracy of Israel. "Effeminate people," he exclaimed, "you do not exercise enough." And the sleepy citizens of Bethel would be awakened by the trampling of horses and the sound of horns, as Ahab rode out at dawn to hunt boar in the forests of Baal Hazor.

In the afternoon, while the king deliberated with his nobles upon affairs of state, Ahab dozed. Upon being reminded of the presence before the council of important matters, he remarked that he had been out riding. And he exclaimed with enthusiasm:

"Exercise is the thing."

An old woman by the name of Sarah kept house for him in his palace of cedarwood and broadstone. She was sharp and severe, but she knew her own value. By noticing the faults of other people, she kept her self-re-

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spect. She managed the house and the slaves, and acted as nurse to Ahab's niece, his sister's child, Judith.

Judith at sixteen possessed a voluptuous body, a pious spirit, and an inexperienced mind. Her gentle soul united in itself the gay ardors of a child with the cloudy desires of a woman. Everything surprised her, and everything pleased her; she was anxious to know everything, and she knew nothing. Eager and trusting, her brown eyes explored with sympathy but without understanding the life she saw all about her. She was happy and dreamy by turns; but sometimes at night her pillow was wet with tears. She would have said that something beautiful had made her cry, perhaps a thought, perhaps a feeling. But she could not have explained what it was, not even to Sarah, to whom she told everything. Perhaps it was the moonlight in the courtyard, and the scent of jasmine or lotus from the garden. But

that was lovely; why should it make her cry? Such things perplexed her.

Sometimes she wished she were a boy, so that she might go hunting with her uncle. Then she saw herself seated on a white horse, with her green cape blowing in the wind, galloping and shouting. But at the thought of piercing an animal with her spear, she turned away with quick displeasure. "No," she thought, "I should not like to go hunting."

And she told her uncle that she was glad she was a girl. "So am I," he replied, "because if you were a boy, I should be disgusted with you." He loved his niece, but he liked people to be active and hardy. "The women of to-day," he often said, "do not amount to much.

"They have no enthusiasm."

Now Judith sat before her bronze mirror, twisting her long brown hair into plaits. As she sat, she sang:

JONAH

*“My love is a shepherd in Sharon,
By rivers he waters his sheep,
Blue are the waters of Sharon,
Rivers of Sharon are deep.”*

She knew no one in Sharon. Nevertheless her nurse said to her angrily, “Now tell me, what sort of song is that for a young girl to sing?”

Judith replied that it was just a song. She added with a smile, “You are vexed because you do not know any shepherds, and because you have no lover.”

“That is my own business,” said Sarah, drawing herself up with dignity. “However, I must say that it does not become you to speak of things like that. What do you know about love? Nothing, I sincerely hope. You should be thinking of marriage, with respectful modesty.”

“Well,” said Judith, “as a matter of fact,

I think love is silly. It does not interest me, really. Were you ever in love? Tell me honestly, Sarah; I cannot imagine such a thing."

Sarah gazed gloomily at her mistress. Presently a blush overspread her sallow countenance. "In love?" she exclaimed; "certainly not. With what, if I may ask? The trouble with you is that your head is full of nonsense. When I was your age I had more decorum. I was prettier than I am to-day, and I attracted the attention of a very handsome man, a camel driver, but such a wild one. He was not good enough for me, and I sent him about his business. I knew my own worth."

So saying she tossed her head, with an air. But Judith clapped her hands. "A camel driver," she exclaimed, "why, Sarah, you never told me. Did he take you up on his camel? Just think, how delightful. That's really life, isn't it, Sarah?"

JONAH

“Ak,” cried the nurse, “where do you get such ideas?”

And turning to Prince Ahab, who was entering the room at that moment, she exclaimed,

“God knows who puts such things into her head.”

Prince Ahab replied, with a discouraged gesture, “Do not ask me, Sarah, for I do not know who puts anything into people’s heads nowadays. I assure you, the entire world is mad. Do you know what the king is doing, now that the war is over? You would think he would be getting ready for the next one. Not at all; he prefers to discuss the marriage laws with Prince Absalom. What a state of affairs. Do not expect me to know what makes a young girl foolish besides.”

“I am not foolish, Uncle,” said Judith; “when I am older, I shall be just as wise as you or Sarah.”

“Be respectful to your uncle,” said Sarah.

Ahab shrugged his shoulders. "No one is respectful any more," he said; "I simply wonder that people do not go around with their fingers actually to their noses. But, then, with so many prophets filling the air with groans and complaints . . . Amos, Joel, Hosea, they are enough to fill the mind of anybody with disrespect."

"And Jonah?" asked Judith.

Ahab replied gravely: "Jonah is not like the others. He comes of a worthy family of Zebulun; as a matter of fact, his home is here in this village. So, you can see, there is something to him. His brother is the village herdsman. Yes, Jonah is quite a different thing altogether."

Judith looked lazily at her face in the mirror. "Tell me what he is like," she said.

"What's that to you?" asked Sarah. She added that she supposed he was old and had a long white beard.

"No," replied Ahab, "he is not old. He is

young, and enthusiastic. His eyes seem to burn. He is a little thin, but one can understand that, living in the desert, and probably starving most of the time. It is not a healthy life. I came upon him during the battle against the Aramæans; the fighting had made him sick. He is not what I would call a very robust individual."

"And did he really see an angel," asked Judith, "as they say he did?"

"Why not?" said Ahab. "Is there any reason why a man from my own village should not see an angel? He has certainly as much right to see one as Amos of Tekoa; or do you imagine that angels only appear to the men of Judah?"

"What an idea," cried Sarah.

And she added with conviction, "For myself, I would sooner take the word of a man from Zebulun."

But when Prince Ahab had gone, she said, sniffing the air with vexation, "Men ought

to stay out of the women's apartments, where they have no business, whether they are uncles or not." Seizing a vial of sweet-smelling oil, she began to sprinkle its contents in the room. This consoled her nose, which had been outraged by the prince, who, as usual, had come from the stables.

Judith went out into the warm spring morning. The bees were humming in the blossoms, the birds sang quietly and gaily in the trees, and trees and blossoms stretched themselves luxuriously in the bright sunshine. Judith took a deep breath of the hot, sweet air; it was like eating flowers, she thought. Underfoot, in the grass, beetles moved gravely to and fro on their mysterious business; the world of stones and twigs was being explored by little eager ants; wasps hung and buzzed. The earth exhaled the beneficent fragrance of spring; everywhere was drowsy joy, tranquil activity. A tanager flew overhead with scarlet wings,

JONAH

turned, shone, and fled among the trees. The girl paused, and looked up at the sky, blue as a robin's egg. "I should like to dance," she thought.

A moment later she added doubtfully, "But perhaps it would be wrong."

At her feet a beetle with a bright green coat which reflected the light was walking soberly toward his house. Presently an ant approached him and gave him a bite on the leg. The beetle turned an anxious look on his tiny assailant, whose head barely came up to his knee, "Come, come," he exclaimed, "have you no respect for beauty? Do you think God enjoys having you bite me? He would be very much upset if anything happened to me."

Disdaining to reply, the ant went away to find his friends and discuss the situation. "I gave it to him," he said; "I gave him a bite he won't forget in a hurry. Now he knows who I am."

Left to himself, the beetle hurried home in an agitated manner. And Judith, remarking his awkward gait, cried,

“There, you are dancing, you strange creature, with your lovely green coat. But that is quite another matter, because you are a beetle, and not a Jew.”

She had a sudden thought. “Perhaps,” she said, “that is why you are dancing. Perhaps you are a little god, with such a fine green coat. Well, go in peace, I will not step on you. I will make a wish, instead. Little beetle, tell me what love is. It does not interest me, really; I would simply like to know . . .”

She broke off with a start. A shadow had fallen on the grass at her feet, and she looked up with surprise. There, behind her and to one side, stood a young man. He was not good-looking, but his expression was gentle and kind. He had on an old, tattered cloak, and he leaned thoughtfully upon a

rough staff which easily supported his weight. Judith looked at him with wide-open eyes.

“Oh, my,” she said.

And she added faintly, but in accents of hope, “Are you also a camel driver?”

The young man shook his head. “No,” he said, “I am not a camel driver.”

Seeing that his reply had disappointed the young woman, he added simply,

“I am Jonah, the prophet.”

V

JONAH and Judith sat on a bank of ferns and moss beneath the shade of a giant sycamore tree. Already they were friends; they talked earnestly together, and twisted in their fingers the ferns with their tough stalks and cool leaves.

“Well, but tell me,” said Judith, “did you really see an angel? Just imagine, how exciting that must be. What was this angel like? Very beautiful, I suppose.” And she looked down with a frown.

“Such beauty,” said Jonah gravely, “I cannot describe to you. Because, actually, one does not see beauty, one feels it. One looks at something, and suddenly one feels a pain in one’s heart. Then one thinks ‘what a beautiful thing.’”

"Yes," said Judith. "Well, tell me, did this angel have dark hair too, like mine?"

"I do not know," replied Jonah candidly. "I did not exactly see any hair. But I remember the wide, white, folded wings, and the glow which entered my heart at the sight of that serene face."

Judith pouted. "Didn't you notice anything at all?" she enquired. "For instance, what did she wear. And was she young or old? What a strange fellow you are; you saw almost nothing, or at any rate, nothing of any consequence."

"Why do you speak always of 'her'?" asked Jonah. "This angel was not a woman. At least, I did not think so."

"Then he was a man," cried Judith.

"No," said Jonah slowly, "he was not a man, either."

"You see," said Judith, "I was right; she was a woman. And besides, if she was so beautiful, naturally she was a woman."

"I confess," admitted Jonah, "that had not occurred to me."

"Of course not," said Judith. "But it occurred to me, because I am a woman."

And she added with a smile,

"Even if I am not as beautiful as an angel."

"You are very pretty," said Jonah shyly. "But it is not the same thing." And he dug in the moss with his staff.

"Do you really think I am pretty?" asked Judith. "Sarah, my nurse, says that to be pretty is nothing, because any one can be pretty. She would rather I were virtuous, because virtue is woman's richest jewel. Of course I mean to be virtuous, and to do what is expected of me."

She began to weave some ferns into a chaplet. "Sometimes," she said in a low voice, "I look at myself in my mirror, and I give myself a little kiss. Do you think it is wrong? Nobody sees me."

JONAH

Jonah moved uncomfortably in the moss. "God . . . ?" he said.

"Oh," said Judith. "Well, God . . . old God.

"Anyway," she added, "I don't think He sees me."

She looked at the garden from which an overpowering fragrance arose, at the flowers languidly lifting their bright-colored faces to the sun, drinking in the warmth and the light. "I have a little dove," she said, "made all of silver. It is a copy of the doves of Eryx, and it is sacred to Astarte. My uncle brought it to me from Tyre. It is pretty, because it is of silver, with eyes of rubies. I put it on the window-sill of my room. It brought the birds; they came and sang on my window-sill.

"My little dove sees me kiss myself in my mirror.

"Is it wrong, Jonah?"

When Jonah did not reply, she said, "Tell

me what it is like in the desert. Just imagine, to live all alone in a little hut or a cave, how exciting that is.”

Jonah began to tell her of his life in the desert. Seated in the shade on the moss, while the bees hummed outside in the sun, he described the way in which the prophets came together for study and meditation. “I have a little cell,” he said, “in Golan, near a tiny stream which rises in the hills. It is clear and cold, and many prophets live beside its banks among the rushes. In the morning, after we have prayed, we gather in the shade to listen to some learned man, or eminent saint. Our midday meal is simple, a few dates, some maize, a little oil or wine, perhaps a fish from the deep waters of Cinnereth across the hills. And in the afternoon we meditate upon the Law, and the history of our people.

“Evening comes suddenly in the wilderness. The shadows lengthen, and night ap-

JONAH

proaches across the desert. The wind of night blows upon the east, which turns dark and blue with cold. In the west the sun goes down into the sea; the sky turns yellow, then green, and shines like a lamp. The stars appear, the dews descend, and the wings of angels begin to sweep through the skies. It is cold, and the desert is silent, save for the prayers of the hermits, which rise in a soft sigh from the earth. As it grows darker the voices of animals begin to mingle with our psalms, and we hear, far off, the roaring of lions on their way to drink. Then our fires are lighted, to guide the Hosts of Heaven to our homes.

“The animals are our friends. The little divinities of the rocks and streams know and reverence us. They bring us food, and they tell us of the approach of demons in the form of ostriches and jackals. Against such beings as these our holiness is sufficient protection while we are on God’s land.

“Well, that is all, really. It is a simple life, but it has its beauty. In the quiet of the desert our hearts expand like flowers in warm weather, and in our minds blossom lovely and tranquil thoughts.”

Moved by a sweet emotion, Judith replied, “How delightful it must be to live in the desert.”

She continued in a low tone, “When you speak of God, I seem to feel Him in my heart. It is such a strange feeling, so peaceful and yet a little painful.”

And she looked at him with surprised and shining eyes.

Suddenly she looked down; the dark lashes rested softly against her cheeks warm as sunny roses. “I must go home now,” she murmured. “Good-by.”

She got swiftly to her feet. “I will not look in my mirror any more,” she said, “if you think it is wrong.”

And she ran away without once looking

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behind her. When she got home she hid her mirror in a box of ivory and sandalwood. Then she went to put her silver dove away also. But all at once, instead of hiding it, she gave it a kiss on its ruby eyes.

“Little dove,” she said, “tell me what love is.”

Going to her box, she took out her mirror again, and gazed for a long time, and with a smile, at her own reflection.

Jonah went thoughtfully home. There he found his Uncle David, who had stopped in for a moment to see if anything was being cooked. Deborah was filling the lamps for the Sabbath. When she saw Jonah she straightened her bent back, and remarked anxiously, “Where have you been all morning?”

“I have been out walking,” replied Jonah evasively. And he sat gloomily down in a corner of the room, as far as possible from his uncle. Then all at once he burst out

laughing. When his mother asked him what he was laughing at, he answered,

“I was thinking of a green beetle.”

“You see,” said Uncle David, nodding his head, “he is not all there.”

Deborah arose, and went to fetch more oil for the lamps. As she passed her son, she touched his forehead with her hand. “What is there so peculiar about that?” she demanded of her brother. “Or perhaps you have never seen a green beetle? Well, I have been amused by them myself.”

“Sit still for a little,” she said anxiously to Jonah; “after walking so much in the sun.”

Uncle David settled himself comfortably in his seat. “To-day,” he said, “who should I meet but Bildad, the water carrier. He said to me, ‘This is fine news about your nephew, Jonah. I suppose that we shall hear from you soon,’ and with that he gave me a look full of meaning.

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“I did not reply; naturally, because I had nothing to say. Could I tell him the truth? We should be the laughing-stock of the entire village. I simply wrinkled my forehead and looked as grave as possible. At any rate, my expression struck him as peculiar, because he said as he went away, ‘Excuse me for intruding in your affairs.’ ”

“I have been thinking of something,” said Deborah. “It has occurred to me that if we do not give a feast, people might begin to think that we wished to give ourselves airs.”

“There you are,” said David; “that is the way I feel about it, word for word. Speak up, and people believe you. Otherwise what is the good of all this?”

Jonah stirred uneasily in his corner. “Mother,” he said, “do you really insist upon giving a feast for me? I think it is foolish. Still, if it would give you pleasure . . . but who would come? The whole vil-

lage, I suppose. Would you actually ask the prince, and his niece?"

"What?" cried David; "what? I shall ask him myself, because I am acquainted with him in a humble way."

"Well," said Jonah, hesitating . . . "But what would you wear, Mother?" he asked with sudden anxiety. "These old rags . . . And who would pay for it? No, it is impossible."

"Do not worry about what I would wear," returned Deborah sharply. "You will not be ashamed of me. As for who is to pay for it . . . you need not worry about that, either, because it will not be you, at all events."

Jonah sat for a long time without speaking. At last he sighed. "Very well," he said, "if you like . . .

"I will stay a few days longer."

VI

SO Jonah did not at once return to the desert. Instead, he said shyly to his mother the next morning: "My cloak is torn almost in two. Is there nothing else for me to wear?"

"There is an old coat which belonged to your father," said Deborah. "But it is brightly colored, and it is too heavy for this mild weather."

"It cannot be helped," replied Jonah; "if people are going to notice me."

When it was brought to him, he regarded it with a timid expression. Nevertheless, he put it on, giving Deborah his old coat to mend.

"You will be overheated," said Deborah. She added, "Must you go out on such a hot

day? You will come home all wet, like a river."

"Mother," said Jonah earnestly, "I am not a child any longer."

"Was I interfering in your affairs?" cried Deborah. "I simply said it was such a hot day."

Clasping her hands anxiously, she asked, "Shall I put some oil upon your hair before you go out?"

For she thought, "Then his head will be cool, at all events."

Without waiting for an answer, she ran to get the oil. Then she combed her son's beard and poured oil upon his hair. "There," she said, stepping back to admire him, "now you look like somebody."

As Jonah stalked gloomily out of the house, she called after him tenderly, "Keep out of the sun."

In the village Jonah met Bildad, the water carrier. Balancing his heavy gourds

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upon his shoulder by means of a wooden yoke and some leather thongs, the old man was going slowly from house to house with his wares. When he saw Jonah, he stopped and said with surprise,

“I see that you have a new coat.”

“Yes,” said Jonah.

Bildad scratched his head. “I am glad to see that you are doing so well in your profession,” he said.

And he passed by, carrying his water gourds.

Walking hastily through the village, Jonah climbed the hill toward Ahab’s house. The moment he entered the garden he saw Judith. She was seated in the same spot as the day before, and she was twining a wreath of flowers in her hair.

“What a surprise,” she exclaimed, “to see you again.”

“Yes,” said Jonah. “I was passing by; it occurred to me to stop . . . that is, I

thought you might be interested to hear that I am going back to the desert again.”

Judith's face remained drowsy and content. “Are you going soon?” she asked, and held up her wreath to admire it. The wide golden sleeves of her robe fell back from her round brown arms; and she smiled dreamily at nothing.

Jonah replied that he had decided to wait a few days in order to satisfy his mother, who wished to give a feast in his honor. “Just imagine,” he said, with a laugh. “Nevertheless, her heart is set on it.”

Judith sighed. “I wish I were a man,” she said, “and could go to feasts.”

Jonah told her that the whole village was to be asked. “Your uncle, the great prince,” he said, “has also been invited. He might even,” he added timidly, “bring his family.”

“Oh, how exciting that would be,” she cried.

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And they looked at each other with happy smiles.

“Why are you going back to the desert?” she asked at length. “But I suppose it is necessary for a prophet. Well, I hope you will be a great man.”

Something suddenly occurred to her, for she added, “My goodness, you are really a great man already, aren’t you?”

“Oh, no,” he said; “it was nothing; God simply wished to speak to me.”

“You are modest,” said Judith; “that is nice.”

Smiling, she looked at the flowers in her hand. Suddenly she frowned, and said seriously,

“One finds so few modest people nowadays. All the prophets have so much to say, but I do not like what they say; they talk about such gloomy things. Jonah, tell me—what is there to be so sad about in Israel?”

Jonah replied gravely, “We are sad be-

cause life is not simple, the way it used to be. We imitate other nations and so we are not certain about ourselves any more. We are not even sure of God; we begin to wonder if He is not a bull, or a dove, and if He is not also the god of Aram and Babylon. That is why we are unhappy. When the things we believe in are questioned, it makes us restless and sad. Patriots are the only happy people, for they believe in themselves; and if other people disagree with them, they do not forgive them for it.”

Judith gazed at the young prophet with admiration. His black eyes glowed, his head was lifted, and he continued bitterly:

“However, that is not all, by any means. One expects a certain amount of ignorance among the poor. But the rich ought to be an example to the rest of the people. Well, the rich have only one desire, to forget that they are Jews. With their beards curled like Assyrians, they vex and oppress the poor,

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who cry out to the gods of other lands for deliverance."

"That is not true," cried Judith angrily. "And I will not let you speak of my uncle like that."

"Your uncle," stammered Jonah; "yes . . . well . . ."

He sat staring at the grass, with burning cheeks. Presently Judith remarked timidly, "Forgive me."

"You see," said Jonah in a low voice, "you do not know what it is to be poor."

"I am sorry," said Judith sweetly. And she added, "What is the good of talking about it?"

"Do you think that I mind being poor?" cried Jonah. "I do not wish to be anything else. Since I am poor, I am free, my heart is at peace. Remember that I live in the desert, where all your uncle's wealth would not do him the least good. It is you, not I, for whom you ought to reserve your sym-

pathy. I do not need anything; I am happy, my heart is full of beauty, like the wilderness, quiet, fragrant, and bare.”

Judith bowed her head, “My heart is bare, too,” she thought. But something moved in it, and she sighed.

“No,” she told herself, “my heart is quite bare.”

Jonah continued: “You have never seen the dawn come up across the desert. The night rolls away into the west like the last clouds of a storm, dark and terrifying. The east grows brighter and brighter, shining like a lamp, so clear and quiet; and the sky seems to be full of angels going out into the world. There is no sound, for the birds do not sing yet. All is peace, all is holiness and beauty. No, you do not know anything about such things.”

Judith sat silent, her hands clasped in her lap, her brown eyes cloudy. At last she murmured sighing,

JONAH

“I should like to be poor, like you.”

And they sat dreaming, hearing their thoughts knock like echoes on the walls of their hearts.

At noon Jonah returned home through the field where his brother Aaron was grazing the village cattle. Bright-colored insects buzzed and hummed about him as he walked; lazy lizards sunned themselves on stones; in the noonday heat earth spoke with faint but audible voices. The trees drank in the light; the wild bees hurried to and fro among the flowers which opened their petals with voluptuous joy to the south wind.

The prophet found his brother asleep beneath a locust tree. “So,” he said, rousing him with his staff, “that is the way you make a success, by going to sleep. I could do that too, without any trouble.”

Aaron sat up and rubbed his eyes. “I have my hands full,” he said. “Remember that I am up at daybreak. And then there

are all these cows. If I doze now and then, it is what any one would do in my place.”

Seeing Jonah's coat, he cried out angrily, “That is the coat mother promised me.”

Jonah paid no attention to this outburst. “Tell me,” he said seriously, “how does one make a living? I am interested, and should like to know a few things.”

An appeal of this nature made Aaron feel pleased. “To make a living,” he said thoughtfully, “is, to begin with, a very difficult thing. Then there are other questions to consider: such as, what sort of a living do you wish to make? Any one can live. Look at Uncle David.”

“No,” said Jonah; “by a living I mean a family and children.”

But Aaron shook his head. “There again,” he replied, “it depends on what kind of wife will do. Must she be expensive? Then you need a good living, naturally. But what could you do, Jonah? Could you sell

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cloth, or gold? Or perhaps you might build roads.”

And he burst out laughing.

“Ha, ha, ha.”

“There is always the cattle business,” he said finally, pointing to the cows.

“I am not joking, Aaron,” cried Jonah impatiently.

His tone caused his younger brother to sit up, and to regard him with a curious expression. “Are you in earnest, Jonah?” he asked. “Do you really mean to settle down? I thought you would never leave the desert. Are you going to be married? Good Heavens . . .”

Jonah replied carefully, with his eyes on the ground, “No . . . what an idea. I may leave the desert for a while, but only to be with our mother. As for marriage . . . well, to tell the truth, I had heard it said of you . . .”

“Of me?” cried Aaron with wide-open

eyes. "You are dreaming, Jonah, the heat has touched you. A wife, for me? Why, I could only afford a poor girl from the village. No, when I marry I mean to take a wife from town. But that will cost a good deal. One pays for a wife in Israel; perhaps you have forgotten that."

"You are right," said Jonah; "I had forgotten it." And he turned home again. His thoughts were grave, and he walked slowly, with a serious air. At the entrance to the village he passed the statue of a winged bull, before which lay the remains of a sacrifice of cereal, which was being enjoyed by some birds. Jonah looked for a long time at the idol which seemed to gaze back at him with an ironic expression.

"Perhaps," he said sadly at last, "it is I, not you, who am a stranger here in Israel."

And he felt a coldness lay itself upon his heart.

VII

MOOONLIGHT covered the earth, the trees showered down their perfume of blossom and cedar, the fragrance of lilies rose through the night. Voices sang softly in the shadows, teased, laughed, whispered in the moonlight; lamps shone, light fell upon trees. In Deborah's kitchen Uncle David passed around cakes, fruits, and bitter almonds, and helped the guests to wine, milk, and honey. He was a genial host; his eyes shone, he urged every one to enjoy himself.

Deborah moved among her friends, anxious and happy. She kept one eye on Uncle David, and had something to say to everybody.

"Well, this is like old times. This is what peace does for a country."

“What a lovely night.”

“We should have such a war every year.”

“A son to be proud of.”

Under a tree in the garden two old men were discussing religion. They pulled at their long beards and gazed at each other with indignation. “God belongs to Israel,” said one; “do not lend Him around.”

The other replied: “Does the earth belong to the tree? Does the air belong to the wind? Can I lend the sky? How many gods are there, then?”

First old man: “Maybe a hundred, maybe two hundred. There is nothing in the Laws of Moses which says how many. Do you wish to dispute with the Holy One Himself?”

Second old man: “As for that, I am not the disputer. I simply say of God, ‘He is everywhere, and He does not look like anything.’ But you say, ‘No. He is here, and He looks like a Jew.’ ”

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First old man: "All the gods look like something. There is a tribe in the south whose god is only two feet high, and entirely covered with short black hair. His people are naturally pygmies. What have you to say to that? or would you like me to believe that our God is also the father of pygmies?"

Second old man: "Pygmies are not human beings, but monsters. It does not surprise me to find monsters in the world. I say it does not surprise me because I can see a little beyond the front of my face. On the other hand you cannot see anything but what is right under your nose. You are not a philosopher; you are a patriot. You would like to keep God all to yourself."

First old man: "Exactly, I am a patriot. And what are you? I hesitate even to say it."

The two old men glared angrily at each other.

"Look," said the first old man to Bildad,

the water carrier, who was passing by, "he wishes to give God away to the Gentiles."

Bildad shook his head. "No," he said accusingly: "Oh, my." And he hurried away to join a group of villagers about Prince Ahab, who was standing by the side of a table on which was set out a large bowl of wine.

The prince was in the best of humor. "My friends," he exclaimed, "what we need is more exercise. That is what makes a nation healthy. Talk is all very well, but there is too much of it."

He paused to take a long drink of wine. Several farmers who worked in the fields from dawn until dark applauded his remarks. It was easy to see that they respected his opinions, and that they did not know what he was talking about.

"Just imagine," said Bildad, "there is a man outside who wishes to give our God away to the gentiles."

“He is an ignoramus,” said Ahab. He continued,

“Every one will agree with me that a good horse is the most beautiful thing in the world. Next to a horse, the best thing in the world is to be active, and to take a lot of exercise.”

Uncle David nodded his head vigorously. “Exactly,” he said; “those are my opinions, almost word for word. A good active life is what I say.”

The Prince turned upon Uncle David a face flushed with wine. “What,” he exclaimed, “here is an honest man.” And he embraced Uncle David, who said proudly to those standing near by,

“We agree with each other. After all, he is a noble fellow.”

Then he quietly asked Bildad to point out to him the old man who wished to give God away. When he found him, he went up to him and said,

“Go away; please get out of this, as we do not want an ignoramus here.”

Returning to the kitchen, he looked around him with an important air, and after blowing his nose, exclaimed,

“Unhealthy people.”

Prince Ahab was still talking. Clutching his beard, stained with grape, he concluded morosely,

“Nobody rides any more.”

It was time to divide the roasted ox among the guests. But first it was necessary to find Jonah, who was expected to perform the sacrifice to the god, in the absence of a priest. So Uncle David went to look for him; but he did not find him at once. For Jonah was in a corner of the garden with Judith, Ahab's niece.

The moonlight fell down upon them through the leaves like a shower of milky petals and blossoms without weight and without fragrance. The faint cheep of

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frogs, the shrill screech of the cicada, rose from the ground and answered from the branches through the air laden with sweetness. A single bird, cheated by the moon, sang far away; his song tumbled through the air like water falling.

They leaned against the trunk of a tree, shadows making pools of darkness over their eyes, moonlight in their hair and on their hands. And their hearts, cheated, too, by the night, sang in confusion a song of joy which seemed to them like pain.

They had little to say to each other. They discussed the weather.

“What a beautiful night,” said Jonah. “It is like the nights on the desert, so still, so calm, and yet it makes me sad.”

“It makes me sad, too,” whispered Judith. “Why does it make me sad, Jonah?”

He shook his head. “I do not know,” he said. “Beauty often makes people sad. It

is something they would like in their hearts, and their sadness is their longing.”

She looked at him in the darkness. “Yes,” she said, “that’s it; that is what I feel sometimes when I look in my little mirror.”

Jonah did not answer. The fragrance, the rapture of the night, moved through his heart. It seemed to flow from the young girl at his side and return to her again, lovely, obscure, a sweet sorrow, a longing filled with grief. He raised his head to the little dapple of moonlight among the leaves.

“I’ve never felt anything like this before,” he thought. “It is like having God speak to me.

“How beautiful she is. And she would like to be poor, like me. Of course, that is nonsense. Still . . .”

He thought that she swayed a little closer to him. Intoxicated by an imperceptible warmth, he touched her hand. “Judith,” he whispered.

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“Yes?”

“No—nothing. How lovely it is out here.” He trembled; his hand, twined with hers, was moist and warm, but he shivered as though with cold.

She stood beside him, breathless, drowsy with sweetness, waiting. . . . “This is love,” she thought. “He loves me, and I love him. How exciting it is.

“I am a young girl, and already I am in love with a prophet.”

She gave his hand a faint squeeze. Jonah sighed deeply. Was there anything else so lovely in the whole world, he thought.

Judith raised her head. “Listen,” she said, “there’s a bird singing. Just think, in the moonlight; isn’t it sweet, Jonah? This is beauty, isn’t it? I could stay here forever.”

No—there was nothing else in the whole world. . . .

From the garden arose the sound of voices; shadows moved among the trees.

Aaron went by with a village girl, his hands stuffed with cakes. He offered them to her to nibble at, and kissed her mouth full of crumbs. She accepted his caresses with pleasure, but without passion. "What a thing you are," she cried. "There's your brother; he behaves himself, at least."

"He is a noodle," said Aaron; "most of him is still in the desert. Who is that with him? My goodness . . ."

They ran away, linked in laughter. Jonah looked after them, but he did not see them. The desert was in his heart, wide, starry, still; all the beauty in the world trembled at the moment's edge. If it made itself known . . . would the heart break with it?

"This is too beautiful," he wanted to cry; "wait, you are hurting me."

In another part of the garden Deborah said to Sarah, Judith's nurse,

"How charming your Judith is. She is

not spoilt like so many of the young girls to-day. And when you consider her wealth, that makes it all the more remarkable.”

“Yes,” said Sarah with satisfaction, “she knows nothing of life. She is a pure lily.”

She added, “I have brought her up myself.”

Deborah nodded her head. “Children cannot be brought up too strictly,” she said. “That is what is responsible for the success of my son Jonah.”

And she moved away, smiling at her guests. Sarah gazed after her with pursed lips. “Indeed,” she said to herself. “Well, that is one thing to call it, of course.”

Jonah was not thinking about being a prophet. His heart beat heavily; he felt as though he were all eyes, staring blindly into the night. The sweet, heavy scent of lilies struck him like a wind. He felt terrified of what he was about to say, of what he felt obliged to ask. But there was no help for it;

the very shadows would begin to murmur if he were silent longer.

“Judith, do you love me?”

“Yes, Jonah.”

Astonished, they gazed at each other without speaking.

Then, slowly, their dark heads bent together.

At that moment Uncle David, hurrying through the garden, caught sight of them under the tree. “Well,” he cried briskly, “there you are. Come, my son; the ox is about to be divided.”

Jonah had only time to whisper, “Wait here for me, Judith.” Then he went, in a daze, to make the sacrifice. He heard but little of what was going on around him, the gay shouts, the pious wailing, but the sudden hush as he consigned the holy portions to the flames broke on him like a light.

“Wait,” he said to himself; “something has happened.”

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And suddenly he began to feel very gay.

“Why,” he thought, looking around at the familiar faces, “what are all these people so happy about? They do not know what has happened. They have no reason to be happy, as I have.

“I ought at least to be happier than they are.”

Seizing a cup of wine, he threw the contents on the blazing altar. “For You, too, God,” he cried recklessly; “enjoy Yourself.”

At once murmurs of protest arose. The old man who had caused the philosopher to be sent home expressed the opinion that such an act was not customary. “What does he mean, ‘Enjoy yourself,’ ” he exclaimed. “Is that a way to speak to God? Or does he think that the Eternal One and he are such good friends already?”

Prince Ahab shrugged his shoulders. “What do you expect of young people to-

day?" he inquired. "It only surprises me that he did not call God something even more irreverent."

Uncle David went anxiously about among the guests with apologies. "He is a little wild," he said to several people; "you must excuse it . . . the life he leads, in the sun . . ." He tapped his head significantly. "He is not all there."

Deborah, on the other hand, did not seem at all disturbed. In a calm manner she explained that very likely there were different ways of making a sacrifice. "After all," she said, "my son is a prophet, and therefore closer to God than any of us here. Did you see the feather he brought home, actually from an angel? Besides, if you ask me, why shouldn't God enjoy Himself, if He likes?"

But she gave Jonah a look, when no one was watching, which said plainly, "What a trouble you always make for yourself and for me."

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When the sacrifice was over, Jonah hurried back to the tree where he had left Judith. But she was gone; Sarah had come to take her home.

As if in a dream he wandered off in the moonlight, down the road and through the fields. Behind him the lights and the hum of the feast faded out; he was alone, in the silence of night. About him the pastures, bathed in dew, shone like silver under the moon which covered the earth with delicate mist. Everything was peaceful, everything breathed a quiet and resigned joy. Only in the heart of the man, filled with bliss, there was no peace.

He spread out his arms, "I am happy," he cried, "I am happy."

He thought of the Deity to whom he had so often prayed. "Thank You," he whispered.

And he gazed with love at the heavens, pale, and shining with stars.

He began to imagine the future. "What does it matter if we are poor?" he thought. "One cannot buy beauty. We will live in a little house, and I will do great things, like Nathan, or Elisha."

But that mood did not suit his spirit for long. "No," he exclaimed, "I will never allow her to be poor. I will make a large fortune, to keep her comfortably."

But how? He did not trouble to find out. Already he was living in his palaces, surrounded by slaves.

All night he walked through the fields soaked with dew, through the woods, silent and dark. The moon floated on to the west, and went down over seas and lands unknown, undreamed. The world slept; even the frogs were still. But there was no sleep for Jonah that night; his joy kept him awake. Accustomed to sorrow and indignation, he could not bear his own happiness.

“Judith,” he cried over and over, in a sort of amazement. “Judith.”

Dawn broke in the east, and hunger turned him homeward. On the road near the village he passed a golden litter, also bound for Gath-Hepher, on whose curtains were woven in silver the little doves of Eryx. The litter was followed by several donkeys, laden with merchandise, and a number of servants in the livery of the Phœnicians. “There goes a rich man,” thought Jonah, “but I am happier than he. I will buy his litter and give it to Judith, because of the little silver doves on the curtains.”

It was Hiram, a merchant of Tyre, on his way to visit Prince Ahab, with dyed silks from Sidon, sandalwood, and cloves. Jonah had no forebodings. Cold, wet, weary, but overborne by happiness, he went on home to his mother’s house for breakfast.

VIII

THAT morning Jonah said to his mother, "Mother, I am going to be married."

Deborah did not stop singing to herself as she sat mixing curds. But she looked at Jonah as though to say, "Are you preparing some new trouble for us both?"

At last, since Jonah did not offer any further information, she remarked quietly:

"What of your career?"

"What of it?" replied Jonah. "I have been alone a long while; now I am going to take a wife."

Deborah went on stirring her curds. But she stopped singing. Presently she put down her wooden spoon and sat still, staring at her son.

“You know,” she said gravely, “that I want you to be happy. But what are you doing? Your father also had a great deal of talent. He might have been a priest, but he preferred to marry me; and he died by being gored by a bull. Marriage is a serious thing, and nothing for a prophet.”

“Do you think prophets are made of wood or stone?” cried Jonah irritably. “They also have feelings, like any one else.”

Deborah nodded her head. “I suppose so,” she said. “Still, how much better it would be if you could find something else to do with those feelings.”

“Well, I can’t,” said Jonah. And he relapsed into gloomy silence.

His mother began to stir her curds again. “If that is the case,” she said at last, “you had better tell me all about it, and we will see what can be done.”

Since Jonah did not reply, she added, “I

suppose it is some woman of Bethel, or perhaps a girl from the desert."

"It is Judith," said Jonah simply, "Ahab's niece."

The spoon fell with a clatter into the bowl. "Ak," cried Deborah. And she gazed at her son in consternation.

"Have you gone out of your mind?" she exclaimed at last. "Do you imagine for a single moment such a thing would be allowed? Who are you, Jonah, the grandson of King David? Or are you perhaps a nephew of King Hiram of Tyre? You must be mad, my son."

And she added, shaking her head, "It is always something difficult or impossible with you."

Jonah raised his eyes, burning with enthusiasm, to his mother. "After all," he said with dignity, "it was I who led the Jews against Aram. Is that nothing? Is it nothing that I have spoken with God? Or is a

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noble a greater person in Israel than the God of the Jews? Let him order the angels, then."

"What does a noble know about God?" cried Deborah. "I am poor, and your mother; I know what it means to be a prophet. But a noble—no, my son, you have taken leave of your senses. All he knows is what he can buy, which is nearly everything."

"Can he buy love?" asked Jonah scornfully.

Deborah thought to herself, "Yes, love, too"; but she did not say so. Putting aside her bowl, she asked more gently,

"Do you love her so much?"

"Yes, mother."

"And does she love you, my son?"

When Jonah nodded his head, she arose and, coming over to him, put her hand a moment on his hair.

"Poor Jonah," she whispered.

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“Well,” she said, after a silence, sighing, “well . . . I will see what I can do.”

Taking down her best shawl, she went to find Uncle David, to discuss the matter.

At first Uncle David was frightened. “He is crazy,” he exclaimed. But after a while, when he had listened to Deborah, he began to take a more hopeful point of view. “Who knows,” he said, “perhaps God is with him.”

He thought: “It is not as though our family were just a common one.”

And he began to feel that he was already connected with nobility. But he had no scented oil for his hair, and he wished to make a good impression when he went to call. Therefore, as there was a little oil of olives left over from the feast, he put this on his hair, and, taking also his me'il, or overgarment, which he kept for special occasions, he exclaimed hopefully to his sister,

“Now, leave all this to me, because I know

Prince Ahab very well, and we understand each other, he and I.”

And he began to rehearse what he would say to the Prince. “Of course,” he declared, with a wave of his hand, “the difference in wealth . . . But you are a man of the world. You know that a prophet is not born every day.”

“And such a good son,” said Deborah.

“And such a good son,” added Uncle David.

“Also, I say to you as one father to another, or, at least, an uncle, what is there in the world like youth? Can we old ones tell the young how to behave?”

“Come,” said Deborah; “you are only wasting time.”

Gravely, with slow steps and thoughtful expressions, they went up through the village to the palace. Uncle David helped Deborah over the rough places, and she leaned upon his arm.

Prince Ahab came to meet them in his hall in which a single fountain sang. There a peacock led his long tail across the floor set in triangles of marble and ebony. Rich silks adorned the walls, which exhaled an odor of musk and cedar.

After greeting them cordially, the Prince offered his guests cakes in which cinnamon, spices, and poppy-seeds were happily mingled. Then he said in a hearty voice,

“What a splendid feast you gave us last night. I wish to thank you in the name of my household, all of whom enjoyed themselves.”

“Thank you,” said Deborah shyly. She was timid and ill at ease, yet she managed to appear calm and smiling. “It was nothing, or at least for such an occasion, nothing . . .”

And she gave Uncle David a nudge with her elbow. But now that Uncle David found himself called upon to say something,

confusion rendered him speechless. "Yes," he said feebly, "an occasion . . ."

Prince Ahab broke in, with a smile: "A feast in honor to a prophet. Do you think I have forgotten what is due your son for his help against Aram? A feast like that is not too good for him."

Warmed by his tone, Deborah said eagerly: "If you only knew him; such kindness, with all that talent besides. He has made a great success, and he is still a very young man."

"I do not doubt it," replied Prince Ahab.

"He speaks to angels," continued Deborah proudly, "but he is like a lamb with his own mother."

"Say something," she whispered to Uncle David; "make an effort."

"Yes," said Uncle David.

"I congratulate you upon your son," said Prince Ahab heartily; "there are too few in

Israel like him. I am proud to have him in my village. I was saying as much the other day to my niece, the Lady Judith."

And he added hopefully, "Does he speak of another war?"

"No," said Deborah, "he is not thinking of wars just now." She hung her head, and gazed at the floor. Presently she lifted her head again, and looked, full of blushes, at the Prince. "He has something else on his mind," she said.

"Are you dumb?" she whispered in Uncle David's ear.

Uncle David gave a start. "As a matter of fact," he said huskily, "it is this way: Jonah is thinking of settling down."

"Ah," said Prince Ahab, and curled his beard idly in his fingers. "Well, that would be too bad. Such men as he have work to do in the world. We cannot afford to lose such optimistic voices. To whom is Israel to look for her glory if not to such prophets

as your son, my good Deborah? No, no, I hope he will not settle down."

"He has made up his mind," said Deborah; "I cannot argue with him." And she added in a voice too low for Ahab's ears, "He is like a goat."

"As a matter of fact," said Uncle David suddenly, "he has made up his mind to marry."

"To marry?" exclaimed Prince Ahab. "What?" And he stood frowning with disappointment.

"Then there will be no more wars," he declared gloomily.

But Deborah replied with conviction: "One can marry and still be a prophet. And my son is particularly suited to be a husband. He is gentle and pure."

"That must please you," said Ahab, "although I do not know if it is the best thing in a husband.

"Well," he said, with a sigh, "I dare say

there is no help for it. So tell me what I can do for you, my good Deborah."

And he gazed amiably at the two who stood before him shifting on their feet with embarrassment.

It was Deborah at last who spoke.

"My brother should by rights speak for me," she said, looking indignantly at Uncle David, "but as he is so dumb, I shall have to speak for myself."

She took a deep breath. "Prince Ahab," she said, "my son Jonah, the prophet, wishes to marry your niece, the Lady Judith."

"That's it," said Uncle David; "that's what we came to say."

The smile died upon Prince Ahab's face, and he stared at them in amazement. "What?" he exclaimed; "did I hear you aright?"

Deborah repeated in a firmer tone what she had said; then, raising her eyes to his, looked at him with a candid and satisfied

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expression. Now that the declaration was out, she felt entirely different.

But Prince Ahab began to laugh.

"My good woman," he cried, "are you mad? Such a thing is impossible."

"Why is it impossible?" asked Deborah calmly. "I do not see anything impossible about it. Do you, David?"

"No," said David hurriedly, "no. Of course it seems impossible; I said at once that it looked absurd. Still . . . there you are.

"Ha ha."

And he also essayed a laugh like a croak.

Prince Ahab controlled himself with an effort. "Madam," he said, "what does this extraordinary son of yours offer as price for my niece, if I may be so bold as to inquire?"

Deborah at least had the grace to blush. "Nothing," she said in a low tone. "But he thought, being a prophet . . . and what is wealth to you, who have so much?"

Prince Ahab let out a sudden roar of anger. The joke no longer amused him. "Nothing," he cried.

"He wishes to give me nothing for the Lady Judith.

"What impudence."

"What did I tell you?" said David, trembling, turning to his sister. "He has insulted her. O my God."

Prince Ahab spread his legs apart, and clutched his beard with both hands. "Woman," he cried in thunderous tones, "let me tell you that my sister's daughter will not marry a pauper, prophet or no prophet. A fig for your prophets. They are dirty, unhealthy, meddling creatures. Tell your son to go back to the desert where he belongs. And as for my niece, she has been given too much liberty. I shall see that she is properly guarded hereafter.

"What ideas. I tell you there is no respect in this unhappy country."

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Summoning his slaves, he bade them hustle Deborah from his sight. Then he went off in a violent mood to find his niece. Fortunately for Judith she was not in the garden; instead he came upon Hiram, the Phœnician, strolling among the flowers. Prince Ahab took the wealthy merchant by the arm. "Come," he said, "I am in a rage. Let me show you my horses. I have some things to talk over with you. I have had a shock this morning, and I do not know what the world is coming to. What ideas. What impudence. Let us go riding for a while; it will do me good."

And he hurried to the stables.

Deborah walked home with her head in the air, the color bright on her face. In the village she stopped to speak a few words to the gossips, who greeted her with curiosity and interest.

"Well," she said, "Jonah is going back to

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the desert soon. God will need him again shortly.

“Such excitement last night; I couldn’t sleep after it. So I still have on my shawl, taking some air in the morning.”

She passed on, humming a little tune to herself.

Uncle David hurried home before her. Dripping with perspiration, and with a white face, he burst into the house, and sank dejectedly upon a bench.

“All is lost,” he cried.

“Woe is me.”

He could say no more. Deborah, when she came home, told Jonah the story.

IX

WHEN Prince Ahab told his niece that she was not to be allowed to marry Jonah, she wept bitterly. For an entire day she refused to eat or speak; for she thought her heart was broken. In the evening she went to the tree in the garden where she had sat with Jonah; and, as she leaned her cheek against its bark, she saw again in her mind the dark, thin face of her lover, the brown eyes speaking to her in silence. She heard his voice:

“Beauty often makes people sad. It is something they would like to have in their hearts, and their sadness is their longing.”

“Oh, Jonah, Jonah . . .”

And her tears fell unchecked.

When she returned to the house, Sarah said to her indignantly,

“Do you know that your young man wished to marry you for nothing? What an impertinence.”

Judith replied tearfully, “He has nothing, the poor fellow.”

“That is what makes the insult all the harder to bear,” said Sarah. “If he has nothing, he should keep quiet, for your sake. What would people think of you if you were to marry for nothing? You would be ruined socially.”

Judith sat up straight, with red cheeks. “Why,” she exclaimed, “what an idea.”

But she remained thoughtful for the rest of the evening. The next morning she said to Sarah, “He is so gentle and sweet. I love him.” And she added,

“Men are so thoughtless.”

At once Sarah, who knew what she was doing, exclaimed, “My poor lamb, you have been badly treated.”

Judith's eyes filled with tears again. "I am a young girl," she thought, "and already my heart has been broken."

All day she was pale, and said nothing. Occasionally she wept, but without violence. In the evening she walked among her flowers, composed and quiet, her brown eyes sad and wondering, like a child's. And as the sky faded from the color of roses to the color of leaves, she breathed a name sadly, but so faintly, into the air.

"Jonah . . ."

No one answered, and her heart vibrated with sadness and with peace. "I have lived," she thought, "I have loved, I have been unhappy.

"That is life, isn't it . . ."

And coming upon Hiram the Phœnician among the roses, she gave him a dignified bow.

In the morning, in the bright sunshine, she said to herself, "Men are so selfish. Just

imagine, if I were married for nothing, what would people think of me?"

And she said seriously to Sarah, "I feel so old, Sarah. I feel as old as Methuselah."

"You are a little pale," said Sarah, "but that does not do any harm."

"Do I look well?" asked Judith in surprise. "No."

"You are like a lily," said Sarah.

But Judith insisted that she looked, at least, a little thin. "And my eyes are all red from crying," she added.

She did not walk in her rose garden that night. In the morning Sarah said to her, "You are yellow as a dead leaf." And she brought the little mirror for her mistress to look into.

Judith looked at her reflection for a long time. She seemed a little proud and a little vexed at what she saw. "It is because I have suffered so much," she said at last to Sarah. And she added,

“Men are so cruel.”

In the afternoon she dressed in white, with a girdle of silver about her hips. And Hiram, meeting Sarah in the court, cool with its fountain, said to the nurse,

“The Lady Judith has a very spiritual face. Is she unhappy about something?”

But Sarah threw up her hands at the mere thought of such a thing. “‘Unhappy?’” she cried; “what an idea. She knows nothing of life. She is like a lily. If she looks a little sad, it is because of her gentle nature.”

That night Judith dined with her uncle and his guest. Her cheeks were pink as the youngest roses in her garden, her lips red again, like poppies. Ahab, seeing her blooming so, was satisfied. And Hiram also watched her carefully, with his shrewd dark eyes.

In Judith’s apartments Sarah put away the pots of red and pink paste, the myrrh

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and cassia buds, and the little silver mirror. Then with a sigh she sat down to await the return of her mistress. She was content; she felt that the worst was over.

“A woman should know her own worth,” she said to herself; “in that way she saves every one a lot of trouble.”

X

JONAH stood again before Amaziah, the High Priest. On his face, dark with woe, were drawn lines of determination. He held out his hands, empty, and brown as the earth.

“I have not brought you anything this time,” he said, “not even an eagle’s feather.”

Amaziah chose to ignore this greeting. “What now, Jonah,” he exclaimed cheerfully; “do you not bring me another war? The presence of my favorite prophet fills me with the liveliest hopes.”

But Jonah shook his head. “I am weary of being a prophet,” he said simply; “I have come to ask you to make me a priest.”

Without losing the serenity of his expression, Amaziah looked thoughtfully at the young man whose weary face expressed dis-

satisfaction and bitterness. The old High Priest seemed to be reaching back into his own past, to the time when he, too, had had a choice to make. And his face, as he gazed at Jonah, softened; an expression almost of pity crossed his features, sharp and cruel as a hawk's.

"This is bad news, Jonah," he said gently. And he was silent, waiting for an answer.

But Jonah had nothing further to say.

Amaziah stroked his chin. "Tell me," he said at last, "what has caused you to look with dissatisfaction on your career at the very moment when all Israel speaks of you with admiration?"

"What is the good of admiration?" asked Jonah sadly. "I have a living to make."

"Ah," said Amaziah, and his face clouded, "so that is it. What a nuisance."

And he sat looking before him with a frown.

"You do not really wish to be a priest,"

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he said at last; "for one thing the duties would soon prove irksome to one of your temperament."

Jonah threw out his hands. "What is there for me to do?" he cried. "Shall I keep cattle, like my brother Aaron? Or am I to beg, with a bowl?"

"There are worse things than begging," said Amaziah. "In the desert every one is a beggar."

"I am tired of the desert," said Jonah; "I am not going to live there any longer."

But Amaziah held up his hand reprovingly. "My son," he said gravely, "one does not change the course of one's life with impunity, or for no reason."

"There is a reason," said Jonah. He looked down at his feet; then he looked boldly up again. "I wish to marry," he said.

The High Priest made a gesture of discouragement. "I might have guessed," he murmured. And he gazed sadly at the

prophet, on whom he had been counting to help further his own plans. Presently he said with a sigh,

“I can see that this maiden’s father does not wish to give her away for nothing.”

“He is wealthy,” said Jonah gloomily. “For that reason he cannot abide a poor man for a son-in-law.”

Amaziah nodded his head. “Naturally,” he agreed; “if he is wealthy, he feels obliged to add to his fortune. It is only those without anything who can give away what they have, without suffering an overbearing sense of loss. For one thing they do not lose as much, and for another, having nothing, they are not required to succeed in the world, and so they can afford to be generous.”

As Jonah did not reply to this observation, he continued in a grave voice:

“Are you really determined upon this thing, my son? Think well. Marriage in your case may well be a calamity. You have

a name already famous in Israel. You are at the outset of a career like that of Samuel. It is safe to predict that you will go far. And you wish to give this up in order to be married? Such a thing is incredible. Farewell to glory, Jonah.”

Jonah folded his arms, and regarded the High Priest with a gloomy and obstinate look. “Nevertheless,” he said firmly, “that is my decision.”

“It is not even your loss,” continued Amaziah earnestly, “wholly; it is Israel’s. It is you who shine like a lamp in her darkness; yours is the voice of hope in her night. If you were Amos, or Hosea, I should say that Israel could get along without you. But you are different; you are the messenger of God’s geniality. Israel cannot afford to lose you, Jonah, my son.”

However, Jonah was proof against arguments of this kind. Seeing which, Amaziah exclaimed,

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“What will God think of His prophet, who no longer listens to His voice?”

Jonah replied with an effort: “Is God only audible in the desert? And must He be silent in the Temple? I tell you, He will speak to me wherever I am.”

Almost at once he astonished Amaziah by crying out in a muffled voice, full of pain, “Do you think this is easy for me?”

Amaziah seized what he took to be his advantage. “You are confident,” he remarked in quiet tones, “but I have noticed that God does not speak to my priests with the same enthusiasm with which He addresses Himself to the wild and savage hermits who live in the desert of Tob and Golan. And it is my experience that His angels do not enter the cottages of married men with the same boldness with which they visit the huts of bachelors. If it is true that prophets have sometimes been married, it is also true that

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they have often left their wives and gone out alone to live in the wilderness.”

“That,” said Jonah stubbornly, “is a personal matter, which need not concern us.”

And he added, “You cannot shake me in my resolve.”

Amaziah looked at him sadly. But suddenly his brow cleared, and he struck his palms together. “Wait,” he cried; “if the father of this young woman did not object to your poverty, then there would be no reason for you to become a priest.”

“Well,” said Jonah sourly, “he does object.”

“Then,” exclaimed Amaziah, “for the glory of his country he shall be prevailed upon to change his mind.”

And he waited with a smile for the name of the unreasonable man whose opinions were making a successful war with Nineveh highly improbable.

“It is Prince Ahab,” said Jonah.

At once the smile left Amaziah's face, to be replaced by a look of consternation. The High Priest sank back in his seat, and stared at Jonah with brows which slowly drew together into a frown. His fingers caressed his chin; he sat for a long time without speaking. At last he said:

“My son, the more I think of things, the more convinced I am that you would not make a good priest. It is the duty of a priest to serve men, and the Temple. You cannot be a good priest, and at the same time be given to divine illumination, because God deals only in generalities, and does not bother Himself about the details of administration.

“A priest must conform; he must not have ideas of his own. He is a soldier with certain duties to perform: he must obey his superiors, and must serve the interests of the men and women who worship the god.

“That would never do for you; your spirit

is too lively. You would try to change everything.

“Moreover, since you are not a Levite, I cannot make you a priest of Adonai. I cannot believe that you would be willing to become a priest of a baal such as Melcarth or Kemosh.

“Besides, can you read or write? No? Well . . .

“I can do nothing for you.”

So saying, he clapped his hands, to show that the interview was at an end.

“Will you speak to Prince Ahab?” cried Jonah wildly.

Amaziah did not reply. Instead, two Nubian slaves came forward, and hustled Jonah out of the house.

A number of people, hearing that the prophet Jonah was in town, had gathered in the street, to gaze at the man who had won a victory over the Aramæans. When they

saw Jonah they waved their sticks and shawls, and cried,

“Hurrah for the prophet.”

“God bless Jonah.”

“There is a great man; just look at him.”

One old woman came hobbling forward, to touch the hem of his cloak. Jonah did not even see her. His eyes, hot with anger, were on the ground; he saw the dust, and the tip of his own beard. Finding an old woman in his path, he gave her a shove; whereat she fell with a bump to the ground.

“Oh my,” she said, when she had got her breath. “Oh my. Well, there’s a great man for you. Tst; I feel better already.”

XI

HIRAM, the Phoenician, was short, dark, and compactly built. His hair was curled and oily; his body, dressed in richest silks, and in linens forbidden to the Jews, exhaled an arresting fragrance. He walked in the garden with Judith and her nurse, Sarah, as evening was falling.

“Redder roses than these,” he said, “bloom in the gardens of Tyre. The serpent priestesses of Astarte, the Kedeshoth, wear them in their hair at the festival of their goddess, who reigns in Sidon as the deity of cows, but in Tyre as the goddess of doves.”

He had about him an air of the world, of cities by the shores of seas, of mountains far away. As he stood on the terrace at Gath-Hepher, his dark, shrewd eyes seemed to behold in the distance the white domes of Tyre,

shining above the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean.

“He reminds me of a man I knew long ago,” said Sarah to Judith in a low voice; “he was a camel driver, and he had been everywhere.”

The Phœnician went on to describe the wonders of his country; the mighty trees of Lebanon, from which Solomon’s Temple had been built, the markets of Acre, with their silks, fruits, and ivory, the Temple of Melcarth, Baal of Tyre, with its two great pillars of marble and gold. He told them of the spacious Temple of Atareatis at Ascalon, with its pool in which floated sacred fish adorned with ornaments of gold.

“At Aphaca,” he said, “there is a temple dedicated to Astarte, with a pool into which gifts are thrown by her worshippers. Once a year this pool is visited by the goddess in the form of a falling star. It is a marvelous sight and makes one very thoughtful.”

“How strange,” said Judith. “And how I should love to see such a thing.”

Hiram looked at her proudly. “You can understand,” he said, “that your temples do not compare with ours. In the first place, ours is a very old country. And then, our religion is not like yours. Our gods have faces you can look at, and love.”

“Yes,” said Judith, thinking of her little silver dove.

“What is more,” continued Hiram, “you who live inland cannot imagine the wonders of the great sea-coast cities. This is all very well; you have a pleasant garden here. But it is nothing compared to the terraces above the harbor at Tyre, looking out over the sea. There is magnificence for you. Well, you see, ships have come from all over the world to decorate them.”

Sarah sighed. “I’d have seen them,” she said, “if I had gone as I was bid.”

The Phœnician gave Sarah a wise look. “Perhaps you will see them after all,” he

said. And he glanced for a moment at Judith as he turned away.

“Oh,” said Sarah.

Overhead the sky had grown dull with evening, green in the west, where the evening star, planet of love, hung silver over the hills. Shadows drew down about the garden, the wind rose and moved among the trees, the scent of flowers in the slow-falling dew ascended from the earth and mingled with the fragrance of pines.

“How you would love the markets,” said Hiram, “with their bales of silk and rich stuffs, the strange fruits from the West and South, the gold and ivory. And such an enchanting odor of spices in the air.”

“Just imagine,” said Judith.

Hiram continued: “All the nations of the earth trade with my city. The masts of our ships rise like a forest along the sea wall, and their sails in the harbor are like orange and yellow moons. Ophir and Egypt, the

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colonies of Carthage, the isles of the barbaric Greeks with golden hair, all send their produce to us, in exchange for our linens, cedarwood, and dyes. It is a wonderful sight to see the ships come in, loaded with so much wealth."

Judith sighed. "How I should love that," she said. And she looked around her at her uncle's simple garden.

"That is life, isn't it?" she said; "to live in the world, in a great city with ships, and strange things to wear, and interesting sights to see."

"It is the life of a Phoenician," said Hiram simply.

And he added, "This sort of thing is all very well, but where does it lead to? You spend your life in a rose garden, between some low hills, among ignorant people."

"You would never believe how ignorant some of these people are," said Sarah, nodding her head.

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“The life of a merchant,” said Hiram, “is another thing entirely. Take myself, for example; I travel a great deal. And it is really amazing how much information one is able to pick up here and there. I have been to Crete, where I went to look at the sewers. They are made out of stone, and very interesting. But perhaps sewers do not appeal to you?”

“Oh, yes,” said Judith, “they appeal to me very much. But tell me something about your own city. What do the women wear? I suppose they are very beautiful.”

“Yes,” said Hiram slowly, with his eyes on Judith, “they are beautiful. But to tell you the truth, I have never bothered much with women. How do they dress? With jewels, of course, and silks . . . I hardly know. I am too busy most of the time to notice such things.”

“Well,” said Sarah firmly, “I am sure you’ve seen no one in your city, or in any

other city, for that matter, to compare with our young lady.”

“No,” said Hiram, with a smile, “that is true.”

Judith blushed a fiery red. “Why,” she cried, “I am not even pretty.”

“You see,” said Sarah in Hiram’s ear, “she is not at all spoiled. What a jewel.”

“The life of a merchant,” said Hiram thoughtfully, “is the most interesting life in the world. There is nothing like commerce to give one a liberal education. For one thing, the merchant has to travel a great deal, because naturally he has to see what he is buying; he has to visit other countries, in order to know what to sell. As you can imagine, it is a delightful way to occupy oneself.”

“It’s quite another thing from living in a stable,” said Sarah.

“Why, Sarah,” exclaimed Judith indignantly, “we don’t live in a stable.”

“Maybe not,” the nurse admitted. “But we might just as well.”

“In the morning,” said Hiram, “I go down to the docks, to see what ships are in. Several of the captains are known to me, and we discuss some matters of importance. Then I visit the markets, to see for myself what people are buying, because that is the only way to make a success of business. It is very interesting, all of it. One has to be perspicacious, to be a merchant. For instance, if people wish to buy silk in Damascus, it is useless to send them sandalwood, or betel-nut, even though I, personally, might prefer such things.

“In the evening one goes for a stroll on the terraces above the water, to drink syrups, and watch the sun go down in the sea.

“On festival occasions the streets are gayly decorated with flowers and rugs, and processions carrying the god pass among the houses, and meet at the Temple. Then there

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is music in the evening on the terraces, and bands of priests and worshippers perform the dances in honor of the deity.”

Judith heaved a deep sigh. “How exciting that must be,” she said. And she gazed before her with parted lips and dreamy eyes. But the breeze, cold with dew, soon made her shiver.

“Let me bring you a shawl,” said Hiram. And he returned to the house for a shawl of heavy silk, dyed in Tyrian purple, with a holy fringe, which he had brought along with him as a gift to Judith. When he was gone, Sarah remarked,

“That is the sort of man I like; one who has made a success in the world and who says right out what he means.

“What a wonderful life he leads. You can see that he knows how to live. A merchant—yes; that’s the life for a person.”

Judith did not answer. When the Phœnician returned with the shawl, and drew it

around her shoulders, she thanked him faintly; she would not even have noticed how beautiful it was, if it had not been for Sarah. The last birds were singing before night; the sky shone with the blue of evening. Far off beyond the hills lay the great ocean, wide as the world, with its sails, like orange moons, blowing home from barbarous lands. And over it, terrace on terrace, the queenly city with its laughing festivals, its temples, its sacred pools . . . She closed her eyes . . . such beauty, such dignity to life, so much to see and hear of; her young heart, dry with curiosity, filled like a pool with longing and despair; her pure and ignorant mind gave itself up in abandon to excitement, to happiness, to festivals with music, to syrup on the terraces as the sun went down . . . to ships and wonder . . .

“Oh, how I should like to be a merchant,” she cried.

Hiram of Tyre bent his dark head humbly upon her hand.

XII

WITH a heavy heart Jonah climbed the hill to the garden. He wore his old coat, and his face was weary and gloomy. He had come to say to Judith, "We cannot be married because I am poor, and cannot get anything to do." But as he drew near the garden, he forgot what he had come to say, and thought only of seeing her again.

When he came to the tree under which he had sat with her, Hiram, who was walking with a satisfied air among the flowers, said to him,

"You, there, are you one of the servants?"

"Well, just be so good as to bring me a bowl for these roses."

"I am not a servant," said Jonah proudly.

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"No?" said Hiram. "Then what are you? Are you interested in horses?"

"I am a prophet," said Jonah.

Hiram made a small bow. "Forgive me," he said. "In my country the prophets are dressed a little differently, because they have priestly connections. However, it is interesting to meet other kinds of prophets. It is an interesting profession. Well . . . what a pleasant day it is. Perhaps you would do me the favor to prophesy me something."

Jonah stared at him angrily. "I have some business with the Lady Judith," he declared.

"She is in the house," said Hiram. And the two men stood looking at each other with surprise and alarm.

Hiram went to fetch her. She came slowly, with downcast eyes, and cheeks as white as her own lilies. "How do you do, Jonah," she said.

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At the sight of her, Jonah felt his heart beating through his body, and a strange sweet sorrow rose up in his eyes. He wanted to say to her, "This is like coming home. I have been so unhappy, but you will comfort me. Because you love me, you will feel my sorrow. How sweet it is to have such a secret together."

"How do you do, Judith," he said; "I have been away."

"Yes," she said. And they stood without speaking, and without looking at each other.

"Well, did you have a good time?" she asked finally.

It troubled Jonah that she would not look at him. "I did not go away to amuse myself," he said simply. And he added in a lower voice,

"Did you miss me?"

"Yes, I suppose so. At least . . . I have been so busy. What hot days these have been."

“I went to Bethel,” said Jonah. He wondered how to go on; he was puzzled and depressed. This was not as he had thought it would be.

“Didn’t you know?”

“No. . . . Did you prophesy again? What is going to happen now? My goodness, you prophets, you are always going about.

“I suppose you will be going back to the desert soon.”

Jonah stared at her. She kept her head down, and her hands twisted together. He began to feel as he did sometimes before God spoke to him, still and empty inside, with a terrible stillness, waiting for something.

“Judith,” he half whispered.

“Yes, Jonah,” she said, looking up at him, for only a moment, and then looking away again.

“All the time I was gone, I thought of

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only one thing. I remembered only one thing.”

“Yes, Jonah?”—ever so faintly.

“That night in the garden, and the white moon in the trees like a bird in the branches . . .

“Do you remember?”

Judith looked away. “That seems like so long ago, doesn’t it?” she answered.

“‘Long ago’?” cried Jonah, and his heart sank. “Why, it is no more than seven days . . . Judith, have you forgotten?”

“No,” murmured Judith unhappily; “but I do not exactly remember . . .”

“You said you loved me,” he cried, in a voice which sounded like a croak.

She put the backs of her hands to her two cheeks, and whispered with bent head, “What must you think of me?”

“But,” stammered Jonah. Words would not come; he stood staring at her, eyes wide with unbelief.

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"Forgive me," she said calmly. "You can understand . . . I hardly knew what I was doing. Do not think too badly of me."

Jonah did not move or speak. But within him there were voices enough, too many. "What? I do not believe it. It is impossible. No, it is not impossible. Well, it has happened. But such things cannot happen . . . to you, Jonah, to you . . ."

He was still, waiting for the clamor to subside, for the voices to reduce themselves to one voice. He was afraid to move even; bewildered, horrified, he was like a man clinging with his finger-tips to the edge of a precipice. If he moved . . . if even a little earth slid from under his fingers . . .

No, he must keep very still; not a word, not a motion . . . then it would all turn out right again . . .

It was Judith who moved, and spoke. Coming forward a step, she laid her hand timidly on his arm. "You will forgive me,"

she said. "You have work to do in the world. You must go on, you must be a great prophet for my sake. I am going to be married. I shall be so proud of you."

And turning, she ran back to meet Sarah, who was hurrying out of the house after her.

Jonah went home. His feet led him back down the hill to his mother's house, but he did not notice where he was going. He felt strangely light-headed, almost as if he had been drinking. His set face, with wide amazed eyes, was lifted to the sky. And he kept thinking:

"Something has happened, something has happened . . ."

But what was it? Could he tell? Something had happened out of all reason, as though a tree had moved, and stood upright on its head. How could one believe such a thing? But there it was—on its head.

What was God about? And what had he, Jonah, done to deserve such a thing?

He passed the field where Aaron kept his cows. And suddenly, as he saw his brother in the distance, his shoulders sagged, his face broke into creases, his body seemed to fall together; and he stood weakly wringing his hands, while a wave of physical sickness stormed through his body . . . remembering, remembering . . .

Then he went on again, with clumsy steps, and bent head.

If only it were something he could understand. But how could he understand it; how could he ever understand? How could one love, he wondered, and then not love? Love did something to one's whole being; it made one gentle, and tender . . .

How could she have hurt him so, if she loved him?

And where was God all this time? What did He think about such a thing? "You, up there—God—what have You to say?"

Nothing.

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He came slowly into the house, and sat down with his hands clasped between his knees. One look at him was enough for Deborah; she knew. But then, she had expected it. And keeping her glance busily upon her sewing, she began to sing softly to herself.

But her eyes were full of pain.

*“Men dead long ago,
Have set me like a tree . . .*

“You are tired, my son.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“It has been hot. The poor always feel the extremes of weather most. If I had a daughter, I would never let her marry a poor man.”

And she glanced swiftly at her son, sunk in despair upon his stool.

*“Let the wind blow,
What is that to me?”*

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“Everywhere I go,” she continued calmly, “they speak of you with such admiration. He is a real prophet, they say. Everybody expects great things of you. It makes me so happy.”

Still Jonah did not answer. And Deborah said, sighing,

“Is it time you were going back to the desert, Jonah?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Well, I suppose you are right. It will be a rest for you, after all this. We shall miss you. It will be peaceful in the desert.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“I will send Aaron to you soon, with news, and some little comforts for you. Even if you have to live with the foxes, you can at least be comfortable.”

Slowly, putting her sewing away, she rose, and came over to him. “Jonah,” she said gently, and laid her hand ever so lightly upon his hair, “my boy . . .

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“People are not very kind to one another.”

“No . . . Mother . . .”

She began to sing again, softly, taking his head in her hands, drawing him gently to her:

*“My roots are in their dust,
My roots are deep, I trust . . .”*

And Jonah wept, with his head against his mother’s breast.

“My son is at my knee.”

XIII

NAAMAN sat beneath his acacia tree. Gentle and austere, his thoughts usually concerned themselves with the universe and with God, who he did not believe belonged exclusively to the Jews. However, he no longer felt called upon to say so, unless he was asked; then he stated his opinions with dignity but without the least hope of convincing any one. When any one wished to know why he, who loved peace, clung to such disturbing ideas, he replied, "I am an old man, and I like to have in my mind only what is comfortable there."

Now, however, his brows were drawn in a frown, and he looked gloomily at Jonah, who sat with bent head at his feet. And his hands, as he caressed his long white beard, trembled with age, with pity, and with indignation.

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“So, my son,” he said, “you have hurt yourself. When you were a child you used to come running to me with eyes full of tears, to show me some bruise you had received. I can still remember what I used to tell you: if you did not fall you would not get a bump. The one followed the other, almost as to make one believe that they were the same thing. And so I used to ask you: Jonah, are you crying because of the fall or the bump? Well, my son?”

Jonah smiled sadly. “Yes,” he replied. “And then you went on to say that I was not a philosopher. How that used to wound me, for I wished above all things to be a philosopher.

“Well, now it is the bump that has made me cry, Naaman.”

Naaman nodded his head. “Exactly,” he said. “But do you think perhaps you are any more of a philosopher than you were then? I doubt it, my son. For you bring

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me your bruise with the same astonishment as of old, not seeing that, having fallen, you can expect nothing else."

Jonah spread out his hands in a gesture of discouragement. "How is one to stand upright in this world then, Naaman," he said, "being but a man, and less than a god."

The old hermit regarded him gravely. "You are not a man, Jonah," he said finally; "although," he added quickly, "you are not a god, either. But you are not a man in the sense that your brother Aaron is a man. Nor do you live in the world he lives in. You belong to another world altogether, as different from that one as Thebes from Nineveh.

"And that world, my son, where you belong, is not here, among the tribes, among the towns and villages. It is in the desert; it is in the wilderness, where there is quiet for God to speak, where there is room for His angels to move about. When you left

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Golan, your heart was like the desert, spacious and calm. But now it is like a crowded village, full of tumult and pain."

"Yes," said Jonah in a low voice, "it is full of pain."

"I hoped you would not stay here," continued Naaman; "I implored you to return to Golan, to your home. Yet you stayed; with the result it was impossible not to foresee."

"I did not foresee it," said Jonah.

"That is because you are ignorant," said Naaman severely. "You do not know the world, yet you wish to live in it."

"No," said Jonah, "that is not true. For such things do not happen to everybody, or to other people. Why, love is holy, Naaman. It is as though God had told a lie."

"Be silent," exclaimed Naaman harshly, "and do not blaspheme. Love is not holy; and God does not lie. That alone is holy which concerns itself with holy things. But

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love . . . no, my son; it is pain and impurity, it is violence and sorrow. The world of desire is the world of demons, of concealment, of Sathariel which hides the face of mercy."

Jonah regarded the old man with astonishment. "You are so bitter," he exclaimed; "I have never heard you speak in that tone before."

Naaman peered off beneath his shaggy white eyebrows to the distant hillside, swimming in the haze of summer heat. For a moment he did not speak, but presently he said, sighing,

"You know but little of my life, my son. I, too, loved in my youth. Does that surprise you? Yes, it is hard to imagine that old men have ever been in love, swept by the flames of passion and of sorrow. And sometimes it is hard for the old to remember how it goes with the young men, with their joy, and their pain.

“I, too, was young like you, Jonah. Do you think your heart is the first to break? Other hearts have broken before; and other men have wept, as you are weeping. I know; for I, too, wept, Jonah, my son.”

He was silent. Jonah took the old man’s trembling hand between his two brown palms. “I am sorry,” he said. And he remained respectfully silent.

“But, Naaman,” he broke out at last, “what then is holy here on earth?”

Naaman replied gently and inexorably, “My son, the love of earth is holy, the love that God bears the least of His creatures, without desire, without envy, and without malice. That mercy and generosity with which the sun warms and the soil nourishes its flowers and trees, is holy; all that gives of itself, without reason, without measure, and without return. For that is the way of God; it is the way of the One, from which all things spring, to which all things return. Go

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back to the desert, Jonah; go back to the desert, and learn that God is One, and that His love is holy.”

But Jonah did not understand him. “Yes,” he said. “I shall go back to the desert, because that is all I can do. But I shall have no happiness, Naaman; my heart will never be at peace again. There is no beauty in the world for me now, ever. Oh, Naaman,” he cried suddenly, clasping his hands together, “if God loves His creatures, how can He make them suffer so?”

Naaman looked sadly at the young prophet whose face was hidden from him. “Must you have beauty, too, Jonah?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Jonah.

Rising to his feet, he added, “You do not know what it is to love and to be unhappy.”

And he went home again. As he entered his yard, a green beetle crossed his path. He went a few steps out of his way in order to tread upon it.

XIV

AND so Jonah returned to the desert, to his hut among the rushes in Golan. As he stood waiting for the ferry to take him across the Jordan, a party of soldiers coming from Hamath passed him on their way home. "There is Jonah," they said, "the prophet. Now we shall have another war."

"That is the sort of prophet to have."

"Hurrah for Jonah."

But Jonah paid no attention to them. He was thin and deathly tired, and his eyes, which burned with a deep and weary fire, were fixed on the distant hills beyond the river. There, Naaman had said, he would have peace again.

He walked northward through Tob, climbing from the river valley toward the

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table-land behind the hills. His heart was heavy, so heavy it seemed to weigh him down; and he walked slowly. At dusk he found himself still far from Golan, with a river yet to cross, and near the little pool at which he had halted on his way to Bethel, months before. How different life had seemed to him then. Why, it was not the same thing at all any longer; now it seemed like a dream, without reality, without anything about it that he could feel.

He sank down and looked around him.

The night came on. The shrill frogs sang together; and the little fox came out of his hole, and lay down beside Jonah, whom he recognized.

“Ah,” he remarked, as he settled himself comfortably at his side, “here is the man of God again.”

Jonah let his hand stroke the fox’s soft fur. His face was turned to the west, and he peered back through the darkness over

the way he had come, as though trying to see again the home he had left. Uncle David, Aaron—his mother . . .

He remembered how she had pressed him to her breast as he departed. "Go, my son," she had said, "go back to God. He misses you. Here is a little cake for the journey, and a few silver pieces. They are all I have. Buy yourself a coat on the way."

She had sold her shawl to give him a coat. But he left the silver pieces in a pot before the oven. He wanted nothing, only to forget the sickness of his heart, the heaviness like a weight of lead in his breast.

"Cheer up," she had said at the last; "see, you will forget all this after a while. There is the storm, and then the sun shines. Do not stay away too long. Who knows, maybe God will send you home again soon."

And she had kissed him. No, he would not forget all this soon. Would he ever forget it? that was what he wondered. And

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Judith, with her brown eyes, and the scent of lilies and jasmine in the moonlight . . .

“O Judith, Judith, how could you do such a thing to me?”

His eyes filled with tears, and he bowed his head.

The fox stirred beneath his hand. “Well, Jonah,” he said sadly, “God is a raven. I believe that now, since a jackal ate my wife. He could not very well be a fox, and allow such things; or even an old man with a beard.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Jonah in a low tone; “perhaps He is a raven.”

Hearing this, the Devil, who was going by in the form of a scorpion, stopped, and said to himself,

“I shall tempt this holy man a little.”

And remembering how Jonah’s quiet and pious spirit had vexed him in the past, Satan considered how best to be revenged on the prophet.

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“There is nothing like an odor,” he thought, “to hurt the memory.”

And he changed himself into a jasmine vine. The unwilling night wind, trembling and sighing, carried the fragrance of its blossoms toward Jonah, who shivered as though with cold.

“Ak,” he thought, “I can never forget.”

And staring with wide eyes at the west, he saw again the garden, with the moonlight falling through the leaves like honey; heard the voices of the old men under the trees, the whispers of lovers, and laughter, like a sound of flutes; felt on his hand the touch of her fingers. . . . Judith’s . . .

“What a beautiful night . . . It makes me sad. Why does it make me sad, Jonah?

“Listen . . . there’s a bird singing. Just think, in the moonlight; isn’t it sweet, Jonah? This is beauty, isn’t it.

“I could stay here forever.”

“Oh, Judith, Judith . . .”

“There is a smell of sulphur here,” said the fox, wrinkling up his nose.

But Jonah did not hear him. Something was hurting in his throat. He sprang to his feet, and took a deep breath. “Look,” he cried out to God, “look; it is I, Jonah.”

And he stood there, with bowed head, in the silence.

“This is very good,” said Satan to himself.

After thinking for a moment, the Arch-Demon decided to become a woman with brown eyes and brown hair. She came up to Jonah out of the darkness, timidly, draped in her shawls. “Well, Jonah,” she said, “here is the desert. See how quiet it is; what peace, what beauty. How happy we shall be here.”

“Go away,” cried Jonah, throwing out his hands in front of his face, “go away.”

“Why do you want me to go away?” asked the woman quietly. “Have I not

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come all this long way with you, as you wished? Am I not your love, tender and gentle and kind? Come, let me make you happy.”

And as Jonah stood trembling, unable to reply, she continued in her soft voice,

“Are you not young, Jonah, and lonely? The young ought not to be lonely. See how beautiful the night is with its stars, its clouds, half seen, half guessed, how the music of the wind rises over the desert and sings in the hills, softly, softly. It is a night for love, Jonah, for young hearts beating each to each in the silence, in the darkness. That is what life is for, Jonah, for lips to kiss, for hands to fondle . . . There is no beauty like mine, Jonah, no voice like mine to hurt your heart so, no hands like mine to hold your face tenderly, to kiss your mouth, Jonah, and your tired eyes, your mouth and your eyes . . .

“And you in your little hut, all alone

among the rushes, all alone, Jonah, all alone . . .

“You will always be alone now, summer and winter, winter and summer, your pillow the earth, harder and colder than my arms; only the song of birds and the sound of rain in your ears . . . And you will never see me again, Jonah, never hold my young white beauty close to your breast, never feel, as other men, love singing in your heart, and peace folding down upon your eyes. You will be all alone, Jonah, with no one to tell the secret things in your heart to at the set of sun, at the rise of moon . . . until at last, old and sleepy, you take my single kiss with you into the darkness . . . alone in the darkness too, Jonah . . . alone in the darkness . . .”

“O God,” cried Jonah, sobbing, “help me, help me.”

“God will not help you now,” said the woman.

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The drowsy fragrance of her body spread through the night. "Come," she said, holding out her arms to him.

"God cannot help you now, my poor Jonah."

Jonah took a step forward, and fell upon his knees. And then, one by one far off and near, the demons of the desert broke into laughter, wild peals of laughter, bitter and full of pain, cruel and without pity.

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Alone, alone . . ."

"God cannot help you now."

Under that mocking clamor, Jonah swayed like a reed, beaten to the earth, his face hidden in his hands. And then, at last, when it seemed to him as though he could bear no more, the terrible laughter stopped. There was a cry, and then silence.

Jonah got up and looked around him. Nothing was to be seen; the woman had vanished.

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The little fox had run forward, and seized the demon by the leg. Once again the desert was filled with a holy peace, as though brooding beneath the wings of angels.

“One can at least always help oneself,” remarked the fox.

He lay down next to Jonah with a contented sigh. And presently the man and the fox fell asleep together.

In her kitchen at home, Deborah sat praying for her son. She prayed that God would be kind to him. “He is only a boy,” she said; “do not ask him to behave like a man. Watch over him a little. I do not ask for anything for myself. I am an old woman, and my heart was broken long ago. But he is so young . . . leave a little of his heart unbroken.”

She lifted up her eyes full of tears. “Leave me my son,” she said.

And Judith, at her window in Tyre, knelt with a pale and weary face, peering out

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across the plains and hills of Phœnicia, across the wide waters of Meram, far off and unseen, toward the desert, where the night had already rolled up its cold blue clouds. And she, too, thought of Jonah; she, too, saw in the moonlight, in the little garden, the thin, worn face with its grave, dark eyes. They seemed to follow her, without reproach, but with infinite tenderness, pitying and forgiving. And suddenly she thought, "Yes, there in the desert there is peace; it is gentle out there, where Jonah is. O my dear, my dear, do you forgive me? Have you forgotten? It would have been different, Jonah, it would have been so different . . ."

Wearily she went to her little gold box, and drew out her silver dove. Holding it in her hands like a tiny live bird, she kissed its ruby eyes and its silver beak. "Little dove," she said sadly, "tell me what love is."

But the dove said nothing. And all at once she let it fall to the ground.

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“Ak,” she cried, “you don’t know anything about it.”

And as she wept, Hiram’s steps mounted through the house to her room.

XV

GOD was worried about Jonah. Watched by reverent cherubim, whose wings fanned the air all about Him, the Lord of Hosts walked up and down in the sky, and said to Moses, who was accompanying Him,

“I must find something for this young man to do.”

Moses looked down at Jonah with an expression of contempt. “He is hardly worth the effort,” he declared gloomily. “He seems to me to lack character.”

“You are right,” said God. “Still, he expects something from Me.”

And He added, smiling gently, “Perhaps that is why I am fond of him. He has not your strong and resourceful mind, Moses, nor Noah’s faithful heart; but he has suf-

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ferred. He is simply a man, like anybody.”

“What?” cried Noah, hurrying up, “are you talking about me?”

God replied: “I was saying that Jonah did not trust Me as you did, My friend.”

“No,” said Noah; “but then, what do you expect? There are so many different ideas now in the world. I do not recognize my posterity in these warring nations. Let us have another flood, Lord.”

Moses looked sadly down at Jerusalem, where golden idols were being sold in the streets. “You are right, Noah,” he said, “but I do not like the idea of a flood. A flood does not teach people how to live. Sometimes I wonder if anything can teach people what they are unwilling to learn.”

“Nonsense,” said Noah. “A flood is the most sanitary thing. Wait and see; even you could learn something about sewers from a good flood.”

God checked the old patriarch with a

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kindly hand. "Things are not the same as they used to be in the early days," He said. "I cannot drown the world to-day without drowning My wife, Israel. She is young, and a nuisance, but she has yet to bear Me a son. I foresee that He will give His mother a great deal of pain, but that cannot be helped.

"Let us not think of Israel now, but of the prophet Jonah. Moses is of the opinion that he is not a first-class prophet, and I am inclined to agree with him. He is a poet; and for that reason I feel warmly inclined toward him. After all, you, Noah, and you, Moses, see only one side of My nature. You try to look upon the Greater Countenance, but what you see is the Lesser Countenance. It is different with a poet. He does not see Hod, or Chesed, the thrones of Glory and Mercy. He looks through Beauty to the Crown itself. Whereas you, Moses, have never seen beyond Knowledge; and you, my

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good Noah, have seen My face only in Severity.”

Moses and Noah bowed their heads. “It is true, Lord,” said Noah humbly.

God continued:

“At this moment Jonah does not see Me at all. In the first place, he is unhappy, and he no longer looks toward beauty. He believes that there is no more beauty in the world because his heart is broken. He is mistaken; and after a while his sorrow will sharpen his eyes. Then he will see more than before.”

“In that case,” said Moses, “why do You bother Yourself?”

The Lord considered a moment before replying. It was obvious that He wished to express Himself in terms intelligible to His hearers.

“The trouble, My friends,” He said at last, “is this: our young prophet is a patriot. He is convinced that I am God of Israel

alone. I do not mind that point of view in a prophet, but it will not do in a poet. Severity, glory, knowledge, belong to the nations, if you like. But beauty belongs to the world. It is the portion of all mankind in its God.

“I have covered the heavens with beauty, the green spaces of the earth, the cloudy waters, the tall and snowy peaks. These are for all to see, these are for all to love. Shall any one take beauty from another, and say, ‘This is mine’?”

“Now He is beginning to talk,” said Moses in an undertone to Noah; “this is like old times.”

But God grew silent again. Presently he continued wearily,

“It is your fault, Moses, that the Jews believe I belong to them entirely. Well, I do not blame you, for you could not have brought them safely through the desert otherwise. But you did not tell them that I was

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a bull. I foresee that for a long time yet men will be irresistibly led to worship Me in the form of an animal.”

“Well, then,” said Noah, “if You foresee so much . . .”

“Be silent,” said God, in a voice of thunder which made the wings of angels tremble. He continued more gently, “Actually, at the moment, I am not interested in theology. I am thinking of Jonah.”

And He walked quietly up and down in the sky, thinking. The cherubim, moving all about Him, beat with their snowy wings the air perfumed with frankincense; and the clouds rolled under His feet.

Left to themselves, Moses and Noah regarded each other in an unfriendly manner. At last Moses shrugged his shoulders. He was vexed to think that he did not know everything.

“Well, old man,” he said to Noah, “have you nothing to talk about except the flood?”

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You do not understand conditions in the world to-day."

"I understand this much," replied Noah calmly, "that faith is more important than knowledge. Where would you be, with all your wisdom, if it had not been for me and my ark? You would be a fish, swimming in the sea."

"Do you take credit for saving your own skin?" cried Moses. "Wonderful. I, on the other hand, was very comfortable in Egypt. What I did was from the highest motives. I am not even sure that I am a Jew."

"I believed in God," said Noah stoutly, "and I did as He told me."

"So did I," said Moses angrily, "but I also used my wits a little. Faith is nothing; any animal can have faith. You and your faith had to get inside a wooden ark, in order to keep dry. But when I wished to take an entire nation across the sea, I simply parted the waters. I shall not tell you

how I did it, because it would be lost on you. It takes a first-rate intelligence to understand such a thing.”

Noah replied excitedly, “Please remember that I am your ancestor, and treat me with more respect.”

“You are an old drunkard,” said Moses.

But at this point God joined them again, and they were silent, to hear what the Holy One had to say.

“This young man,” said God, “does not believe in Me any more. How then shall I convince him of Myself?”

Desirous of showing his knowledge, Moses began to quote from the Book of Wisdom: “Infidelity, violence, envy, deceit, extreme avariciousness, a total want of qualities, with impurity, are the innate faults of womankind.”

“Nevertheless,” said God, “they are also My creations. In My larger aspects I am as impure as I am pure; otherwise there would

not be a balance. However, as I have said, we are not concerned with My larger aspects.”

Noah broke in at this point. “Send him to sea, Lord,” he begged. “There is nothing like a long trip at sea to quiet the mind. It is very peaceful on the water. One forgets one’s disappointments.”

“You are right,” said God; “we need the sea; it will give him peace. But as a matter of fact, I do not care whether he finds peace or not. As I have told you, I simply wish this poet to understand that I am God, and not Baal of Canaan. The attempt to confuse Me with a sun-myth, with the fertility of earth as symbolized by the figure of a bull, or a dove, vexes Me. Increase is man’s affair, not God’s. Besides, where will all this increase end? I regret the days of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. Already there are more people on earth than

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I have any use for, socially speaking. Now I could wish there were more beauty in the world. I should like some poet to speak of Me in words other than those of a patriot. Yet if I try to explain Myself, who will understand Me? Not even you, Moses, with all your wisdom. And so I, in turn, must forget My wisdom, in order to explain Myself. I must act as the not-too-wise God of an ignorant people. That this is possible is due to the fact that along with infinite wisdom, I include within Myself an equal amount of ignorance.”

He sighed deeply. “I shall send Jonah to Nineveh,” he concluded. “The subjects of King Shalmaneser the Third are honest, hard-working men and women. I enjoy, in some of My aspects, their vigorous and spectacular festivals. Nevertheless, repentance will not do them any harm, since for one thing they will not know exactly what it is

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they are asked to repent of, and for another, they will soon go back to their old ways again.

“Thus I shall convince Jonah of Myself where he least expects to find Me. He shall hear from Me at sea, and again within the walls of Nineveh. It will surprise him. And perhaps the rude beauty of that city will speak to his heart, dreamy with woe.”

“I do not doubt that it will surprise him,” said Moses, “but will he be convinced?”

God did not answer. Already He was on his way to earth. And Noah, looking after Him, shook his hoary head with regret.

“A flood would have been the better way,” he said.

XVI

GOD went down to the water. He stood on the shores of the sea and called; like the voice of the storm a name rolled forth from those august lips across the deep. And the deeps trembled. Presently a commotion took place in the waters; wet and black the huge form of Leviathan rose gleaming from the sea, and floated obediently before its God.

The Lord spoke, and the whale listened. After He had explained the situation, God said:

“I foresee that Jonah will not go to Nineveh as I command. He will attempt to flee from Me, and he will choose the sea as the best means of escape. It will not help him. I shall raise a storm upon the waters, and the ignorant sailors will cast him over-

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board as a sacrifice to the gods of the storm. That is where you can be of assistance to Me, My old friend. As he sinks through the water, I wish you to advance upon him, and swallow him."

"Ak," said the whale; "O my."

"Well," said God impatiently, "what is the matter?"

The great fish blew a misty spray of water into the air. "It is impossible," he declared; "in the first place, I should choke to death."

"You are an ignorant creature," said God; "you have neither faith, nor science. Let Me tell you a few things about yourself in the light of future exegesis. Know then, that you are a cetacean, or whalebone type of whale. Such animals obtain their food by swimming on or near the surface of the water, with their jaws open."

"That is true," said the whale, reverent and amazed.

"The screen of whalebone," continued the

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Lord, "opens inward, and admits solid objects to the animal's mouth. This screen does not allow the egress of any solid matter, only of water. As the gullet is very small, only the smallest objects can pass down it.

"Jonah will therefore be imprisoned in your mouth. You cannot swallow him; and he cannot get out, because of the screen of whalebone."

"Then he will suffocate," said the whale.

"Nonsense," said God. "Remember that you are an air-breathing, warm-blooded animal, and can only dive because of the reservoir of air in your mouth. When this air becomes unfit to breathe, you must rise to the surface for a fresh supply.

"While you have air to breathe, Jonah will have it also.

"So do not hesitate any longer, but do as you are told."

The whale heaved a deep sigh; his breath

groaned through the ocean, causing many smaller fish, terrified, to flee with trembling fins.

“How horrid for me,” he exclaimed.

God replied soothingly, “It will assure you a place in history.”

So saying, the Lord blessed Leviathan, who sank sadly back to the depths of the sea; and, turning from the shore, the Light of Israel rolled like thunder across the valleys toward Golan.

The night came to meet Him from the east, pouring down over the hills like smoke. In the cold night air God went to look for Jonah.

Poor Jonah, he had not found peace after all. The lonely desert, so calm and quiet in the past, had given no rest to his thoughts. His mind went back over and over again to those days at home; he felt the wonder of the love-night, his heart shrank again with sickness for what followed. And he asked him-

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self for the thousandth time how such things could be. Then he cried out against Judith for her cruelty; yet the next moment he forgave her.

And these thoughts, climbing and falling wearily up and down through his head, kept him awake until long after the desert was asleep. In the morning, when he awoke, it was with regret; he tried to sleep a little longer, to keep his eyes closed, to keep from thinking again . . . why wake at all? he wondered. There was nothing to wake to. Only the hot sun over the desert, only his heavy heart, which grew no lighter as the days went by.

Why wake at all?

God found him sitting wearily upon a rock, his head bowed between his hands. The Lord spoke, and the desert was silent.

“Jonah,” said God in a voice like a great wave breaking, slowly, and with the peace of the sea, “Jonah, you have wept enough.”

Jonah replied simply, "I have been waiting for You a long while, and I am very tired."

"I had not forgotten you," said God; "I have been thinking."

And He added, "Now I have something for you to do."

Jonah remained seated without looking up. He seemed no longer to care what God had for him to do.

"Arise, Jonah," said God, "and go to Nineveh. Cry out against that great city for its sins."

But Jonah looked more dejected than ever. "What have I to do with Nineveh?" he asked. "Am I prophet to the Assyrians? I am a Jew. Do not mock me, Lord."

"I do not mock you," said God gravely. "Go, then, and do My bidding."

And as Jonah did not reply, he added sadly, "Do you still doubt Me?"

Jonah rose slowly to his feet. His eyes

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blazed, and his hands were tightly clenched. "Oh," he cried bitterly, all the passion in his heart storming out at last in a torrent of despair, "You . . . what are You God of? Were You God of Israel when a Tyrian stole my love? Was I Your prophet then? Have You power over Tyre, that You let Your servant suffer such anguish? Or are You God of the desert, where the demons mock me night and day, where the very stones cry out against me, and the whole night is noisy with laughter? Nineveh . . . Nineveh . . . in whose name shall I cry out against Nineveh? Do the gods of Assur visit their wrath upon Jerusalem? What power have You in Nineveh? For my youth which I gave You, what have You given me? How have You returned my love, with what sorrow? What have You done to me, Lord? I stand in the darkness, weary, and with a heavy heart. What are You God of? Answer: what are You God of?"

And God answered gently, "I am your God, Jonah, and where you go, there you will find Me."

Jonah sank down upon the rock again. His passion had exhausted him; but he was not convinced. "Well," he said in a whisper, "You are not God in Nineveh, and I will not go."

Then the wrath of the Lord, slow to start, flamed for a moment over the desert, and Jonah cowered to earth while the heavens groaned and the ground shook with fright. And in his hole by the pool in the Land of Tob, the little fox said to himself, "Jonah is talking to God."

But God's anger passed, leaving Him sad and holy.

"Peace unto you, Jonah," He said in tones of divine sweetness; "take up your task, and doubt Me no more."

And He returned to heaven in a cloud.

JONAH

Overcome with weariness, empty of passion,
Jonah fell asleep upon the ground.

No jackals laughed that night. Silence
brooded over the desert. The stars kept
watch without a sound, and Jonah slept with
a quiet heart.

XVII

BUT in the morning his doubts returned more strongly than ever. "They will mock me in Nineveh," he told himself. "I shall be made a laughing-stock. What power has the Light of Israel in the land of Marduk, of Dagon, of Istar, of the warrior Ashur? I should count myself lucky if I escaped being stoned to death.

"For how can God destroy Nineveh? I might as well preach to the fish in the sea."

But now he had something to do, at least. He determined to flee from God. "I shall go to Tarshish," he thought, "and begin life over again. There is nothing for me here any longer. The desert will be glad to be rid of me."

And without bothering even to return to

his hut, he started south, toward Joppa, where he expected to find a ship bound west for Tarshish.

He traveled swiftly, on other roads from those he had come. Late on the afternoon of the second day he crossed the Brook Kanath, and saw in the distance the white domed roofs of Joppa shining above the sea.

As he came down from the low hills, the sight of ocean rounded like a bowl under the wide arch of the sky, the distant and titanic clouds piled above the unseen shores of Africa, filled his heart for a moment with beauty. But then he thought:

“This is like Tyre. It is by the shore of this same sea that Judith has gone to live.”

And he cursed the beauty that hurt him.

It was late when he came to the shore, and night was already moving upon the deep. In profound silence he leaned above the harbor wall and regarded the shadowless water which with the sound of immemorial tides

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passed under him in the darkness. It was the season when the mists from the ocean blow landward in the evening. In the gray night fog the masts of the vessels at anchor rocked toward one another on the long, low waves; and the mist, salty with sea air, mingled along the quays with the odors of the city.

It was the dark of the moon in the month of Nisan. The moon was gone, and his youth with it. Other moons would rise, fall through the branches of a tree, and cheat a bird to sing. But where would Jonah be? And Judith, in her great house over the terraces of Tyre; she would grow old, soon she would be like Deborah, looking backward over her life . . . What happened to youth, to beauty? Where did they go? They hardly lasted at all.

Night hung black and silent over the sea. The wings of angels leaned upon the wind which moved dark and vast between

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the earth and sky. The stars paled, and the sun rose like a ball of fire in the east. Then the ocean mist, cold as frost, melted away. The tide turned, and the waves, breaking far out, spoke with their murmur like the sound of wind to the sleeping city on the shore.

In the morning Jonah found a ship bound for Tarshish. The cargo was already loaded; and when he had made his bargain, he went aboard. Bearded and singing, the seamen hoisted the sails, yellow as a slice of moon; with a sly, tranquil motion the ship moved out of the harbor, over the blue sea, sparkling in the sun, past sails stained blue as the sky, or brown as the sands. The white roofs of Joppa faded behind them in the east, lost in the gradual fog; the sea-gulls cried above them; and Jonah sat silent, dreaming, gazing at the sea.

He was tired, and listless. "Now," he said to himself, "God has lost me."

And he thought of Deborah with sadness and peace. He remembered what she had said to him, as she had held him, weeping bitterly, in her arms, on her breast.

"Jonah," she had said, "when you are dead, or perhaps very old and ready to die, people will say of you, 'There, he was a great prophet.' And they will feel honored because they knew you, because their names will be spoken of with yours. But now . . ." she sighed; she wanted to say, "now you are only a nuisance."

What she finally said was, "Well, people are like that."

But Jonah knew what she wanted to say. And as he sat quietly on the deck of the ship under the yellow, curved sail, he thought,

"I shall not bother anybody now."

The warmth of the sun, reflected from the sea, entered his mind and lulled his limbs. Sea-quiet took hold of him; the peace of ocean bathed his spirit. He grew drowsier

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and drowsier; he began to doze. And as he fell asleep, his last thought was that he had got away from God.

All day the sails sang in the wind, under the sun. Jonah slept; his dreams swept out like homing birds over the calm waters; and in his sleep he wept.

But in the afternoon the wind died away; an ominous haze enveloped the sky; and the sea grew oily. The sails were hastily drawn in; and the oars were made ready. Huddled together on the deck, the seamen spoke in low, anxious voices. All eyes were turned toward the east, which grew darker and darker. All was still; the air did not stir. Moved by fear, the men trembled; and as though herself frightened, the ship started to creak in all her timbers. All at once the sky uttered a moan; high above them the air began to sing; and the sea rolled in slow, unwilling swells. And then it seemed as if the sky fell down upon the sea, for the water

rose like the hills, and the dark came down upon it. Unable to move, the ship trembled from bow to stern, lifted dizzily upon the waves, tilted in the wind, and dropped like a stone into the trough. The gulls were flattened to the sea, and the air was filled with the shout of the gale, and the crash of water falling upon itself. It was God's storm, but Satan also was enjoying it.

Pale with fear, the sailors rushed to lighten the ship by throwing the cargo overboard. Then, as the tiny vessel dashed about in the water like a cork, they fell upon their knees and prayed to their gods, to Ramman, the thunderer, to Dagon, to Enlil, the old god of storms.

Seeing that Jonah still slept, sheltered by the deck which curved above him, the captain ran to awaken him. "Here," he said, "this is a storm. Well, see for yourself. You should be more anxious, my friend.

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Have you a god? Then pray to him, for we need all the help we can get.”

Dazed by the tumult, still half asleep, Jonah gazed in confusion at the heaving waters. The wind lashed him to the deck; he stared in dismay at the mighty waves rising above him on every side like mountains. “I will not pray,” he said. And the captain shrank back at the sight of his face.

But the seamen, clinging to the deck, looked anxiously at Jonah, and at the great seas which broke over them without ceasing. “This is no common storm,” they told each other; “some great god is angry.”

They were good and simple men. Had one of them sinned, to draw down upon them all such wrath? No, it was Jonah, the stranger whose face was like a demon’s, dark as the storm itself. They looked at him with terror.

And Jonah looked back at them as fright-

ened as they were. His mind reeled; had he not got away from God after all? Had God come after him—out there on the sea? Was there no way to flee from God?

Why had he tried to run away? What a fool . . . God would never forgive him for it.

And then, in the crash of wind and water, a feeling of disdain came over Jonah, a bitter strength, a final pride. Well, here was the storm . . . here was God still. God had taken everything away from him. What was his life worth to him now? Oh, be done with it, once and for all. "Look . . . if You want it, God . . . it is of no value to me any more . . ."

"It is my fault," he said to the sailors proudly. "I alone am to blame. I am a Jew who has denied his God. It is my life that is wanted. Throw me overboard."

But the sailors were frightened, and they would not touch him. "No," they said, "we

will row back to Joppa again. Then your god can do as he likes. If we throw you overboard, you will drown. Then we shall have blood upon our hands.”

They tried with all their strength to row against the storm. But the black sea, breaking, splintered their oars, and the wind pressed them backwards.

Then they said humbly, in fear, “This sea belongs to Iaveh, the god of the Jews. We cannot prevail against him any longer.”

And seizing Jonah, they cast him overboard, with a prayer. “Do not lay innocent blood upon us,” they said, “O god of the Jews. This is your doing, not ours.”

So saying they waited, trembling.

At once the sea grew calm, the wind died away, and the sun sank tranquilly down in the clear west. The peace of evening brooded again upon the water. And the ship, with all her sails set for Joppa, fled to the east.

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Jonah sank through the waters without complaint. It was the end, and he had no desire to live. But as his breath failed, so his mind brought back to him the blue and shining sky, the sweet odors of the desert, the happy dreams of his youth, of glory, of peace. He began to struggle; his body fought against the sea, his mind shouted against death. "No," he cried to himself, "no, I must live; I must live."

With a groan Leviathan hurled himself through the waves and took the prophet into his mouth.

XVIII

IN the darkness the whale spoke to Jonah. "What a lot of trouble you have made for yourself," he said. And he told Jonah how God had made arrangements.

Jonah was not unhappy. In the whale's mouth he was uncomfortable, but he had a great deal to think about. His mind was filled with wonder.

So it turned out that God was at home everywhere; that He commanded the fish of the sea, as well as the hosts of the air, and the creatures of the land. That was an extraordinary thing.

What an upset to theology.

Jonah asked the whale many questions. And the whale, who had often thought about such things as he rested among the weeds at

the bottom of the sea, answered him as best he could.

“Do you deny,” said Jonah, “that God created man in His own image?”

“No,” replied the whale, “but on the other hand, do you suppose God has only one image? And then it depends, besides, on who is looking; because people do not see things all alike. Well, do you suppose a whale does not also look like God?”

“A whale does not look like God at all,” replied Jonah firmly.

“Still,” said the whale thoughtfully, “the most beautiful sight in the world, in my opinion, is a female whale. And you must admit I have seen as much of God as you have. So you see what difficulties you make for yourself.”

But Jonah would not believe that God looked like a whale. And they discussed other aspects of theology.

The whale swam through the waters green

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with daylight, or black with night, rising to the surface now and then to breathe. Out of respect for the sanctity of the prophet, he did not attempt to eat any of the small fish which fled in terror from his path. "We will fast together," he said kindly to Jonah.

In his warm, black prison, Jonah slept, and woke, and thought about God. His spirit lifted; he felt peaceful, resigned, and almost happy. Gone was the bitter sense of defeat, the shame of betrayal. What if his heart ached still? he had God again. And what a God, now that he saw Him: the thunder of sea-surges, the holy calm of the desert, all peace, all beauty, were His . . . one need not seek it, it was there, it was everywhere. Jerusalem was His—Tarshish and Tyre . . .

"I am your God, Jonah, and where you go, there you will find Me."

Tyre was His, too. The Master strode through the streets of the city with thunder

on His brow, with love and sorrow in His hands. And His prophet walked beside Him, wrapped in glory, like a king.

When they came to Judith's house it was Jonah who blessed it with gently outstretched arms.

"My sister," he said; "my poor, faithless love."

The whale asked Jonah what he was doing. "I was dreaming," said Jonah.

"I think you had better pray," said the whale. So Jonah prayed.

"Lord, I have sinned," he said humbly. "I was unhappy; and I ran away. And for that reason You cast me into the sea; the waves passed over me.

"The waves passed over my soul, Lord.

"I went down to the bottom of the hills; the bars of the earth were about me. But I did not perish. You heard my cry, and You remembered me. I thank You, Lord.

"Look, I am not vain any longer; I do

not wish anything for myself. Let me do Your bidding again, with a quiet heart."

And he added with a cry, "Give me peace, Lord."

The whale swam on, past schools of appetizing fish, down through the dim flower-branches of the sea's deep bed, up through sunny foam. Hungry, weary, but hopeful, the great fish waited patiently for God to speak.

On the third day, God spoke. And the whale, lashing the waters with his tail, sped like an eager minnow to the shore, and vomited Jonah forth upon the sand.

XIX

JONAH was let out of the whale in the North, near Arvad, and not far from Kadesh as a crow might fly, which is to say, over the coastal hills and then in a straight line across the jungles and the desert. This was the route he took as being the shortest way to Nineveh. He was in a hurry; he was impatient to begin his mission. He was filled with enthusiasm.

How different from his flight to sea, this vigorous return across the land dry with the sun of midsummer. Now he marched with a firm and hurried step, his face darkly radiant with divine purpose, with pious anger. Yes, he would speak; Nineveh would hear him. Let them stone him if they liked, God would amply repay them for it. What glory.

And this was all his, not hers, not for her sake; let her be proud of him if she liked; what did it matter any more? She would hear enough of it in Tyre; Jonah here, and Jonah there . . .

Yes, they would speak of it in Tyre.

As he passed the wayside altars of the baalim with their pillars surmounted by horns of sacrifices, he smiled at them in derision.

“You,” he said scornfully, “you . . . what are you gods of, anyway?”

At Kadesh he saw statues of the river deities, Chrysonhoa and Pegai. He spat in the dust before them; fortunately, no one was looking. In the sun of late afternoon their shadows pointed like great spears toward Nineveh.

“Israel will hear my name again,” he thought proudly.

The evergreen oaks of the hills gave way to the tamarisks of the Syrian jungles, and

the palms and scrub of the desert. He slept the first night in the wilderness between Kadesh and Rehoboth. The jackals were silent, awed by the presence of lions among the rocks. Padding to and fro, the great beasts watched Jonah from afar, with eyes like flames. And Jonah dreamed of Deborah; when he awoke, he remembered her gentle smile.

In the fresh light of early morning a mother goat divided her milk between the prophet and her ewe. "These are stirring times, Jonah," she said; "angels are abroad in great numbers." Recognizing a minor deity, Jonah blessed her and resumed his journey.

At the end of the second day he began to pass the boundary stones of Assyria, set up to warn trespassers upon private property. Thinking them altars, Jonah cursed each one as he went by. The next day he passed kilns in which colored bricks were being

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baked. As far as he could see, the blue, green, and yellow bricks stood in rows on the red earth.

That night he slept outside the gates of Nineveh. The city rose above him in the dark; he heard the sentries challenge on the walls.

In the morning he entered the city with some farmers on their way to the markets. The sun was rising, gleaming upon the great winged bulls before the temples, the green and yellow lions upon the walls. Under the clear upland sky the city shone with color like a fair. The markets opened; the streets filled with men and women in their colored shawls and clashing ornaments. And Jonah, looking and looking, was astonished. "Why," he thought, "this is strange; there is something bright and bold about all this. This is fine, after all." And he felt a gayety of heart take hold of him. How vigorous these mountain people looked with

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their insolent faces and their swaggering air. There was nothing old or sad in Nineveh. He forgot why he had come; he was excited, and happy. It was not at all what he had expected; and he forgot himself.

But not for long. As the hours passed, he grew weary; and as the brightness wore off, and he began to think of his own life again, he began to hate Nineveh, to hate the bold colors all around him, the youth that carried itself so proudly and carelessly in the streets. "Yes," he thought, "that is all very well for you; but you know nothing about life." And, lifting his arms, he cried aloud with gloomy satisfaction, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The success of this remark astonished him. Without waiting to find out any more about it, the Assyrians hurried home and put ashes on their heads. Nineveh repented like a

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child of its sins; in an orgy of humility the city gave up its business, and dressed itself in sackcloth. The king, even, left his throne, and sat down in some ashes.

Jonah was vexed. This, also, was not what he had expected. He had looked for a wind of fury, for stones, and curses, and a final effect of glory. And when he learned that because of its repentance Nineveh was to be spared, his courage gave way in a flood of disappointment.

“I knew it,” he said bitterly to God; “I knew You’d never do it.”

And with an angry countenance he retired to an open field on the east side of the city, to see what would happen. His heart was very sore.

“Where is my glory now?” he thought.

Then God, who was anxiously watching, spoke to Jonah from the sky. “Why are you angry?” said the Holy One. “Have I done you a wrong?”

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Jonah replied, sighing, "Who will ever believe me now, Lord?"

And for the rest of the day he maintained a silence, full of reproach.

Then because the sun was very hot, and because where Jonah was sitting there was no shade of any sort, God made a vine grow up, overnight, to shelter Jonah.

"There," said God, "there is a vine for you. Rest awhile and see."

That day Jonah sat in comfort beneath his shelter. The wind was in the west, full of agreeable odors; at noon a farmer brought him meal, salt, and oil; he ate, was refreshed, and dozed beneath his vine. The sun went down over the desert; and the evening star grew brighter in the sky, which shone with a peaceful light. The dews descended; and Jonah, wrapped in his cloak, dreamed of home.

But in the morning worms had eaten the leaves of the vine; gorged and comfortable,

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they regarded Jonah from the ground with pious looks. As the day progressed, the sun beat down upon him without pity, a strong wind blew up from the east, out of the desert, and the prophet grew faint with misery. Too hot even to sweat, he nevertheless refused to move.

“No,” he said, “I shall sit here.”

An obstinate rage kept him out in the sun, although he half expected to die of it. “Well,” he said to himself, “what if I do?”

It seemed to him that he had nothing more to live for.

Then God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry, My son?”

Jonah did not wish to reply. But he was sure of one thing: that he had every right to be angry. “Why did You wither my vine, Lord?” he asked bitterly. “Was that also necessary?”

God, looking down on His prophet, smiled sadly. “What is a vine?” He said gently.

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“Was it your vine, Jonah? You neither planted it nor cared for it. It came up in a night, and it perished in a night. And now you think I should have spared the vine for your sake. Yes . . . but what of Nineveh, that great city, where there are so many people who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand? Shall I not spare them, too, for My sake, Jonah?”

Jonah rose wearily to his feet. “Well,” he said, “I may as well go home again.”

And with bowed head he passed through the city, and out of the western gate. In the streets the citizens made way for him with pious murmurs and anxious looks, but Jonah did not notice them. All his courage was gone, his pride, his hope of glory, all gone down in the dust of God’s mercy to others, to all but him. To him alone God had been merciless and exacting. One by one the warm hopes of the youth, the ardors of the man, had been denied him; peace, love,

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pride, everything had been taken from him. What was there left? Only the desert, stony as life itself . . . only the empty heart, the deliberate mind, the bare and patient spirit. Well, Jonah . . . what a fool to think of anything else. Glory . . . yes, but the glory is God's, not yours.

But he had not learned even that. He was not a good prophet. The flowers of his hope, the bitter blossoms of his grief, sprang up everywhere, where there should have been only waste brown earth. No, he was not a prophet; he was a man, like anybody else, whose love had been false, whose God had been unkind . . .

And as he trudged dejectedly along, his heart, bare now of pride, filled with loneliness and longing. He thought of Judith, of the happiness that would never be his; and he wept.

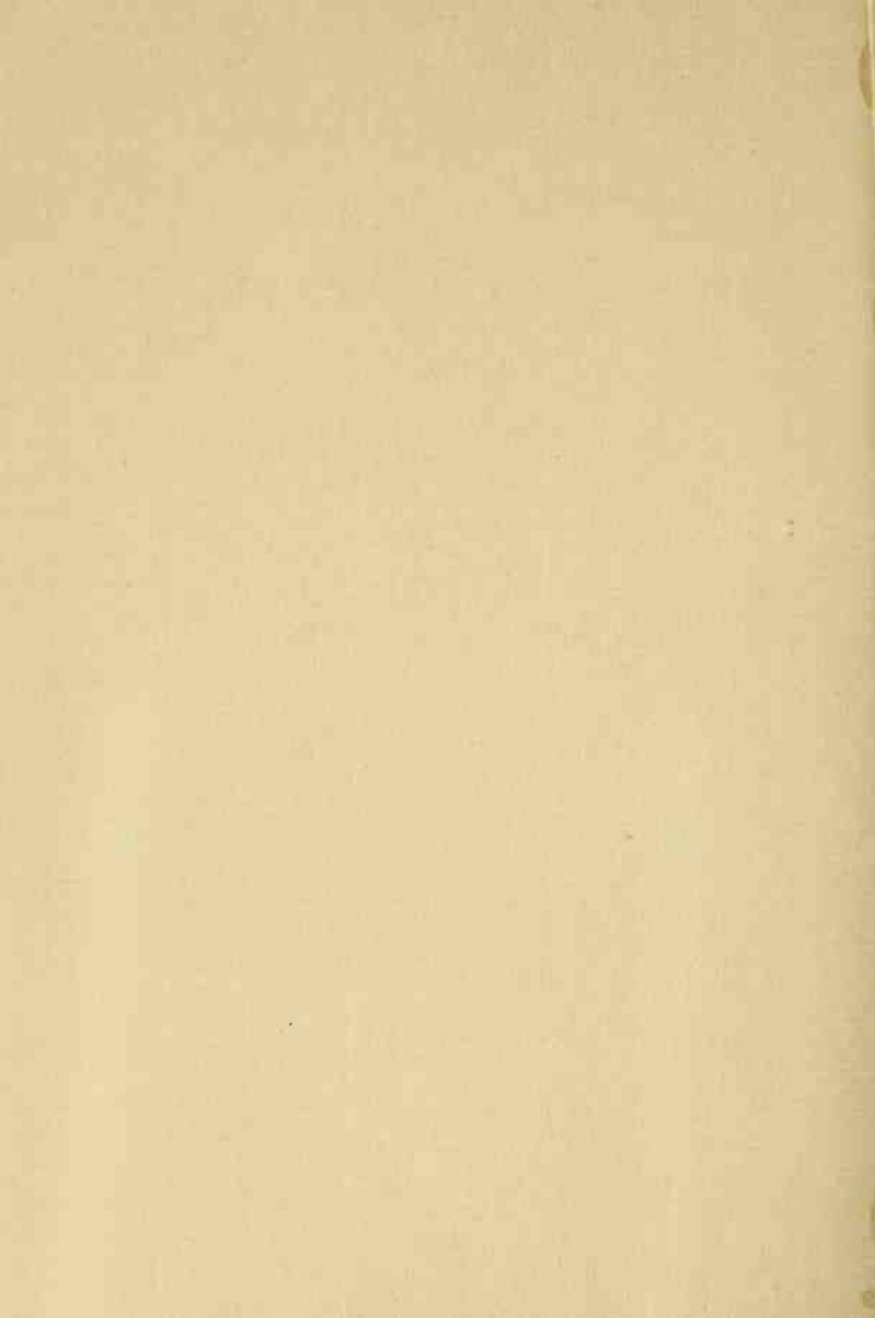
High among the clouds, God turned sadly to Moses. "You Jews," He said wearily,

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“you do not understand beauty. With you it is either glory or despair.”

And with a sigh He looked westward to the blue Ægean. Warm and gold the sunlight lay over Greece.

THE END



WITHDRAWN

