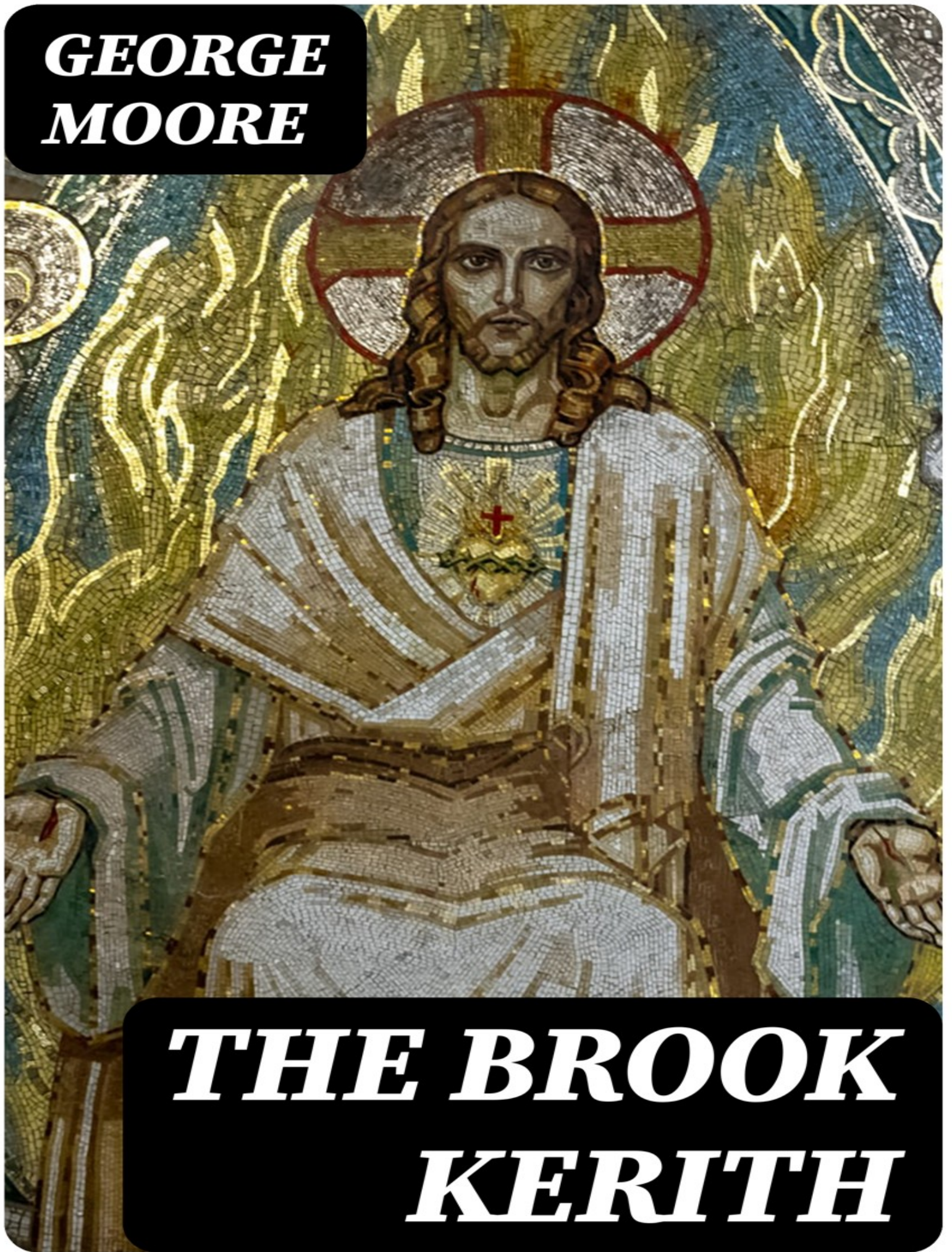


***GEORGE
MOORE***



***THE BROOK
KERITH***

George Moore

The Brook Kerith

A Syrian story

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[A SYRIAN STORY](#)

[BY GEORGE MOORE](#)

[THE BROOK KERITH](#)

[CHAP. I.](#)

[CHAP. II.](#)

[CHAP. III.](#)

[CHAP. IV.](#)

[CHAP. V.](#)

[CHAP. VI.](#)

[CHAP. VII.](#)

[CHAP. VIII.](#)

[CHAP. IX.](#)

[CHAP. X.](#)

[CHAP. XI.](#)

[CHAP. XII.](#)

[CHAP. XIII.](#)

[CHAP. XIV.](#)

[CHAP. XV.](#)

[CHAP. XVI.](#)

[CHAP. XVII.](#)

[CHAP. XVIII.](#)

[CHAP. XIX.](#)

[CHAP. XX.](#)

[CHAP. XXI.](#)

[CHAP. XXII.](#)

[CHAP. XXIII.](#)

[CHAP. XXIV.](#)

[CHAP. XXV.](#)

[CHAP. XXVI.](#)

[CHAP. XXVII.](#)

[CHAP. XXVIII.](#)

[CHAP. XXIX.](#)

[CHAP. XXX.](#)

[CHAP. XXXI.](#)

[CHAP. XXXII.](#)

[CHAP. XXXIII.](#)

[CHAP. XXXIV.](#)

[CHAP. XXXV.](#)

[CHAP. XXXVI.](#)

[CHAP. XXXVII.](#)

[CHAP. XXXVIII.](#)

[CHAP. XXXIX.](#)

[CHAP. XL.](#)

[CHAP. XLI.](#)

A SYRIAN STORY

[Table of Contents](#)

BY GEORGE MOORE

[Table of Contents](#)

1916

A DEDICATION

[Table of Contents](#)

My dear Mary Hunter. It appears that you wished to give me a book for Christmas, but were in doubt what book to give me as I seemed to have little taste for reading, so in your embarrassment you gave me a Bible. It lies on my table now with the date 1898 on the fly-leaf—my constant companion and chief literary interest for the last eighteen years. Itself a literature, it has led me into many various literatures and into the society of scholars.

I owe so much to your Bible that I cannot let pass the publication of "The Brook Kerith" without thanking you for it again. Yours always, George Moore.

THE BROOK KERITH

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAP. I.

Table of Contents

It was at the end of a summer evening, long after his usual bedtime, that Joseph, sitting on his grandmother's knee, heard her tell that Kish having lost his asses sent Saul, his son, to seek them in the land of the Benjamites and the land of Shalisha, whither they might have strayed. But they were not in these lands, Son, she continued, nor in Zulp, whither Saul went afterwards, and being then tired out with looking for them he said to the servant: we shall do well to forget the asses, lest my father should ask what has become of us. But the servant, being of a mind that Kish would not care to see them without the asses, said to young Saul: let us go up into yon city, for a great seer lives there and he will be able to put us in the right way to come upon the asses. But we have little in our wallet to recompense him, Saul answered, only half a loaf and a little wine at the end of the bottle. We have more than that, the servant replied, and opening his hand he showed a quarter of a shekel of silver to Saul, who said: he will take that in payment. Whereupon they walked into Arimathea, casting their eyes about for somebody to direct them to the seer's house. And seeing some maidens at the well, come to draw water, they asked them if the seer had been in the city that day, and were answered that he had been seen and would offer sacrifice that morning, as had been announced. He must be on his way now to the high rock, one of the maidens cried after them, and they pressed through the people till none was in front of them but an old man walking

alone, likewise in the direction of the rock; and overtaking him they asked if he could point out the seer's house to them, to which he answered sharply: I am the seer, and fell at once to gazing on Saul as if he saw in him the one that had been revealed to him. For you see, Son, seers have foresight, and the seer had been warned overnight that the Lord would send a young man to him, so the moment he saw Saul he knew him to be the one the Lord had promised, and he said: thou art he whom the Lord has promised to send me for anointment, but more than that I cannot tell thee, being on my way to offer sacrifice, but afterwards we will eat together, and all that has been revealed to me I will tell. You understand me, Son, the old woman crooned, the Lord had been with Samuel beforetimes and had promised to send the King of Israel to him for anointment, and the moment he laid eyes on Saul he knew him to be the king; and that was why he asked him to eat with him after sacrifice. Yes, Granny, I understand: but did the Lord set the asses astray that Saul might follow them and come to Samuel to be made a King? I daresay there was something like that at the bottom of it, the old woman answered, and continued her story till her knees ached under the boy's weight.

The child's asleep, she said, and on the instant he awoke crying: no, Granny, I wasn't asleep. I heard all you said and would like to be a prophet. A prophet, Joseph, and to anoint a king? But there are no more prophets or kings in Israel. And now, Joseph, my little prophet, 'tis bedtime and past it. Come. I didn't say I wanted to anoint kings, he answered,

and refused to go to bed, though manifestly he could hardly keep awake. I'll wait up for Father.

Now what can the child want his father for at this hour? she muttered as she went about the room, not guessing that he was angry and resentful, that her words had wounded him deeply and that he was asking himself, in his corner, if she thought him too stupid to be a prophet.

I'll tell thee no more stories, she said to him, but he answered that he did not want to hear her stories, and betwixt feelings of anger and shame his head drooped, and he slept in his chair till the door opened and his father's footsteps crossed the threshold.

Now, he said to himself, Granny will tell Father that I said I'd like to be a prophet. And feigning sleep he listened, determined to hear the worst that could be said of him. But they did not speak about him but of the barrels of salt fish that were to go to Beth-Shemish on the morrow; which was their usual talk. So he slipped from his chair and bade his father good-night. A resentful good-night it was; and his good-night to his grandmother was still more resentful. But she found an excuse for his rudeness, saying that his head was full of sleep—a remark that annoyed him considerably and sent him upstairs wishing that women would not talk about things they do not understand. I'll ask Father in the morning why Granny laughed at me for saying I'd like to be a prophet. But as morning seemed still a long way ahead he tried to find a reason, but could find no better one than that prophets were usually old men. But I shall be old in time to come and have a beard. Father has a beard and they can't

tell that I won't have a beard, and a white one too, so why should they—

His senses were numbing, and he must have fallen asleep soon after, for when he awoke it seemed to him that he had been asleep a long time, several hours at least, so many things had happened or seemed to have happened; but as he recovered his mind all the dream happenings melted away, and he could remember only his mother. She had been dead four years, but in his dream she looked as she had always looked, and had scolded Granny for laughing at him. He tried to remember what else she had said but her words faded out of his mind and he fell asleep again. In this second sleep an old man rose up by his bedside and told him that he was the prophet Samuel, who though he had been dead a thousand years had heard him say he would like to be a prophet. But shall I be a prophet? Joseph asked, and as Samuel did not answer he cried out as loudly as he could: shall I? shall I?

What ails thee, Son? he heard his grandmother calling to him, and he answered: an old man, an old man. Ye are dreaming, she mumbled between sleeping and waking. Go to sleep like a good boy, and don't dream any more. I will, Granny, and don't be getting up; the bed-clothes don't want settling. I am well tucked in, he pleaded; and fell asleep praying that Granny had not heard him ask Samuel if he would be a prophet.

A memory of his dream of Samuel came upon him while she dressed him, and he hoped she had forgotten all about it; but his father mentioned at breakfast that he had been awakened by cries. It was Joseph crying out in his dream,

Dan, disturbed thee last night: such cries, "Shall I? Shall I?" And when I asked "What ails thee?" the only answer I got was "An old man."

Dan, Joseph's father, wondered why Joseph should seem so disheartened and why he should murmur so perfunctorily that he could not remember his dream. But if he had forgotten it, why trouble him further? If we are to forget anything it were well that we should choose our dreams; at which piece of incredulity his mother shook her head, being firm in the belief that there was much sense in dreams and that they could be interpreted to the advantage of everybody.

Dan said: if that be so, let him tell thee his dream. But Joseph hung his head and pushed his plate away; and seeing him so morose they left him to his sulks and fell to talking of dreams that had come true. Joseph had never heard them speak of anything so interesting before, and though he suspected that they were making fun of him he could not do else than listen, till becoming convinced suddenly that they were talking in good earnest without intention of fooling him he began to regret that he had said he had forgotten his dream, and rapped out: he was the prophet Samuel. Now what are you saying, Joseph? his father asked. Joseph would not say any more, but it pleased him to observe that neither his father nor his granny laughed at his admission, and seeing how interested they were in his dream he said: if you want to know all, Samuel said he had heard me say that I'd like to be a prophet. That was why he came back from the dead. But, Father, is it true that we are his descendants? He said that I was.

A most extraordinary dream, his father answered, for it has always been held in the family that we are descended from him. Do you really mean, Joseph, that the old man you saw in your dream told you he was Samuel and that you were his descendant? How should I have known if he hadn't told me? Joseph looked from one to the other and wondered why they had kept the secret of his ancestor from him. You laughed at me yesterday, Granny, when I said I'd like to be a prophet. Now what do you say? Answer me that. And he continued to look from one to the other for an answer. But neither had the wit to find an answer, so amazed were they at the news that the prophet Samuel had visited Joseph in a dream; and satisfied at the impression he had made and a little frightened by their silence Joseph stole out of the room, leaving his parents to place whatever interpretation they pleased on his dream. Nor did he care whether they believed he had spoken the truth. He was more concerned with himself than with them, and conscious that something of great importance had happened to him he ascended the stairs, pausing at every step uncertain if he should return to ask for the whole of the story of Saul's anointment. It seemed to him to lack courtesy to return to the room in which he had seen the prophet, till he knew these things. But he could not return to ask questions: later he would learn what had happened to Samuel and Saul, and he entered the room, henceforth to him a sacred room, and stood looking through it, having all the circumstances of his dream well in mind: he was lying on his left side when Samuel had risen up before him, and it was there, upon that spot, in that space he had seen Samuel. His ancestor had

seemed to fade away from the waist downwards, but his face was extraordinarily clear in the darkness, and Joseph tried to recall it. But he could only remember it as a face that a spirit might wear, for it was not made up of flesh but of some glowing matter or stuff, such as glow-worms are made of; nor could he call it ugly or beautiful, for it was not of this world. He had drawn the bed-clothes over his head, but—impelled he knew not why, for he was nearly dead with fright—he had poked his head out to see if the face was still there. The lips did not move, but he had heard a voice. The tones were not like any heard before, but he had listened to them all the same, and if he had not lost his wits again in an excess of fear he would have put questions to Samuel: he would have put questions if his tongue had not been tied back somewhere in the roof of his mouth. But the next time he would not be frightened and pull the bed-clothes over his head.

And convinced of his own courage he lay night after night thinking of all the great things he would ask the old man and of the benefit he would derive from his teaching. But Samuel did not appear again, perhaps because the nights were so dark. Joseph was told the moon would become full again, but sleep closed his eyes when he should have been waking, and in the morning he was full of fear that perhaps Samuel had come and gone away disappointed at not finding him awake. But that could not be, for if the prophet had come he would have awakened him as he had done before. His ancestor had not come again: a reasonable thing to suppose, for when the dead return to the earth they do so with much pain and difficulty; and if the living, whom they

come to instruct, cannot keep their eyes open, the poor dead wander back and do not try to come between their descendants and their fate again.

But I will keep awake, he said, and resorted to all sorts of devices, keeping up a repetition of a little phrase: he will come to-night when the moon is full; and lying with one leg hanging out of bed; and these proving unavailing he strewed his bed with crumbs. But no ancestor appeared, and little by little he relinquished hope of ever being able to summon Samuel to his bedside, and accepted as an explanation of his persistent absence that Samuel had performed his duty by coming once to visit him and would not come again unless some new necessity should arise. It was then that the conviction began to mount into his brain that he must learn all that his grandmother could tell him about Saul and David, and learning from her that they had been a great trouble to Samuel he resolved never to allow a thought into his mind that the prophet would deem unworthy. To become worthy of his ancestor was now his aim, and when he heard that Samuel was the author of two sacred books it seemed to him that his education had been neglected: for he had not yet been taught to read. Another step in his advancement was the discovery that the language his father, his granny and himself spoke was not the language spoken by Samuel, and every day he pressed his grandmother to tell him why the Jews had lost their language in Babylon, till he exhausted the old woman's knowledge and she said: well now, Son, if you want to hear any more about Babylon you must ask your father, for I

have told you all I know. And Joseph waited eagerly for his father to come home, and plagued him to tell him a story.

But after a long day spent in the counting-house his father was often too tired to take him on his knee and instruct him, for Joseph's curiosity was unceasing and very often wearisome. Now, Joseph, his father said, you will learn more about these things when you are older. And why not now? he asked, and his grandmother answered that it was change of air that he wanted and not books; and they began to speak of the fierce summer that had taken the health out of all of them, and of how necessary it was for a child of that age to be sent up to the hills.

Dan looked into his son's face, and Rachel seemed to be right. A thin, wan little face, that the air of the hills will brighten, he said; and he began at once to make arrangements for Joseph's departure for a hill village, saying that the pastoral life of the hills would take his mind off Samuel, Hebrew and Babylon. Rachel was doubtful if the shepherds would absorb Joseph's mind as completely as his father thought. She hoped, however, that they would. As soon as he hears the sound of the pipe, his father answered. A prophecy this was, for while Joseph was resting after the fatigue of the journey, he was awakened suddenly by a sound he had never heard before, and one that interested him strangely. His nurse told him that the sound he was hearing was a shepherd's pipe. The shepherd plays and the flock follows, she said. And when may I see the flock coming home with the shepherd? he asked. To-morrow evening, she answered, and the time seemed to him to loiter, so eager

was he to see the flocks returning and to watch the she-goat milked.

And in the spring as his strength came back he followed the shepherds and heard from them many stories of wolves and dogs, and from a shepherd lad, whom he had chosen as a companion, he acquired knowledge of the plumage and the cries and the habits of birds, and whither he was to seek their nests: it had become his ambition to possess all the wild birds' eggs, one that was easily satisfied till he came to the egg of the cuckoo, which he sought in vain, hearing of it often, now here, now there, till at last he and the shepherd lad ventured into a dangerous country in search of it and remained there till news of their absence reached Magdala and Dan set out in great alarm with an armed escort to recover his son. He was very angry when he came upon him, but the trouble he had been put to and the ransom he had had to pay were very soon forgotten, so great was his pleasure at the strong healthy boy he brought back with him, and whose first question to Rachel was: are there cuckoos in Magdala?—Father doesn't know. His grandmother could not tell him, but she was willing to make inquiries, but before any news of the egg had been gotten the hope to possess it seemed to have drifted out of Joseph's mind and to seem even a little foolish when he looked into his box, for many of his egg shells had been broken on the journey. See, Granny, he said, but on second thoughts he refused to show his chipped possessions. But thou wast once as eager to learn Hebrew, his grandmother said, and the chance words, spoken as she left the room, awakened his suspended interests. As soon as she returned she was beset by

questions, and the same evening his father had to promise that the best scribe in Galilee should be engaged to teach him: a discussion began between Dan and Rachel as to the most notable and trustworthy, and it was followed by Joseph so eagerly that they could not help laughing; the questions he put to them regarding the different accomplishments of the scribes were very minute, and the phrase—But this one is a Greek scholar, stirred his curiosity. Why should he be denied me because he knows Greek? he asked, and his father could only answer that no one can learn two languages at the same time. But if he knows two languages, Joseph insisted. I cannot tell thee more, his father answered, than that the scribe I've chosen is a great Hebrew scholar.

He was no doubt a great scholar, but he was not the man that Joseph wished for: thin and tall and of gentle appearance and demeanour, he did not stir up a flame for work in Joseph, who, as soon as the novelty of learning Hebrew had worn off, began to hide himself in the garden. His father caught him one day sitting in a convenient bough, looking down upon his preceptor fairly asleep on a bench; and after this adventure he began to make a mocking stock of his preceptor, inventing all kinds of cruelties, and his truancy became so constant that his father was forced to choose another. This time a younger man was chosen, but he succeeded with Joseph not very much better than the first. After the second there came a third, and when Joseph began to complain of his ignorance his father said:

Well, Joseph, you said you wanted to learn Hebrew, and you have shown no application, and three of the most learned scribes in Galilee have been called in to teach you.

Joseph felt the reproof bitterly, but he did not know how to answer his father and he was grateful to his grandmother for her answer. Joseph isn't an idle boy, Dan, but his nature is such that he cannot learn from a man he doesn't like. Why don't ye give him Azariah as an instructor? Has he been speaking to thee about Azariah? Dan asked. Maybe, she said, and Dan's face clouded.

CHAP. II.

[Table of Contents](#)

We are to understand, Son, Dan said, on hearing that the fourth preceptor whom he had engaged to teach his son Hebrew had failed to give satisfaction, that you cannot learn from anybody but Azariah. Now, will you tell us what there is in Azariah more than in Shimshai, Benaiah or Zebad? and he waited for his son to speak, but as Joseph did not answer he asked: is it because he looks more like a prophet than any of the others? And Joseph, who still dreaded any allusion to prophets, turned into his corner mortified. But Rachel came forward directly and taking the child by the shoulders led him back to his father, asking Dan with a trace of anger in her voice why he should think it strange that the child should prefer to learn from Azariah rather than from a withered patriarch who never could keep his eyes open but always sat dozing in his chair like one in a dream.

It wasn't, Granny, because he went to sleep often; I could have kept him awake by kicking him under the table. Joseph stopped suddenly and looked from one to the other. Why

then? his father asked, and on being pressed to say why he didn't want to learn Hebrew he said he had come to hate Hebrew, an admission which rendered his parents speechless for a moment. Come to hate Hebrew, they repeated one after the other till frightened by their solemnity Joseph blurted out: you wouldn't like Hebrew if the scholar's fleas jumped on to you the moment you began. And pulling up his sleeves Joseph exhibited his arms. How could I learn Hebrew with three fleas biting me and all at one time, one here, another there and a third down yonder. He always has three or four about him. No, Father, don't, don't ask me to learn Hebrew any more. But, Joseph, all Hebrew scholars haven't fleas about them. An unbelieving face confronted them, and Joseph looked as if he were uncertain whether he should laugh or cry: but seeing that his parents liked his story he began to laugh. We've tried several preceptors but you're hard to please, Joseph. Now what fault did you find with—and while Dan searched his memory for the name Joseph interjected that the little fellow whose back bulged like Granny's chest wouldn't let him read the interesting parts of the Scriptures but kept him always at the Psalms and the Proverbs. And he was always telling me about Hillel, who was a good man, but good men aren't as interesting as prophets, Joseph rapped out. And wilt thou tell us what he told thee about these pious men? Dan asked, a smile playing about his long thin mouth. That the law didn't matter as long as we were virtuous, Joseph muttered, and he was always explaining the stories that I understood quite well when Granny told them. So it was Hiram that confirmed you in your distaste

for Hebrew, Dan said, and the child stood looking at his father, not quite sure if it would be in his interest to accept or repudiate the suggestion. He would have refused to give a direct answer (such is the way of children) but the servant relieved him of his embarrassment: Azariah was at the gate asking for shelter from the rain.

From the rain! Dan said, rising suddenly. It is coming down very fast, Mother, but we were so engaged in listening to Joseph that we didn't hear it. Shall we ask him in, Joseph? The child's face lighted up. Now isn't it strange, Rachel said, he should be here to-day? We haven't seen him for months, and now in the middle of a talk about tutors—aren't you going to ask him in? Of course, Dan said, and he instructed the servant to ask the scribe to come upstairs. And now, Joseph, I hope you'll listen to all that Azariah says, giving quiet and reasonable answers. And not too many questions, mind!

Joseph promised to be good and quiet and to keep himself from putting questions. I will listen attentively, he said, and he seized on the last chance available to his tongue to tell that he had often seen Azariah in the lanes. He doesn't see us, he walks like one in a dream, his hair blowing in the wind. But when he does see us he speaks very kindly ... I think I'd like to learn Hebrew from him. Rachel laid her finger on her lips; the door opened and Azariah advanced into the room with a long grave Jewish stride, apologising to Dan as he came for his sudden intrusion into their midst, mentioning the heavy rain in a graceful phrase. Joseph, who was on the watch for everything, could see that his father was full of respect for

Azariah, and hearing him say that it was some years since Azariah had been in his house he began to wonder if there had been a quarrel between them; it seemed to him that his father was a little afraid of Azariah, which was strange, for he himself did not feel in the least afraid of Azariah but an almost uncontrollable desire to go and sit on his knee.

Here is my boy Joseph: and, Azariah, you will be interested to hear that we were talking about you for the last quarter of an hour.

Azariah raised his thick eyebrows and waited to be told how he had come to be the subject of their talk, though he half knew the reason, for in a village like Magdala it soon gets about that four preceptors have been sent away unable to teach the rich man's son. He has made up his mind, Dan said, to learn Hebrew and Greek from none but you. No, Father, I didn't make up my mind. But I couldn't learn from the others and I told you why. Are you sure that you can learn from me? Azariah asked. Joseph became shy at once, but he liked to feel Azariah's friendly hand upon his shoulder, and when Dan asked the scribe to be seated Joseph followed him, and standing beside his chair asked him if he would teach him Hebrew, a question Azariah did not answer. You will teach me, he insisted, and Dan and Rachel kept silence, so that they might better observe Joseph working round Azariah with questions; and they were amused, for Joseph's curiosity had overcome his shyness; and, quite forgetful of his promise to listen and not to talk, he had begun to beg the scribe to tell him if the language they spoke had been brought back from Babylon, and how long it was since people had ceased to speak Hebrew.

Azariah set himself to answer these questions; Joseph gave him close attention, and when Azariah ceased speaking he said: when may I begin my lessons? And he put the question so innocently that his father could not help laughing. But, Joseph, he said, Azariah has not yet promised to teach you, and I wouldn't advise him to try to teach a boy that has refused to learn from four preceptors. But it will be different with you, Sir, Joseph murmured, taking Azariah's hand. You will teach me, won't you? When will you begin?

Azariah answered that it could not be this week, for he was going to Arimathea. The town we came from, Dan said. I am still known as Dan of Arimathea, though I have lived here twenty years. I too shall be known as Joseph of Arimathea, Joseph interjected. I'd like to be Joseph of Arimathea much better than Joseph of Magdala.

You needn't shake your head at Magdala, Dan said. Magdala has done well for us. To which Joseph answered nothing, but it was not long, however, before he went to his father saying that he would like to go to Arimathea, and in charge of Azariah.

You are asking too much, Joseph, his father answered him. No, I don't think I am, and his honour Azariah doesn't think so, Joseph cried, for his heart was already set upon this holiday. Azariah has perhaps promised to teach you Hebrew. Isn't that enough? his father remarked. Now you want him to take you to Arimathea. But if he likes to take me, Joseph replied, and he cast such a winning glance at Azariah that the scribe was moved to say that he would be glad to take charge of the boy if his parents would confide him to his care. Whereupon Joseph threw his arms about his

father, but finding him somewhat indifferent he went to his grandmother, who welcomed his embrace, and in return for it pleaded that the boy should not be denied this small pleasure. But Dan, who only half liked to part with his son, tried to hide his feelings from his mother, who had guessed them already, with a joke, saying to Azariah that he was a brave man to undertake the charge of so wayward a boy. I shall not spoil him, and if he fails to obey he'll have to find someone else to teach him Hebrew, Azariah answered. I think the rain is now over, he said. Some drops were still falling but the sky was brightening, and he returned from the window to where Joseph was standing, and laying his hand on his head promised to come for him in the morning.

We shall hear no more about fleas preventing thee from study, Dan said to his son, and very much offended Joseph withdrew to his room, and stood looking at the spot in which he had seen Samuel, asking himself if the prophet would appear to him in Arimathea and if it would be by the fountain whither the maidens used to come to draw water. Samuel and the maidens seemed to jar a little, and as he could not think of them together he fell to thinking of the rock on which the seer used to offer sacrifices. It was still there and somebody would be about to direct them to it, and it would be under this rock that Azariah would read to him all that Samuel had said to Saul. But we shall be riding all day, he said to himself, Arimathea must be a long long way from here, and he fled downstairs to ask his father if Azariah would call for him at the head of a caravan, whether he would ride on a camel or a mule or a horse: he thought he would like to ride a camel, and awoke many times in the

night, once rolling out of his bed, for in a dream the ungainly animal had jolted him from off his hump.

And the old woman's patience was nigh exhausted when he cried: Granny, it is day, and bade her leave her bed and come to the window to tell him if day were not breaking; but she answered: get thee back to thy bed, for 'tis the moon shining down the sky, simpleton. The sun won't give way an hour to the moon nor the moon an hour to the sun because thou'rt going to Arimathea. And methinks, Joseph, that to some the morrow is always better than to-day, and yesterday better than either,—a remark that puzzled Joseph and kept him from his rest. Didst never hear, Joseph, that it is a clever chicken that crows in the egg? the old woman continued, and who knows but Azariah will forget to come for thee! He won't forget, Granny, Joseph uttered in so doleful a tone that Rachel repented and promised Joseph she would wake him in time; and as she had never failed to keep her promise to him he allowed sleep to close his eyelids. And once asleep he was hard to awaken. At six in the morning sleep seemed to him better than Arimathea, but once awake Rachel could not hand him his clothes fast enough; he escaped from her hands, dressing himself as he ran into the lanes, and while tying his sandals at the gate he forgot them and stood at gaze, wondering whether Azariah would come to fetch him on a horse or an ass or a mule or a camel.

At last the sound of hooves came through the dusk, and a moment after some three or four camels led the way; and there were horses too and asses and mules, and the mules were caparisoned gaily, the one reserved for Joseph's riding

more richly than the others—a tall fine animal by which he was proud to stand, asking questions of the muleteer, while admiring the dark docile eyes shaded with black lashes. Now why do we delay? he asked Azariah, who reminded him—and somewhat tritely—that he had not yet said good-bye to his parents. But they know I'm going with you, Sir, he answered. Azariah would not, however, allow Joseph to mount his mule till he had bidden good-bye to his father and grandmother, and he brought the boy back to the house, but without earning Dan's approval, who was ashamed before Azariah of his son's eagerness to leave home; a subtlety that escaped Rachel who chided Dan saying: try to remember if it wasn't the same with thee, for I can remember thine eyes sparkling at the sight of a horse and thy knees all of an itch to be on to him. Well, said Dan, he'll have enough riding before the day is over, and I reckon his little backside will be sore before they halt at the gates of Arimathea; a remark that caused Rachel to turn amazed eyes on her son and to answer harshly that since he had so much foresight she hoped he had not forgotten to tell Azariah that Joseph must have a long rest at midday. But thy face tells me no order has been given for the care of the child on the journey. But Azariah cannot be far on his way. I'll send a messenger to caution him that Joseph has his rest in the shade.

Dan let her go in search of the messenger and moved around the room hoping (he knew not why) that the messenger would not overtake the caravan, the which he very nearly missed doing, for while Rachel was instructing the messenger, Joseph was asking Azariah if he might have

a stick to belabour his mule into a gallop. The cavalcade, he said, needed a scout that would report any traces of robbers he might detect among the rocks and bushes. But we aren't likely to meet robber bands this side of Jordan, Azariah said, they keep to the other side; and he told Joseph, who was curious about everything, that along the Jordan were great marshes into which the nomads drove their flocks and herds in the spring to feed on the young grass. So they are there now, Joseph replied meditatively, for he was thinking he would like better to ride through marshes full of reeds than through a hilly country where there was nothing to see but the barley-fields beset by an occasional olive garth. But hooves were heard galloping in the rear and when the messenger overtook the caravan and blurted out Rachel's instructions, Joseph's face flushed. Now what can a woman know, he cried, about a journey like this? Tell her, he said, turning to the messenger, that I shall ride and rest with the others. And as an earnest of his resolve he struck the messenger's horse so sharply across the quarters that the animal's head went down between his knees and he plunged so violently that the messenger was cast sprawling upon the ground. The cavalcade roared with laughter and Joseph, overjoyed at the success of his prank, begged Azariah to wait a little longer, for he was curious to see if the messenger would succeed in coaxing his horse. At present the horse seemed in no humour to allow himself to be mounted. Whenever the messenger approached he whinnied so menacingly that everybody laughed again. Is there none amongst ye that will help me to catch the horse? the poor messenger cried after the departing travellers. We

have a long day's march in front of us, Azariah said; and he warned Joseph not to beat his mule into a gallop at the beginning of the journey or he would repent it later, words that came true sooner than Joseph had expected, for before midday he was asking how many miles would bring them to the caravansary. In about another hour, Azariah answered, and Joseph said he had begun to hate his mule for it would neither trot nor gallop, only walk. Thou'rt thinking of the nomads and would like to be after them flourishing a lance, Azariah said, and—afraid that he was being laughed at—Joseph made no answer.

After the rest at midday it seemed to him to be his duty to see that his mule had been properly fed, and he bought some barley from the camel-driver, but while he was giving it to his mule Azariah remarked that he was only depriving other animals of their fair share of provender. It is hard, he said, to do good without doing wrong to another. But the present is no time for philosophy: we must start again. And the cavalcade moved on through the hills, avoiding the steep ascents and descents by circuitous paths, and Joseph, who had not seen a shepherd leading his flock for some years, became all of a sudden delighted by the spectacle, the sheep running forward scenting the fresh herbage with which the hills were covered as with dark velvet.

A little later they came into view of a flock of goats browsing near a wood, and Azariah sought to improve the occasion by a little dissertation on the destructive nature of the goat. Of late years a sapling rarely escaped them, and still more regrettable was the carelessness of the shepherd who left the branches they had torn down to become dry

like tinder. He spoke of many forest fires, and told all the stories he could remember in the hope of distracting Joseph's thoughts from the length of the journey. We are now about half-way, he said, disguising the truth. We shall see the city upon the evening glow in about another hour. The longest hour that I have ever known, Joseph complained two hours later; and Azariah laid his cloak over Joseph's saddle. Dost feel more comfortable? A little, the child answered. At the sight of the city thy heart will be lifted again and the suffering forgotten. And Joseph believed him, but towards the end of the day the miles seemed to stretch out indefinitely and at five o'clock he was crying: shall we ever get to Arimathea, for I can sit on this mule no longer, nor shall I be able to stand straight upon my legs when I alight.

Azariah promised they would be at the gates in a few minutes, but these few minutes seemed as if they would never pass away, but they did pass, and at the gateway Joseph toppled from his mule and just managed to hobble into the inn at which they were to sleep that night: too tired to eat, he said, too tired, he feared, to sleep. Azariah pressed him to swallow a cup of soup and he prepared a hot bath for him into which he poured a bottle of vinegar; an excellent remedy he reported this to be against stiffness, and it showed itself to be such: for next morning Joseph was quite free from stiffness and said he could walk for miles. Samuel's rock cannot be more than a few hundred yards distant, so miles are not necessary, Azariah answered, as they stepped over the threshold into a delightful morning all smiles and greetings and subtle invitations to come away

into the forest and fields, full of promises of flowers and songs, but in conflict with their project, which was to inquire out their way from the maidens at the fountain, who would be sure to know it, and in its shade to read the story of David and Goliath first and other stories afterwards. But the gay morning drew their thoughts away from texts, and without being aware of their apostasy they had already begun to indulge in hopes that the maidens would be late at the fountain and leave them some time to loiter by the old aqueduct that brought the water in a tiny stream to fall into a marble trough: an erstwhile sarcophagus, maybe, Azariah said, as he gathered some water out of it with his hands and drank, telling Joseph to do likewise.

There were clouds in the sky, so the sun kept coming and going. A great lantern, Joseph said. That God holds in his hands, Azariah answered; and when tired of waiting for maidens who did not appear their beguilement was continued by shadows advancing and retreating across the roadway. The town was an enchantment in the still limpid morning, but when they rose to their feet their eyes fell on a greater enchantment—the hills clothed in moving light and shade so beautiful that the appeal to come away to the woods and fields continued in their hearts after they had lowered their eyes and would not be denied, though they prayed for strength to adhere to their original project. It had died out of their hearts through no fault of theirs, as far as they could see; and wondering how they might get remission from it they strode about the city, idly casting their eyes into ravines whither the walls dropped, and raising them to the crags whither the walls rose: faithful

servants, Azariah said, that have saved the city many times from robbers from the other side of Jordan.

Joseph's thoughts were far away on the hillside opposite amid the woods, and Azariah's voice jarred. By this time, he said, the maidens are drawing water. But perhaps, Joseph answered, none will be able to tell us the way to the rock, and if none has heard for certain on which rock Samuel offered sacrifice we might go roaming over the hills and into forests yonder to find perhaps some wolf cubs in a cave. But a she-wolf with cubs is dangerous, Azariah replied. If we were to try to steal her cubs, Joseph interjected. But we don't want to meddle with them, only to see them. May we go roaming to-day, Sir, and read the story of David and Goliath to-morrow? The boy's voice was full of entreaty and Azariah had very little heart to disappoint him, but he dared not break an engagement which he looked upon as almost sacred; and walked debating with himself, asking himself if the absence of a maiden at the fountain might be taken as a sign that they were free to abandon the Scriptures for the day, only for the day. And seeing the fountain deserted Joseph cried out in his heart: we are free! But as they turned aside to go their way a maiden came with a pitcher upon her head; but as she had never heard of the rock, nor indeed of Samuel, Joseph was certain that God had specially designed her ignorant, so that they might know that the day before them was for enjoyment. You said, Sir, that if none could direct us we might leave the story until to-morrow. I did not say that, Azariah answered. All the same he did not propose to wait for another maiden more learned than the first, but followed Joseph to the gates of the city, nor did he

raise any objection to passing through them, and they stood with their eyes fixed on the path that led over the brow down into the valley, a crooked twisting path that had seemed steep to Azariah's mule overnight and that now seemed steeper to Azariah. And will seem still steeper to me in the evening when we return home tired, he said. But we shall not be tired, Joseph interposed, we need not go very far, only a little way into the forest. And he did not dare to say more, lest by some careless word he might provoke an unpremeditated opposition.

He dreaded to hear the words on Azariah's lips: you have come here with me to learn Hebrew and may not miss a lesson.... If he could persuade Azariah into the path he would not turn back until they reached the valley, and once in the valley, he might as well ascend the opposite hill as go back and climb up the hill whence they had come. I am afraid, said Azariah, that this cool morning will pass into a very hot day: the clouds that veil the sky are dispersing. We shall not feel the heat once we are in the forest, Joseph replied, and the path up yonder hill is not so steep as the paths we go down by. You see the road, Sir, twisting up the hillside, and it is planned so carefully to avoid a direct ascent that a man has just belaboured his ass into a trot. They have passed behind a rock, but we shall see them presently.

Azariah waited a moment for the man and ass to reappear, but after all he was not much concerned with them, and began to descend unmindful of the lark which mounted the sky in circles singing his delirious song. Joseph begged Azariah to hearken, but his preceptor was too much