

THE YOUNGEST KING

A STORY OF THE MAGI

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"FETICHISM IN WEST AFRICA"



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"HIS LITTLE HAND GRASPED THE SHAFT."

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THE YOUNGEST KING

PREFACE

Miss Alice Werner, an English lady—traveler, journalist and author—contributed the following verses to “The African Monthly” of January, 1908:

“We see in holy pictures
Our fathers wrought of old,
How the three Kings came, bringing
Their gifts of myrrh and gold.
And one is old and gray; and one
A bearded man of war;
And the third is brown, and crisp of hair,
Like those of Zanzibar.

“From ancient towered cities,
That old King, gray and mild,
And that mailed warrior in his prime,
Came forth to seek the Child.
The brown lad, with the fearless eyes,
Who joined himself to them—
I know not where he dwelt, or how
He fared to Bethlehem.

“Maybe, he came from the Lake-land,
Where Father Nile leaps down;
Or, from the Table-Mount that wears
His red rocks for a crown;
Or, where thrice-cleft Mvai
Looks down the lonely land.
But, I think he was girt with a leopard skin,
And bore a spear in his hand.

“Their corded bales of treasure
Were high on camels borne.
His feet were burnt by the glowing sand,
And scarred by the flint and thorn.
Nothing he knew of gold or gem.
What gift had he to bring?
He laid his war-spear at the feet
Of the Babe who was a King.

"They say his name was Gaspar,
This lad who loved so well.
And what of him thereafter?
Nay, that I cannot tell.
But, those, the last of all the world,
In Ethiop forests dim,
I think shall be the first when God
Hath called the Lands to Him.

"One Land of the gray old Past;
And one that Now is strong;
And one that lies in Darkness;
(But the Dawn shall be ere long).
That land, so long forgotten,
In sorrow and in thrall,
Our dear Lord hath remembered,
And loves it best of all."

Those verses came to me while under the
live oaks of Florida, with my pencil sketching
a train of thoughts for an Address on Africa.
Instantly, I said to myself, *I know how*

"He fared to Bethlehem."

And at once I outlined the chapters of this
story of "The Youngest King."

During my life in Equatorial West Africa
(all of whose Bantu inhabitants point to
the northeast as the source of their fore-
fathers), I had gathered many legends in the
native folklore; among them, a tale of a
Fall, a Lost Eden, and a Deluge. Yet, I had
heard no mention by them of the Story of
the Christ. But a white man, who had

been connected with the white fathers in the Sudan, told me that he had there met with a legendary basis of that story.

I wrote to Miss Werner, at her London home, asking permission to utilize her beautiful poem; inquiring also whether it had basis in the folklore of the natives whom she had met in East and South Africa. She replied: "With regard to the verses you ask about, I believe it is a very old tradition that Gaspar, or Kaspar, was a black man. One of my childhood's recollections is the 'Pump of the Three Kings' (Dreikönigsbrunnen) at Sachsenhausen (Frankfort-on-the-Main) Germany, which, like many old pumps in German towns, is surmounted by a sculptured group. This, which, as it now stands, may be some two hundred years old (but probably replacing an older one), is colored; and represents Gaspar as not only black, but with woolly hair and negro features. He is similarly represented, I think, in many ancient stained-glass windows; but, as far as I know, no attempt has been made at an exhaustive study of this tradition.* It sug-

*"The best authority for the legendary title would be found in the apochryphal gospels, or in 'Lives of the Saints'; of which an excellent example is the 'Golden Legend.'

"In earlier English days, the name of the Three Kings was clearly far more common than now; for the 'Sign

gested the verses; for any farther working out I am responsible. I never heard of any tradition on the subject among any of the African tribes.

"By the bye, the following is a little touch which may interest you: An old woman, among the candidates for baptism at Blantyre (Nyasa-land) was being examined by Dr. Hetherwick; and when asked, 'Who was Jesus Christ?' answered, 'Nyenyezi ya kale' (A Star of Long-ago). Probably she was thinking, in some confused way, of the Story of the Magi."

The story of the three Wise Men and the Star of Bethlehem, told as a legend in many nations and on different continents, has had added to its simple Bible outlines details that, whether fanciful or true, have the backing of antiquity.

Those Magi may have been more than three. They may have been kings. They may have been priests; in some nations, priestly functions were united with the kingly office. They may have been philosophers.

of the Three Kings' lingers in many villages, and in particular at 'Three Kings Court,' in Fleet Street, London. Moreover, the many famous paintings of the sacred scene never omit the crowns, while one of the gift-bearers is usually a Moor."—(Franz Liszt's March, "The Three Holy Kings," in his Oratorio, "Christus.")

They certainly were seekers. They were wise, knowing the times and seasons. They came from far. They were guided by supernatural influences. They were men of distinction and wisdom. Within these limits, there is ample room for the variances of fancy as to their position and nationality. I do not think it mere fancy that finds their local origin in the three then known continents.

"One Land of the gray old Past
And one that Now is strong,
And one that lies in Darkness."

It is not my own pen that has assigned one of them to Africa. But it is my pen that has chosen to base on Miss Werner's poem this Tale of Gaspar's Journey to Bethlehem.

"And what of him thereafter."

In the density of Africa's intellectual poverty, his language was not a written one. He had no historian to even write his name correctly.* His companions, on the road

*In the Bantu stock of the black race, its admirably regular grammar closes every syllable with a vowel. The wave of the Bantu human flood, starting from Upper Egypt and flowing south and west, covered the entire southern third of the African continent, and extends to about four degrees north latitude, where it broke against the wall of the pure negro stock in the Bight of Baifra; evil communication with whom (e. g., among the clans of the Faiwe, or Fang, tribes) has corrupted the good manner of the elsewhere invariable



to Jerusalem, heard his name. It has come down to us as only a name. With scanty suggestion from ancient history and archæology, but with a lifelong acquaintance with African characteristics, I write what might have been his own story; thus claiming for him his due, and for Africa her right.

rule of a final syllabic vowel. Therefore, the name which we know as variously Caspar, Kaspar, Gaspar, if a Bantu word, should be written either Ga-si-pa, or Ga-spa-re. The name of one of my employés on the Ogowe River was Gasita.

PROLOGUE

"There seems a Voice in every gale,
A tongue in every opening flower,
Which tells, O! God, the wondrous tale
Of Thy indulgence, love and power."

Earth has her known powers of speech, her capacities for hearing, among her human beings; among the beasts; among the fowls of the air; among the reptiles; among the fish in the waters of brook and river, lake and ocean; among the insects, and even the lowest forms of creation. All these understand each the speech or mode of utterance belonging to their own tribe or clan, by word of tongue or other vocal note, or by touch of antennæ or tentacle.

Also, it has occurred, even in historic days, that a lower animal had spoken with human speech.

And, previously to that, native legend said that, in prehistoric days, before the present sharp, antagonistic, dividing lines had been drawn between mankind and all other beings, man had lived in amity of feeling, community of residence, reciprocity of social relations, and interchange of language with all those brother-children of the great Creator.

But, aside from those misty realms of legend, in the actual life of human beings,

there has been a distinct and impassable line of demarcation between the known and unknown, the visible and tangible and the unseen and beyond. Mankind has indeed ever knocked at the doors of that unseen, in vain efforts to discover its secrets, and in a longing to converse with those of their households who had passed into the beyond. Witch and wizard, with incantation and charm and deceptive art, have claimed, at On and Endor and Delphi, to have communication with the inhabitants of Spirit-Land. But, she of Endor was herself startled when one day her art seemed to have been successful. And Baal's priests cried to him in vain, in the crucial test on Carmel. Only when Jehovah Himself, on occasions, chose to draw aside the veil of Isis, has mankind actually heard and seen of that hidden land.

Eras of time have been marked by His silence; and other eras by His utterances. By the multitude they were unthought of, unheard of, or, if spoken of, were derided.

They have come to a few since His Word began to be written. A certain man stepped out from the prayers and sacrifices of the idol-room in his father's home in Ur of the Chaldees. He had been a seeker. The Voice had come to him; and he went out,

not knowing whither, to unknown heights of faith, to unheard-of blessings.

They came at Horeb, after the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire. Later, they came to the Hero of Worms. Perhaps they came to the Maid of Domremy.

In these latter times, however, Jehovah prefers to speak by only the still small voice of His Spirit; and, not to a few, but to all His creatures, according to their ability, their need, and their receptivity.

But, two thousand years ago, there had come the time when, gradually and increasingly, like the tramp of approaching armies, were heard voices; audible, not to the physical ear, but to the inner ear and finer sense of certain chosen ones, to whom Jehovah sent His messages.

At that time, the voices seemed to have become actual, though the physical ear felt no impression. So intense was their impression on the inner sense, that they forced themselves on even unwilling listeners, as if really audible. They were everywhere. They were crying in the wildernesses. Kedar lifted up its voice. Even in the silent places, where there was no human inhabitant. For the whole creation was groaning together. Even the lower creation was alert. The

eagle's eye, that could see beyond the range of human vision; the gazelle's ear, that could hear the footfall far distant; the hound, whose lifted nostril detected approach on the air, all these and their fellows felt a new instinct that tingled in their soulless recesses, as a heralding of the coming of One whose established kingdom should be marked by the dwelling of the wolf with the lamb, and the lying down of the leopard with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, (a little Child leading them,) just as they had done in Eden, before one of their number had proved traitor to Eve. For, now there were reports through all the universe that that Child was coming. He had been heard to say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O! God." But as to just when He would come, the denizens of the universe did not know. Some knew that He would appear in one of the least of the villages of Palestine; and that a virgin, of the House of Judah, in the nation of the Hebrews, was to be His human mother. Also, it had been told, and many, in the lands beyond the Land of Palestine, had heard the prophecy, that He would be a King, and that of His kingdom there should be no end. Men wondered how this could be, as they talked, in camps and

city gateways and palaces, of the strange news carried to the ends of the three continents of the then known world by merchants and seekers of knowledge, and adventurous explorers driven by their wanderlust. They talked of the expected, as the old men sat in their doors, as the travelers stopped to salute on the highways, and as the visitors tied their beasts of burden, their camels and asses, in the public khan at night. And many young Hebrew women of the tribe of Judah, as they whispered the historic news, in their apartments, wondered, each for herself, whether she should be the chosen blessed mother.

The news penetrated, even into the regions of the lost, among the spirits in prison. Lucifer trembled for his own kingdom, so long successful in the world, and so dominant in the hearts of the majority of mankind. He counseled. This new dispensation that Jehovah was about to inaugurate must be met by a more vigorous stroke on his part that might deceive even the elect of God. Lucifer sent out into the world lying spirits that should be false voices. Legions of them he sent into the Land of Palestine to attempt to duplicate whatever miracles that Child might perform as proofs of His divine character, and to offer themselves as false

witnesses for Him. All through Palestine and elsewhere, where had been only natural cases of insanity as a result of disease, were multiplied cases of demoniacal possession. The armies of Satan, that, hitherto, in their attacks on the town of Man-soul, had allied themselves in good fellowship with man's passions and appetites and ambitions, now made combined assault on the tower of man's reason. Pitiably unreasoning demoniacs roamed the land, wandering among tombs and desolate places; the uninvited guests in human bodies, torturing them in fire and water and senseless self-wounding. All to make hopeless the task of the Messiah when He should come. For they had heard that a wonderful Child was to be born Who was to be King of kings.

Over the three continents, Asia, already gray with age and wisdom; Europe, arousing itself to an appreciation of its manhood strength; and Africa, all, except its northern portions, lying in darkness; the soothsayers, the diviners, the magicians, the wise men, the doctors and teachers were unable to control their thoughts. They had all of them believed in the possibility of communicating with the spirit world. Most of them had attempted to do so. Many of them in their

attempts, while deceiving themselves had deceived others. But some were sincere. They were seekers after truth. To them it was a very deep well. The means that some of them used in their search seemed to be justified by the end in view. They were seeking after God, if haply they might find Him. Wandering far, as the races of mankind had done, from the original truth revealed by Him, He had not left Himself without a witness, in man's own inner consciousness. To those who groped sincerely, though blindly, He came, His spirit communing in the night seasons, and under the stars, and in quiet hours of meditation. Of such communing, each could have said for himself:

" 'Twas like the stealing
Of summer wind through some wreathed shell;
Each secret winding, each inmost feeling
Of my soul echoed to its spell."

Thus groping all their lives, but according to the light He gave them within, they had not been startled, when, in succession they had stepped out of this life; for there had been revealed to them the Perfect Light. Thus it had ever been.

But now, when the promised time was drawing near, those, all over the three lands, who had been sincere seekers, felt a strange

and unusual elevation. Their thoughts, which they had been accustomed to control in their mystic discussions, switched off at tangents from recognized premises. Convictions came to them that had not traveled from logical bases. And a Voice, stronger clearer and more authoritative than ever before, seemed to say: "This is the Way, walk thou in it."

They had often reasoned of the unknown from the known. Now, the unknown was coming to them without any mental process, but as a direct revelation from a Superior Mind. In the visions of the night, they seemed to pass to life's verge.

"O! Spirit-land! Thou land of dreams!
A world thou art of mysterious gleams,
Of startling voices and sounds of strife,
A world of the dead in the hues of life."

They had often prayed, better than they knew, that the Great Spirit would teach and guide and direct. Yet, when He did thus stand before their souls, most of them shrank back from what the following of that directing Hand involved. Custom bound them. Environments limited them.

Nevertheless, a few not only heard, and saw, and felt; they followed, though the thoughts that came to them electrified them.

The electrifying was clarifying. As they stepped higher, the air became purer, the horizon wider, and God's heaven nearer. For,

"God is also in sleep; and dreams advise,
Which He hath sent propitious, some great
Presaging."

Thus, as this new dispensation was struggling from the womb of eternity past, all over the three continents these few sincere, obedient ones were standing, wistfully saying, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth."

CHAPTER I

THE SHADOW OF A THRONE

"There is something behind the Throne greater than the King himself."

"My son, thou art to be king, in the place of thy father. When the days of the appointed months of the mourning are past, then thou shalt be placed on the throne; and, I, thy mother, will be glad. For I will be proud of thy glory. And thou wilt continue to me, wilt thou not, my son, the power which thy father permitted me in the house?"

Thus spoke the mother of Gaspar to him, as they sat under the starlight of a balmy rainy-season night, by the northern shore of Nyanza's inland sea. Almost under the very line of the equator, and in the season when nature is most rampant in its vegetation, there was, in the trees and smaller plants around them, everything that could gratify the senses for beauty. Palms, of several species, held above them their long curved fronds, whose leaflets were forever trembling, aspenlike, under the slightest breath of wind. The air was redolent of heavily luxurious perfumes, extracted by the night-moistened breeze from the masses of flowers hanging from tree and shrub and

vine. Stretched to the south was the limitless (as far as the eye could see) expanse of the Great Lake, its rippled surface glinting with the light of constellations reflected through Africa's wonderful air.

Gaspar did not immediately reply to his mother. He was not just then looking at the beautiful in nature, nor was he anticipating the glory of his impending kingship. He was listening to the unutterably sad wails and screams and cries of the crowds of mourners; wailings that, however insincere some of them might be suspected to be, were nevertheless depressing in the pathos of their tones.

Even inanimate nature had been ravaged in the course of the mourning ceremonies. Traditional custom said: "The plants and trees whose fruits our great king enjoyed eating, belonged to him and shall belong to him in that other world to which he has gone. No one else shall eat them." Therefore, his plantations had been cut down and wasted more ruthlessly than by the devastations of the elephants and other wild animals against whose raids they had been carefully guarded during his lifetime.

The same sentiment had murdered hundreds of his slaves and wives, that they might

continue in the invisible world of spirits the services they had rendered in their visible life. Those of the harem whose lives had been saved, were so saved by favoritism of the king's council, as recruits to their own harems. Gaspar's mother had escaped, because he was the heir apparent. But his less favored half-brothers had also been either murdered or exiled. There was none of them to rival his claim to the Throne. He had no part, or even accessory knowledge, in their being put away. The powerful inner circle of the council, as a regency, held authority during the months of mourning, and until the rites of his installation should be completed. That council had elected to save him, not that they loved him more than they did his more brutal or less physically handsome brothers, but because, through his apparently gentler nature, they hoped to continue their own private domination.

The thought of these scenes and sounds saddened the young man. Those bitter wailings were possibly not all for his father. There were other fathers and mothers, the heads of whose children had been struck off at their feet: and they had not dared resist the court executioner. Their lips

waited for their king; but their hearts waited for their children.

Gaspar's mother broke the brooding silence:

"My son, why speakest thou not? Dost thou not love me?"

"Yes, my mother, I love thee. I know that thou didst love me more than my brothers, the sons of the other wives of my father. And, if power comes to me, I will share it with thee. But I would that those brothers had not died. I had no voice in their death. And, if I am desired to take part in such cruelty, I do not wish to be king."

Startled for her own future, she hastily replied:

"But my son, these are the customs of our country. And the magicians and sooth-sayers, with their visions of the spirits, declared that what had been done was necessary. That, indeed, the spirit of your father appeared to them, and demanded the company of his wives and children."

"No, my mother, my father was great and strong; but he was not cruel. I doubt some of those magicians; for not all of the doctors took part in the decisions of the council. And there are many spirits. I have obeyed the doctors in their worship. But I have

asked them, if we pray to the little spirits, why we should not also pray to the Great One. And the doctors discussed much with me, saying that, because that One was far away, there was no use to pray to Him; that it was necessary only to supplicate the others who were near and not always kind, and who, therefore, might injure us."

"And is not that true? Are the doctors not right?"

"Not all of them, my mother. For one of them, Ra-Marânge, declared unto me that, as to his part, he did pray also to the Greater Spirit, even though It was far away; for, perhaps, It might hear."

"Can one hear who is far away?"

"I do not know, my mother. But I, myself, have tried to speak to It. And I thought I heard Its Voice."

"No! no! my son," she exclaimed, frightened. "Do not speak so! Perhaps you will die, by the strange Voice!"

"No, my mother; others also think they have heard the Voice of a Spirit different from the spirits of the magicians. And when their hearts have heard It, they say that It causes them thoughts of goodness, and love, and mercy; not of blood, and hate, and destruction. I will again inquire of Ra-Ma-

rânge. For I do not understand. And, if I am to be king, my power shall show itself, not in the oppression of the weak, but in their defense from violence."

To his mother, this was a new code. She had known him as fearless in hunting, and brave against assault by enemies of their tribe. But his kindness, his justice and his truth that had endeared him, as a youth, to the common people of the kingdom, had been misunderstood as weakness by the council in its selfish plan of control. During the months of the mourning, and until his installation, Gaspar held many conferences with the more serious-minded diviners. They told him much that confirmed him in the belief that a Spirit's Voice had spoken, not to him alone; but, that, at that time, all through the nations there were voices, not before unknown, but new and strange and insistent in their frequency and startling in their prevalence.

CHAPTER II

WHO WILL GO FOR US?

"I hear a Voice ye cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay.
I see a Hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away."

The Kings of Uganda were rich and powerful. The native priesthood were in high esteem. Gaspar, a very young man, had just been placed on the throne. He had not sought the honor. It came to him by direct succession. Other members of the family, older and more ambitious than he, and more warlike, would have liked to supplant him by intrigue that might have overcome the directness of his right. But, at his father's decease, the nobility of his character, the unusual loftiness of his purpose, and the justness of his dealings during his youth, had won his people's love; and the acclaim of the multitude, even if there had been no other power, had forced the crown upon his head.

He, too, though not a soothsayer, had thought much about Creator-Njambi, and of the problems of misery that he saw in the lives of others; as Gautama had done for his East Indian people, before him. He



queried whether there was no Guide surer than the way of the diviners, whose assertions he often doubted, having sometimes found them false. To him also had come a revelation. He did not understand it. But he was receptive, and wanted to know more; as others, too, were seeking to understand. For, the waves of unrest that spread themselves over Asia and Europe had impinged also on the shores of Africa. North Africa already had light and knowledge. But, in the southern recesses of the land, there was darkness and ignorance, broken only here and there by some wandering star's feeble ray. Jehovah's name was there not utterly unknown; but He was not worshiped. The nations of that land, in wandering farther and farther away from Him (and forgetting that He is not far from any one of us), made the astonishing blunder of ascribing the supposed distance between Him and themselves to Him! As if God had left them, and did not, in His sublime greatness, regard them worthy of consideration, and abandoned them to the operation of spirits that were evil-disposed, but that could be made complacent by propitiatory sacrifices and other ceremonies. So, the land was given over to animism; priest and people groping in their darkness;

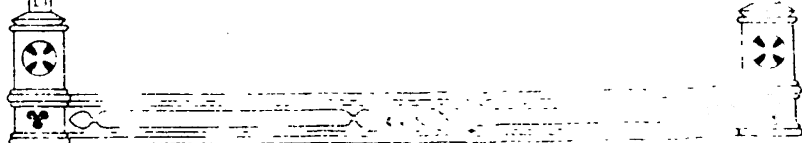
some of them sincere, and unconsciously at times touching the paternal Hand, which they did not know was so near to them, held out ready to save them from utter loss of the truth.

It was not strange, therefore, in their constant worship of spirits, and their daily belief in spiritual influences, that they should stumble unexpectedly onto the path of some Good Spirit, and be startled by a Voice that in its tone was unlike what they had been accustomed to conjure from the shades.

The soothsayers were making, as usual, their prophecies for good or for evil; the diviners were discovering secrets inquired into by those who sought the unknown; the physicians were concocting their charms for the warding off of danger, or for the healing of diseases; the magicians were holding their new-moon dances for the purification of the villages, and for the prosperity of their gardens and their trading and household interests.

But, in the midst of all these ceremonies, there came sometimes a note that seemed to rebuke those of the wizards who were only deceiving; or, that startled into reverential silence those who were only self-deceived.

Those waves of unrest, in their widening circles on the sea of human thought, had



rolled south and ever southward, up the Nile, past Abyssinia, to the interior lake regions, and on beyond Zambesi, over the veldts of the South, even to the extremity of its tableland, where, long ages afterward, a sailor's human hope has concentrated itself.

That continent had not been unknown to its neighbors. Its shores were open to travelers. Only since the days of the modern export slave trade have those coasts been closed to all but its own agents, and at only certain ports. True, previously, domestic slavery had existed, but only as a punishment for crime (in lieu of the modern deprivation of liberty in a penitentiary) and in the universal bondage of prisoners of war. Explorers had traveled far toward the equator. Herodotus wrote of the Garden of the Hesperides; a tale whose allegory is not far from actual fact. Ptolemy had made a chart of some of the interior lakes, and of the supposed sources of the Nile, the Kongo, and the Zambesi, from one central fountain: which the latest maps have shown was nearer the reality than even Livingstone knew.

So, the native priesthood in that South-land had been consulting about the meaning of the new voices. To some, these voices had



come as a call. Almost irresistible influences were dragging the feet of a few, for a journey to see a Light that was promised to them.

There was a day when a few of them met without appointment at the court of King Gaspar on the shore of the great Nyanza. His kingdom was a powerful organization of the Bantu section of the negro race. In its southward migration from Upper Egypt, ages before, with a mixture of Egyptian blood, and tintured with Egyptian knowledge and civilization, it had established itself as the great Kingdom of Uganda. Other portions of its human flood had swept on, dropping its representatives at various points in South Africa, until its wave surged and broke on the Cape: and then swung westward and northward until it passed the equator, and filled with its language and customs the entire southern third of the continent.

Gaspar welcomed the coming together of the hearers of the voices, the few grave, earnest men who came to him to ask his authority to decide on the way they should take in obeying the call of those voices. They were asking, "Who will go for us to find out this matter; what it is?" And, "Whither shall we go?" He listened to them. He waited many days. Then he sent messengers

to the kings and the diviners of all the adjacent regions. For, some of those grave men had said that He, who was to show them the new way, was to be born as a King, greater than all kings.

The rulers assembled together, at Gaspar's call. Some of the heathen raged. Some objected to any inquiry being made. Some dreaded any new power as against their own. Even those who were willing for some response to be made to what they admitted were spirit calls, feared to attempt for themselves any journey.

During days of confused counsels, Gaspar listened attentively to the legends of old men, who told of what had been handed down from their forefathers of tales of other lands: How men had come afoot, or in ships by sea, in their own thirst for knowledge, or in their lust for trade and commerce, telling strange stories about their own countries:—How, hundreds of years before those days of the voices of unrest, fierce sons of Phœnicia had come in ships, on a triennial cruise, along the Eastern Sea, to Ophir, as far south as the Land of Punt; whence they had returned to their trading ports of Palestine with a wealth of gold, and silver, and gems, and ivory, and spice, and

ostrich feathers, and chimpanzees and other wild animals, and Guinea fowls and other birds:—How some of those foreign merchants had made settlements in Punt.*

Such travelers and merchantmen, in their conversations, had left tales of a great God whose chosen nation crowded the land of Palestine, and whose worship was held in a great Temple at Jerusalem. These tales had been repeated in the village streets from tribe to tribe of the far interior.

King Gaspar's thought grew within him. Purpose formed itself in definite outline. He felt that he was being taught by a Mind other than the selfish minds in whose midst he had sat silently. Then he spoke. In a few words he quieted the tumult of speech; told his fellow-kings, his court councilors and the soothsayers, that he no longer doubted; that, in the watches of the night he had been directed; that he believed the direction true; that, though king, he would leave the throne to a regent, and himself would go on the long journey, to which he

* Their Zimbabwe towers are standing to-day. The pits they dug in search for gold and gems have not been entirely filled by the débris of ages. Time has not wiped out the memory of King Solomon's mines in the south, in old Monomotapa; nor the claim, north in Abyssinia, by its line of kings, to a strain of his blood in their veins.

felt himself called, and at whose end he believed he would receive a Light, whose rays he would bring back to them.

They were silenced, and most of them dispersed to their places; some, with derisive hearts; some, selfishly hopeful that his vacated throne might happen to come to themselves; some, waiting; and some, joyfully longing for what Gaspar might bring to them of Light and Truth.

CHAPTER III

TEMPTATION

“Christ leads me through no darker rooms,
Than He went through before;
He that into God’s kingdom comes,
Must enter by this door.”

When the audience had dispersed, leaving only the few usual attendants standing guard on either side of the throne where Gaspar sat, silent and solemn under a sense of consecration, suddenly his mother appeared at the entrance, her hair and garments disheveled as signs of grief; and, flinging herself on the ground, in the attitude required by court custom of approach to the throne, she crawled to her son’s feet, with tears and sobs.

The king’s filial heart was surprised and grieved. Stepping quickly down to her, he raised her to a seat at his side. She asked for an audience with him alone.

When all the attendants had retired, she sank to her knees and clasping his, exclaimed:

“O! king! O! my son! My son! Is it true that thou wilt go away to seek to find the Star of this new King of whom the magicians have told thee?”

"Yes, my mother, it is true. But, not because the magicians have told me. A greater One than they has called me."

"But, O! my son! Whither shall I go? And how shall I do? And what shall I be? Truly thou art king. Even my life is in thy hand. But, dost thou forget that once and often thy little life was in the hands of thy mother who gave thee birth? At this breast didst thou hang for thy food day by day. And is all that nothing to thee, that now thou goest away from me? Truly, thou lovest me not!"

"Say not so, my mother. If I had not loved thee, I might have sought the love of the younger women. And I do not forget thy care for me as a child. But, I am obeying a call that comes from a great Spirit, whose right and power it is to command you, as well as the king, your child."

"But, I have not seen that Spirit, nor has It spoken to me. I understand not. Knowest thou, in very truth?"

"It has spoken to me, because I sought It, and It answered in my heart. Thou and I have prayed to the spirits of our forefathers. They have not answered. But, my mother, I also do not understand. Therefore, I go to see this King who will tell me. And I

shall return to thee and to my people, with a knowledge of the way."

"Alas! My son! Thou wilt not return! And I shall die in my grief. And none will care for the woman whose son cared not for her."

"Thou wilt be provided for, my mother, while I am away, in thine own house and with thine own servants, by the regent, in whose hands I will leave the kingdom, with authority for a time."

His mother felt she had failed in her appeal to his filial feelings for her personal interests. She turned her pleading into other channels, thinking his personal ambition and natural love of power might be influenced.

"Thinkest thou, O! king, that, when thou art gone, the regency will administer the kingdom only for thee, and in thy interests? When they sent the spirits of thy brothers to be with thy father in the other world, thinkest thou that it was for any love of thee that they did not send also thee?"

"My mother, I know not why thou speakest thus, or why thou doubttest the loyalty to me of the three councilors. They are most obeisant in their deference in the court audiences; and they constantly asked my wishes during the months of the mourning."

"True, O! king! But let not their servility blind thine eyes. Thy life is indeed safe. They will not assail thee. Not because they would not dare; but because they think they can better accomplish their own plans by making use of thee."

"Why dost thou think so, my mother? What hast thou seen that my guards have not seen?"

"Nothing, my son, have I seen. But I have heard. Thou art king; and, in the court, words are said to please thine ear. I am only a woman; but, in the street, and behind the huts, and in the shadows of the nights, I hear the whispers, of which thou knowest not."

"And thinkest thou, my mother, that I am a coward, and would fear those whispers, for my life?"

"No! O! king! Thou art fearless; thou wast ever brave, as a lad. I fear, not for thy life; but for the kingdom. Some day when these thy councilors have gathered power, they will drive thee from thy throne into exile. And, if now thou goest, of thy own will, seeking a Star that is not seen, of a King who is not named, in a land that is not known, thou are hastening their wish, and in a manner without blame for them."

"Fear not, my mother. When I go, I will lay my power in their hands as only a regency. I still shall be king, on my journey. My people love me; and the regency will not dare to refuse me the throne, on my return.

"Alas! my son! Trust not the regency. True, the people love thee now. But, love changes. Carest thou not for thy kingdom, and thy power, and thy name, and thy glory?"

"Yes, my mother, I care. But, I tell thee truly, that I care more for the Voice that has spoken to me in the night seasons. I understand it not. But my heart tells me that I shall know if I obey. Rather than disobey, I would lose my kingdom. I must go."

Disappointed in her appeal to the king's ambition, his mother thought of another motive.

Before his father's death, Gaspar, like other young nobles of the court, had not been unconscious of the eyes of willing maidens who had admired his manly form. But, he had awaited the king's permission to make a choice. And, during his father's funeral ceremonies, he was more than ever aware of the score of maidens who were hoping for a summons by the court herald on their fathers, ready for alliance with the throne, to the harem which the young king would



be expected to gather for himself. He had delayed until after his installation. And, then had come that Voice, which, filling his soul, excluded thoughts of earthly love. But, he had not told his mother or anyone else, all the thoughts that had been reconstructing his life.

She rose from the seat which she had resumed at his side, and said:

"My son! thou art going on thy journey. Thou carest not for thy mother, nor for thy kingdom. So let it be! I would forget my sorrow. The day is passing. This night, take me to the meeting place where the maidens dance. Their songs will lighten my pain."

Willing to gratify her, he went. The scene was attractive; his attendants attired in brilliant colors, of wild skins and native-woven cloths, with ornaments of ostrich plumes and other feathers. Burnished spears and shields and daggers glistened. In the absence of a moon, flaming torches made spots as bright as day, and threw other spots under the shadow of the grove of trees into darker shade. Under star, and leaf, and flower, and perfume, and the alternate light and dark of the flickering flame of the fire around which the dancers circled, there

was the pleasurable excitement that kept every sense tense to the changing scene. The lithe female forms, some of them with beautiful features, all of them with graceful limbs, and merry tones, and inviting smiles, as they tossed their round arms, and little hands, and nimble feet, in perfect rhythm with the drums, and marimba, and harps; and voices, male and female of the chorus, that, unacquainted with the harmony of the modern gamut, sang in unison of bass and treble and falsetto, fascinated Gaspar's eye, and compelled him to recognize the honorable claims of love.

Said his mother to him, as she directed his attention to certain ones of the graceful dancers:

"My son! Look! Seest thou not the tender eyes of this one, and the form that has no fault of that one, and the manner like a queen of the other? And wilt thou indeed go away and leave thy throne childless? Knowest thou not how many maidens rejoice awaiting the summons of their king?"

Gaspar did know. And he was not indifferent. His feelings were not deaf to the appeal to masculine passion. His mother had not needed to direct his attention to "this one" and "that one." His own heart,

in previous days, had already chosen one, though he had suppressed any words to her, or to his mother, the while that the insistent Voice was calling him to service. It had not been difficult for him to put aside his mother's pleas for herself and for his ambition. But, now he felt that her plea for love was weakening him. With a supreme effort, he replied:

"O! my mother! Speak no more! I will answer thee to-morrow. Let us go."

And he arose, tearing himself from the intoxicating scene; his mother hopeful that his answer on the morrow would be as she wished.

But, that night, alone with the Voice, he fought, with more bravery than he had ever used against wild beasts or human enemy, against himself.

When God's Spirit calls His great messengers to a supreme service, He first sends them alone into a wilderness to be tempted. And, afterwards, angels minister to them.

CHAPTER IV

A PILGRIM

"While his staff the traveler handles,
In his weary journeying,
Thorns may tear his dusty sandals,
Fangs his tender feet may sting."

When Gaspar emerged from his hour of temptation, a victor, he bore, in his entire being, the scars of the contest. The boyish youth had become a sedate man, with visage marred; the buoyancy of lighter years was exchanged for serious utterances; the varying passions of incompleteness were merged into what was to be his one passion of a search for the truth.

Tropical plants, under favoring combined warmth of sun, and moisture of rain, and food of fertile soil, rush in rampant life from seed to flower. But their haste is weakness. Gaspar, in his hour's growth, under fierce temptations, but with divine aid, stood up in vigorous manhood, being made perfect in suffering.

There yet remained the official duty of courteously sending away the few visitors who had remained after the dispersion of the assembly he had called; and the naming of temporary officers and their duties during his absence.

When his visitors had all gone, he arranged for his journey. It would be long; he knew not how long. He did not know whither he was going, except that he should look northward. Though young, he was dominant. Some of his subjects should accompany him, even if they had no faith in the object of the journey.

For the expenses of travel, part of the way, he would be met by the hospitality of the kings of tribes adjoining the Great River, which was to be his highway. Beyond that, for the distant land of Sihor, whose merchants he had known of by their occasional caravans, his servants should be laden with ivory, and ostrich feathers, and incense gums, and valued skins: which also should be part of the royal gifts which he, as a king, would offer on his presentation to the Child-King whom he was going to see and recognize as his Superior.

For his food, on most of the way, his followers, with spear and poisoned arrow, would supply themselves from the wild herds and flocks in forest or on plain, or from the river.

And so, on a day, the young king was ready for his pilgrim journey, with his laden retinue awaiting his command to start down

the Nile. He stood under the palms near the bank, below the surging falls where the Nyanza pours out itself to make the River of Sihor, called by others, because of its source, the River of the South. The brave young man still wore his insignia, a feather crest of white, from the tail of the ostrich, and red, from the tail of a parrot. The handsome, spotted skin of a leopard hung with easy carelessness about him, fastened by its own claws over his left shoulder. Tall and erect, the youthful development of his limbs stood out in graceful proportions. From his girdle hung a long, broad dagger, made by native artisans from natively smelted iron ore, suitable for defense in war, or as hunting knife in peace, or for service in clearing a path. In his right hand, a spear, whose curiously wrought head was a scepter in sign of his kingship, and whose long shaft served constantly as staff. It, with the dagger, on occasion would also be for defense.

And then he trod toward the north; for whose star, not yet visible on the misty horizon, he had been bidden to watch, toward which he should go in order to find the Greater Star that would lead him to the ultimate Light.

CHAPTER V

SEEKING A STAR

"Upward, where the stars are burning,
Silent, silent, in their turning
'Round the never changing pole;
Upward, where the sky is brightest,
Upward, where the blue is lightest,
Lift I now my longing soul."

With his face looking down stream, Gaspar would follow it for the two thousand miles until he should reach a place where it emptied itself into the Great Middle Sea. With large canoes, he could go with the current through all the river's devious ways, as long as its course was northward. Villages on the way would tell him of any of its enormous windings. At such places, he could barter for camels. And, on again striking the river, he could barter the camels for other canoes, sometimes gaining in the exchange.

Floating, he left behind him the Great Lake, and the Wuta-Nzinga. When the marshes obstructed, he took his way afoot through the forests, where were no human inhabitants to break the great silence of the dense woodland places. Yet those places were not entirely without inhabitants. There were paths he could follow through the brushwood, made by feet of wild beasts, whose



voices could be heard through the solitude, startling the silence; where even the trees also were whispering to each other their everlasting secrets. On such parts of the journey, during the long hours of forest silence and leafy shadows, there came to the heart of Gaspar the solemn thoughts to which such silence and such solitude give birth. He was alone in these communings; for he could not share his thoughts with his companions who had no sympathy with the expectations of his pilgrimage. In his loneliness, he sought companionship with the very spirit of solitude that seemed to him to move with him along the ridges of the hills, or rested with him under the tall trees, or crouched at the night bivouac among the bushes of the plain.

His journey led him past the kingdoms of the Sudan. Sometimes his path lay through the rough places of the mountains, among rocks with their jagged, broken edges; or, where the tall peaks lifted themselves like Babel-towers to woo the sky and be kissed by its clouds.

In the forests, there was ample opportunity of supplying himself with meat of the animals, the sound of whose rustling steps through the glades mingled with the rustle of the winds which still gently followed him from

the Great Lake he had left behind him. These lower brethren of the creation, great or small, seemed to dog his steps, as if they too wished to inquire into the mystery of his pilgrimage. Here, some wild animal would scurry slitheringly through the dense, tall, coarse grass of the wayside. There, the little, changeable or varicolored lizards darted out and in among the stones of their hiding places. Anon, a chameleon, with bulging eyes and puffed throat, wended its slow way along a low branch; and a mantis on a twig persisted in bending and bowing its head with clasped hands, as if in deference to him, or in prayer to the Creator of them both.

At other times, he seemed surrounded by invisible forms, a whole world of beings that were certainly living and moving, and yet, who, thus acutely present to his other senses, were invisible to his eyes. Though thus invisible, some weird thing, now and then, as if to prove its reality, would burst through the jungle within a short distance of him.

His journey was leading him past the rivers of Abyssinia, where the Blue Nile came to join the White. Day and night, after day and night, he traveled. At night, there was the continuous song of the frogs by the river-side; the monotonous shrilling of the crickets

among the bushes. Fireflies flitted in the open spaces, sailing softly into the dusk; as if verifying native superstition, that they were spirits lost and vainly lighting their way to the other world. The cicadas took up their evening song. Spiders deftly wove their webs in the gloom, to catch an unwary insect on the morrow. The enormous hawk moths buzzed among the fragrant incense trees, as night threw over the land the lingering twilight, that, in the moonlight, seemed to be the resurrection of the day that had just departed. In the shadows, as the heavily foliated tree branches swayed under the night wind, it did not require a distorted imagination easily to conjure up shapes that were monstrous productions of mythic legends and sinister in their mien. One could actually see in the gloom, that was begotten by the rank vegetation, the forms of fierce-looking beasts. These beasts were not making any sound; but Gaspar, fearless, found himself listening for them to break the stillness, and speak in some common language which they both could understand.

Before he should fall away into the sleep of needed rest, he sat in the moonlight, watching the filmy threads, like gossamer, woven by the insects of the night. He watched the

quiet moon, that, like an architect, was swinging her ladder slowly, steadily, higher and higher; and he almost wished he might mount with her among the stars. Perhaps there would be found the greater Star he had been bidden to follow. Then his thought was brought back to earth, the stillness of the night being broken by the occasional cry of jackals, hounding their prey, or, of an owl, as it flapped low in search of food.

In all those hours, there was a mystery that had not come to him in the crude realities of human habitation in the town he had left far south. As he gazed on the fantastic shadows that were cast by the moonlight on rocks and bush, on river, around him, the silence seemed to throb with a mysterious meaning. He prayed that Voice to tell him what that meaning was. But the Voice spoke only to direct the way. The meanings of life were to come later. He was asking in vain. For the full moon went on casting over plain or forest, as the case might be, her floods of silver light, with no light for his soul. It was indeed, some day, to be illumined, as that moon was now illuminating the ghostly murk with a brightness that brought out in startling clearness what before had been only a dark, ashy-colored landscape.

For his soul, there was yet to be a revelation, just as that same moon, glinting across the deep, somber jungle set with terrible thorns and a strange obscurity, bathed restfully the distant horizon of a great range of mountains. His soul was being prepared, by God's revelations of Himself in nature, for the greater revelation that was yet to be vouchsafed to him.

At night, under the moon, the loneliness of the silence dominated him with a sense of awe and majesty such as he had never felt before. His own kingdom and kingship and power as a ruler shrank into nothingness. The wide expanse around him gave him a formerly unknown sense of vastness. Was nothing there? Who was there? Would the Voice tell him?

And by daylight, the loneliness of the river became almost exasperating, shut in as he was by the monotonous, papyrus-fringed banks. It was like the exasperating loneliness of a prison cell. So different was it from any loneliness under the moonlight. That, though vague, was vast, and was like the restful solitude of a mountain top.

His journey carried him past the Great Desert. Even it had a peculiar glamour that seemed to swathe his soul with a garment of

peace. There were stretches of sandy waste. And, again there were lowly valleys between narrow ridges whose rocks were barely covered with a scant vegetation of fern or moss or bush. There the rising sun, in its first approaches, flushed the eastern spaces with delicate blushes; and, then, fully risen, it flung its shimmering waves of golden light on the tawny sands. Or, in the sunset hour, the towering rocks of the distant western hills were set aflame with golden rays wantoning in a departing glory.

His journey carried him past the deserts of Nubia; through regions without village or human dweller, where there was an utter silence from the sunrise to the sunset. But Gaspar was growing in knowledge. He was learning the lesson of the silent places.

His journey carried him past the Cataracts leading to the Land of Pharaoh.

He saw the level stretches off toward the Lybian desert, and the waterways on which the inhabitants hopefully cast the seed of their bread which they were to gather after many days. For, after the great rains of the interior, those level sands were clad with a soft mantle of tender grass and luxuriant herbage. Between the rains, there were hours of scorching sunshine, wearying to the human

eye that sickened under its glare; but in which the insects reveled, the butterflies coming out from their corners to dry their wings; the while that the heat haze threw a veil over the distant western hills, or lay in their narrow valleys, a mist dim as the dimness of a dream.

Many hours along the way, storms had overtaken him. At times, they were far away, the lightning flashing from point to point with intense photographs of the tops of the hills. At other times, he stood in the storm's path, in the midst of a deadly fusillade of hail and rain, when the small trickling rivulets would quickly be converted into roaring, impassable rivers, whose fierce currents washed into destruction the hapless man or beast caught in its path. The swirling floods would rise above their accustomed banks, carrying away the low-lying huts of the natives, and breaking up the traveler's camp. The lightnings, like great daggers, were thrust forward from the heavy black clouds, lighting up the horizon on every side as they fiercely struck at the bosoms of the surrounding hills, and into the hearts of the tall trees, making the very ambient air to quiver as in agony. Then, a few hours later, the stars above would be shining brightly

and peacefully, as if there had been no elemental war in the unspeakable clearness of the African sky. And below, in the vast expanse of prairie, or amid the giant rocks of the hills, would lie the quiet forms of the forest kings struck by the storm king in his path.

All along the route there had been delays at Gaspar's company's making of changes of mode of travel from canoe to foot and back again to canoe or camel. There had been detentions by tribes hostile to them, or covetous of the wealth of ivory they were carrying. There had been dangerous adventures, in their hunting of wild animals for meat, when the hunters had become the hunted, fleeing before enraged lions, leopards, elephants, or rhinoceroses, which they had not assaulted, but upon which they came in their own pursuit of zebra, giraffe, antelope or gazelle. There had been exciting escapes on the river, in running the gauntlet of bellowing hippopotami and deceptive crocodiles. But, as if with charmed lives, they had all survived.

And now their journey led them to Noph, and past the Pyramids, even then hoary with the dust of ages, into the Land of Goshen. There, all but one of Gaspar's followers deserted him. Their loyalty had been only

that of subjects bidden by a master. But the glamour of his kingly authority had vanished before their leader's growing humility and self-abnegation. From the beginning, they had little sympathy with the object of his journey. And his exalted expectations, and increasingly frequent references to a "Star," and a "King," and "Light," and "Service" became to them the utterances of a disordered mind, to whose vagaries they no longer trusted themselves. Moreover, the fascinations of the brilliantly seductive life, of which they had obtained glimpses in the Egyptian cities through which they passed, and in which the ivories and other goods had been exchanged for gold and gems and clothing and other supplies, carried them away. They deserted, taking with them most of their king's goods and gifts: only one man and a single camel-load remaining.

The star of the North, by which, every night, Gaspar had laid his course for the travel of the next day, just as mariners on the sea steadily watched it, had gradually, as he advanced, risen higher and higher, not deflecting to the right hand or the left. Other stars rose and sank or swayed aside. Orion, and Scorpio, and the Great Bear swung,

"Bending about their boundless beat,"

but this star of the North simply, steadily rose.

Just as Gaspar was about to proceed to enter the Field of Zoan, his feet were suddenly and forcibly deflected eastward as if drawn with cords of a man with bands of love. And he passed on through the Wilderness of Zin, joining himself to certain caravans of returning companies of Arabians and other Hebrew proselytes on their journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The North star had been Gaspar's guide simply as an earthly landmark. It was not the star which the Voices had led him to expect. He traveled now in the new direction simply because his feet seemed drawn thither. His new companions were traveling on the same route, but under commercial interests. But they observed his holy demeanor. They were not ignorant of the true God, from what they had heard on their former visits to Jerusalem, and some of them were professed believers. Gaspar learned much from them about the religion so new to him. And they confirmed his inquiry about a coming King, by telling him that they too had heard vague rumors, though they had given them little attention, of a Virgin and a Wonderful Babe that was to be born to her.

CHAPTER VI

TWO OTHER PILGRIMS

'From darkness, here, and weariness,
We ask not full repose;
Only be Thou at hand to bless
Our trial hour of woes.'

A month's slow journey of Gaspar brought him up through Edom and Moab, around the eastern side of the Salt Sea, and to where it is entered by the Jordan. One day, late in the afternoon, the caravan stopped to camp for the night. But Gaspar chose to continue his journey still farther.

As the setting sun threw his lonely shadow away from the River Jordan, he saw in advance of him a spot where were pitched some travelers' tents. As he approached, an old man, of patriarchal beard and kingly aspect, rose, and, advancing, said to him: "Brother! Peace be to thee! Thou art he whom the Spirit bade me await. I know thy errand. It is the same as mine and this other's," as he pointed toward a mailed soldier. "Thou hast done well in that thou hast come. Rest thee this night. On the morrow, we will cross this Jordan, and journeying westward, shall follow the Star."

At the word, Gaspar turned his face to the

West; and, in the twilight of the sun that had set, lo! the Star! And his soul saw a great light, and was glad with an exquisite joy. All through the fibers of his being he felt a new life, and a tingling certainty that his quest was not to be in vain. And, in the passionate devotion to his new-born love, he bowed his knee in reverential worship with the other two.

Those two also had been seekers of the truth. Like Gaspar, they had been seized, directed, and driven, and had obeyed the Voice. They had, in their own countries, gradually realized that what they had been worshipping was not the true God. Their ceremonies had no longer any meaning, except so far as some of them had been channels of feeling. Some of those ceremonies had been sinful, because misleading; and some, under misdirected sacrifice, had been cruel. But finally all these things they had cast behind them; and, for so doing, they had incurred ill will or denunciation by many of their fellows. Sincerely they were seeking the truth. Receptively and humbly, though themselves regarded by the multitude as "Wise Men," they were ready for a Teacher. The Voice had bade them go out on a journey, on which, though it might be long, their steps

would impulsively be carried on the proper route, and, at the proper moment, their eyes should be greeted by the sight of an unusual Star, following whose rays they would be led to One, born an uncrowned King who should be to them and to all the world the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

These two pilgrims inquired of Gaspar whence he came. After he had given them a simple outline of his journey from Central Africa, they told him of their own experiences. One of them, the gray-headed patriarch, told of his journey from Central Asia. He said, "I bade good-by to my household in the Far East, to travel toward the setting sun. I was a teacher. Men called me a king among philosophers. There was little sorrow in the parting; for, was I not to return with the pearls of knowledge which should enrich the crown of reverence I already wore among my fellows, as king among them? Nor did I start alone; a retinue of friends and servants have attended to my needs on the way. Those needs have been well supplied from the wealth of gems and gold and gifts that my laden camels are carrying to present to the King whose face I am to see. I crossed mountains, and rivers, and the plains of Mesopotamia, and reached the bank of this

Jordan. Here the Spirit bade me wait for the coming of this soldier and thyself."

The soldier then related how he had started from Central Europe: "I was a soldier, and had become like a king among men at arms. None wielded a mightier sword than I; the voice of no other captain spoke with greater power in my country's council. But wealth, ambition, power, did not satisfy my innermost longings. In vain, at Yggdrasill's Tree, did I pray for rest, and peace of mind, and knowledge of how rightly to serve. Still clad in this coat of mail, and with these trappings of horse, and retinue, I started, with gifts of gold and garments, a soldier tired of war, to seek the face of One who, the Spirit had revealed to me, was to be the Prince of Peace."

Gaspar interrupted him, asking how he knew the way. The soldier replied:

"I knew not the way. But, watching a stork in its southern passage, I thought that the One who showed the bird its way would show me mine."

He thought, as a modern poet has written,

"He, who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will guide my steps aright."

The soldier resumed his story, "Not war, but holiness, was written on the bells of my horses; and their hoofs trod firmly south-eastward, across Scythia and Parthia to Syria. And then they suddenly and powerfully turned eastward to the caravan track leading from Damascus down the valley of this Jordan on the left side of the river, until I came hither opposite to the Plain of Jericho. Here I met this venerable patriarch. And we two, in the oneness of our common quest, knew each other. For, the old man said to me: 'Brother, is it well with thee? Thou hast done well to come. I have waited for thee. And together we shall cross this Jordan; but first on this side we must wait for another.' And now thou art come."

The young king sat, listening respectfully to the kingly old man and the knightly soldier. With intense eagerness his hungry mind absorbed the knowledge they gave him from their higher civilization; and his thirsty soul drank in the light they brought him from their own spiritual acquisitions.

CHAPTER VII

FOLLOWING THE STAR

"Onward through the darkness of the lonely night,
Shining still before them with Thy kindly light,
Guide them, Jew and Gentile, homeward from afar,
Young and old together, by Thy guiding Star."

The journey of the cavalcade of the three kings, from their next day's camp on the Plain of Jericho, was made mostly by night. They rested during the daytime, from preference to avoid the crowd; and awaiting the reappearance of the Star as it came out of the sky at each twilight hour. It differed from all other stars: for, "one star differeth from another star in glory." Not the uncertain twinkle of a far-off, distant star; nor the mild smile of a near planet; nor the cold light of an earthly moon; nor the glare of a daily sun; nor the shimmering stream of a northern aurora; nor a blazing comet with nebulous tail; nor the flickering ray of a will-o'-the-wisp, but steady, warm, pure, the sheen of whose lambent beam was sufficiently remote to hold its divine origin, and yet near enough to play its human part as guide.

The path they trod at that season of the year was a well-traveled route. They journeyed safely; more safely than a certain man who, some years later, on that same route,

going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves. As they approached the Holy City their little company became part of a continuous procession of merchants, and worshipers, and visitors, and home-coming travelers from distant portions of the world. In increasing numbers, they met with men, who, with varying grounds of interest, of curiosity, of ambition, of trembling hope, or humble reverence, spoke of what they had heard from other travelers, going the other way, of the strange news, much talked of in Jerusalem, of a woman named Mary and her infant, whose recent birth had been heralded by an angel with a multitude of the heavenly host.

As they finally entered the city, this story grew more thrilling in interest and with larger detail of glorious incidents; how that, more than a month previously, certain shepherds, abiding in the field and keeping the night watches over their flocks, had been made sore afraid by a sudden apparition of the angel of the Lord, his glory shining round about them, and bidding them to go to the city of David, and there find Him who was born Christ the Lord; to be known by the sign of a Babe lying in a manger of the stable of the public khan.

"Cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child that would be King one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine."

The Star still shone; but it no longer moved. The three kings believed it was waiting to guide them farther; but they knew not whither. They anxiously inquired of the multitudes whom they met thronging the city's streets: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For, in our journey from the East, we have seen His Star, and are come to worship Him. We have come thus far; for we are told that Zechariah, one of His Prophets, wrote of Him, 'Shout! O! Daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh.' Is it in Jerusalem that He is born?" And they began to be troubled.

When the Roman king, Herod, had heard of these things, he also was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Rome held Judea a part of its empire, as a captive, and by force of arms. Judea submitted, not willingly, but simply because she was conquered. She paid tribute to Augustus Kaiser only under compulsion. Her hopes were alert for any descendant of her illustrious former King David, who should lead his people Israel in successful rebellion. Herod trembled at the

thought of a rival aspirant for his throne having been heralded from the sky by the miraculous Light and Voice of song, of which his guards and spies had kept him informed. He gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and demanded of them where the Child should be born. And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the Prophet Micah, 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.'"

That was definite; the locality was distinctly named; the village of Bethlehem, only five miles south of Jerusalem. But, as promptly came to Herod's thought the question, "How long is it since this royal Child was born?" His instant determination to destroy this possible aspirant to his throne made necessary a knowledge of its age, and what limit of time would probably include this Babe among the other babes of Bethlehem whom he was already planning to massacre, in the certainty of destroying Him with them. He too had heard, through his spies, of these kingly visitors being led by a Star visible only to them, who, without display of glory

for themselves and demanding none for the nations whom they represented, had shown themselves so willing and anxious to bow in worship to this new royal Babe. He dismissed the assembly. And then he privately called the Wise Men, and diligently inquired of them at what time the Star had appeared. They told him the number of months. To cover up his murderous design, he acted the part of a fellow-seeker, who wished to join them in reverence for this King of nations who was to bring peace to men of good will. He bade them go to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him; bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also."



CHAPTER VIII

BETHLEHEM

"O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by:
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night."

The three kings listened to what Herod said; and they departed, going toward the village of the House-of-Bread. And lo! the Star, which had traveled westward in their journey from the East, and which had been stationary during the days of their delay in Jerusalem, now went before them again, but southward. And, when they saw the Star in this new movement, they rejoiced with exceeding joy; for they felt sure that the vision they had been seeking was soon to greet their eyes.

Only a two hours' travel to the little town and into its streets; and the Star slowly sank, and again stood still, but now directly over the house where the young Child was!

Not the stable of the khan, where, in the manger of an ox's stall, the Babe had been seen by the shepherds more than forty days previously. During that interval,

the crowd that had filled the town, having come to register themselves according to their family, for the taxing made during the governorship of Cyrenius of Syria, had mostly returned to their homes. The Holy Family, on whom the hour of women's trial had fallen just when the Virgin arrived, wearied with her journey from Galilee; and for whom, even in her distress, there was no room in the inn, nor, under the overtaxed hospitality of the town and her narrow finances, could shelter be found other than a corner in the caravansery, had by now obtained better quarters in a house.

In that interval also, the family had made a visit to Jerusalem, the mother to perform in the Temple her rite of purification, according to the Law; she presenting, in her poverty, the minimum of legal offering, two young doves, the one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering. Into that Temple also the Patriarch Simeon and the Prophetess Anna had been led by the Spirit at the same hour, in order that they might recognize in the Child Jesus the Light that was to lighten the Gentiles and all them who looked for a Redeemer.

And now the representatives of the Gentile world stood at His door! And when the three

Wise Men were come into the house, they saw
the young Child with Mary, His mother.
And they fell down and worshiped, not her,
but Him! What a moment of glory, after
their long journey! Their eyes saw and their
hearts claimed the King they had sought.

CHAPTER IX

GIFTS

"Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odors of Edom and offerings Divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?"

And when the three kings opened their treasures they gave unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. They recognized with reverence the woman whom thenceforth all nations were to call "Blessed," because of the distinguishing honor that had been laid on her of being the human mother of the Divine Child, yet who was still only an imperfect human being like themselves. But they bowed in worship before the divinity of her Child. It was to Him that their gifts were made, in tribute of His kingship. But those gifts enriched the mother also. She now had wealth. No longer the humble offerer of the pitifully small sacrifice of two little birds. She could now feed and clothe her Child and herself as their health required, aside from the earnings Joseph might make at his carpenter's bench. And thus there was ample means provided for all the family expenses during the years of their unexpected journey to and residence in Egypt.

In the semicircle that now stood with admiration in front of the Child, as He sat on His mother's knee, Gaspar at one end of the curve was near to her right-hand side. Of the three, he had given least. The remnant that remained after the robbery and desertion by his people in Egypt, had left him little, in comparison with the large wealth of the other two. But, in giving of his poverty, would not the Master count that he had given more than they all?

While thus he stood, in rapt emotion, as they severally spoke with the mother, who told them of her own Magnificat while in the home of her cousin Elisabeth in the hill-country of Judea, of the shepherds' visit, and of Simeon's Nunc Dimittis, Gaspar with his left hand was leaning on his spear, whose shaft was thus close to the Babe. The Child's attention had been attracted towards the faces of the three as they spoke. His gaze rested on Gaspar's color, darker than that of the others. And His little hand, in infantile activity, touched and grasped that shaft. Was this a claim? In the impulsive affection of his race, Gaspar's heart and life flung themselves out of self at the thought of service to this new King. Nothing was to be reserved. His feather crest had gone, piece-

meal, on the journey. His spear, that had been scepter, was the last sign of his own royalty. But instantly he laid it at the feet of Jesus. It might be the Child's toy!

Was that spear, abandoned by the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt, discovered by a Roman soldier at the massacre of the innocents, preserved by him as a trophy, kept in the soldiers' barracks as a curio, the same spear that thirty-two years later was to pierce the side of the Man of Calvary?

The three kings remained at Bethlehem that night, planning for their return journey by way of Jerusalem and Herod. Now that they had seen the Christ with their eyes, and believed on Him with their hearts, they were in haste to go back to their peoples, as first missionaries, to summon them also to the light and joy of this new and only true worship. But, in the night season, the same Spirit that long months before had first come to them as a whispering Voice, and later as a controlling Influence, and still later as a guiding Star, but which they now knew was the Messenger of the Great God Himself, came to them in a dream, revealing to them Herod's murderous plans, and warned them that they should not return to Jerusalem. Therefore, they departed into their own

countries by other separate and devious and secret routes. They went also in haste; for they knew not what spies of King Herod might have followed them; or what vindictive hand might be laid on themselves when it should be discovered that they had mocked him, in failing to bring back a report to him.

CHAPTER X

FOLLOW ME

"If I find Him, if I follow,
What's my portion here?
Many a sorrow, many a labor,
Many a tear."

Gaspar went toward the south to Egypt, by the way of the Philistines that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Though much of the way was desert, he and his camel and his one faithful attendant went on their way rejoicing. For, though poor, he had found the Pearl of Great Price. And his life was just then a *Te Deum*.

Arrived in Egypt, his one thought was to get back to his kingdom in the land of the Lakes by the Mountain of the Moon, to call his subjects to the worship of the true God. But the problem was how to get back to his home. It would be barely possible to go afoot the long, long way. The certain dangers from wild beasts and wilder men, now that he was a lonely traveler, he was perfectly ready to risk and bear. But he had no means with which to purchase his daily supplies on that year's journey to the equator. He was ready for any plan that was honest and just. His crest had gone; his scepter was laid down.

He made no claim of name or origin. He hired himself as camel-driver and boatman to a company of merchants who were going for trade toward his far interior. Their numbers gave protection; and their wage gave him and his companion their necessary food and clothing.

Thus they ascended the river, toward Ethiopia, going south and ever southward over the route that a year before he had descended as a king. Across the same plains, over the same mountains, into the same deserts, through the same forests; in the midst of danger and privation and disease and obstruction; his employers regarding, at first with suspicion, and then with ridicule, and finally as the utterances of a madman, the story of a wonderful Child who was to be each repentant sinner's Redeemer and the entire world's Ruler, which he persisted in repeating day after day, to the inhabitants of the villages where they camped. He was sowing by all waters.

The journey of his merchant employers reached its end. And Gaspar went on with his one human friend, afoot, the not many weeks' distance to his own former home. There he arrived, poor, destitute, worn in body, broken in health, and prematurely aged,

but undaunted in his purpose to win his hereditary kingdom for the Christ. Personal ambition did not enter into his simple plan. He would use the power which he supposed belonged to him to forbid his people their heathen practices and evil customs. Thus clearing the way, he would, supported by his one faithful witness, tell the story of the Ruler of the world whom he had found, as the only Way and the Truth and the Life. In his own intense conviction and belief, he expected that his people would believe and follow.

But, nothing having been heard of him, they had believed him dead. In the years of his absence he had been forgotten. And now they thought him mad. Loyalty was accorded him by but a small party. His mother had died in obscurity. No maiden hands waved him a welcome. And the regent, when asked to step aside and vacate the throne, refused. The party that supported Gaspar in his claims, demanding for him his hereditary rights, were not all of them enthusiastic for his programme of civilization. They admitted his right as king, but were opposed to any change in the order of things. Only a few were earnest in the joy of the salvation they had received in his teachings.

The forces arrayed against them were in a majority. Instead of the regent and his party being called rebels, this name was flung at Gaspar and his adherents. Party spirit ran high and fierce. Rebellion was in the land. Thousands were marshaled for war. Gaspar's force was the smaller. Against him were combined the personal interests of those in actual power. The priesthood class, almost to a man, resented the item on the proposed new programme that did away with the diviners and soothsayers. Their craft was in danger. Customs hoary with age, even cruel and sometimes burdensome, cried out with a voice that appeals to all Orientals for their continuance, simply on the ground that they were customs.

"O! Lord, how long?" has for its answer, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." Following Jesus may mean pain and death. For millions it has meant persecution, torture, massacre, the cross and the stake.

CHAPTER XI

A PRINCE OF PEACE

"It hath been said, that, an unjust Peace
Is to be preferred before a just War."

Gaspar carried on the campaign, knowing he was fighting, not for his personal or political rights, but for essential righteousness and the best interests of the land. But his broken health made him unequal to the task. The agents of the Prince of the Power of the Air were more active than he. There had been skirmishes and ambushes and loss of life and confusion.

The day came when the two forces were arrayed for the final contest. Gaspar did not value his life, except so far as it could be useful in the service of his King of righteousness. He looked at his small band of followers and then at the host of their enemies. To die himself would be easy. But, knowing that not all in his company were fighting for Christ, but for himself, he hesitated. He doubted whether it was wise or best to permit them to lose their lives for him. And still more, he began to doubt whether even the truth would be advanced by force of arms. It had entered his own heart and life, not by external force, but by internal

conversion. (In later times, Islam has spread itself by war's compulsion; but it has not made men's hearts better.)

Gaspar deliberately chose to sacrifice himself and his earthly positions, hoping that with continued life of himself and the few believers, the truth might quietly leaven the heathen, and finally assert itself. He stepped forward between the two armies, and offered to resign all personal claims, and cease all political opposition, on condition that all lives should be saved and peace proclaimed. His enemies accepted his offer, but only on the additional proviso that he himself should go into exile. In the hope that this farther self-sacrifice would demonstrate the sincerity of his profession that he had been fighting for the good of his country and not for himself, he consented. But he realized that his expectation of a wholesale conversion of his people had failed. And the failure broke him. Hope deferred made him heartsick. He had come to his own, as did his Master, and his own received him not.

It was his Gethsemane.

CHAPTER XII

AWAITING

"Only waiting, till the shadows
Are a little longer grown."

Driven into exile, Gaspar left houses and land, for the Kingdom of God's sake. He was wifeless and childless. Followed by only a faithful few, he left his home by the shore of the Nyanza, and slowly traveling westward, he came to the valley of the Ruwenzori range of mountains. Sick in body and broken in spirit, he was not an object of dread to the paramount chief of the people of that region. Strict oriental hospitality assured him the safety and protection accorded to any refugee who places himself at the host's door and demands the right of a guest. As a deposed king, aloof from all political affiliations, he was not a disturbing factor in the government of that country. His one interest in life, that monopolized his entire energy, the telling of the story of King Jesus, with a passionate love, that, though quiet, was deep, was regarded by most of the men and women who listened to that story, if not with indifference, with only the amused interest that they gave to the folklore legends told in their streets at their moonlight gatherings. But he

told the story over and over again. It was ever dearer and sweeter to himself as he saw his days were becoming fewer, his strength less, and his breath drawn with greater difficulty. With no earthly bonds of position or relationship he was free to serve. That service he gave with a devotion unwearied by anything but physical exhaustion. Not wearied at the indifference with which his message was received by his audiences, he only knelt in more earnest prayer that their eyes might be opened, as his had been.

Hills, in that part of Africa, are venerated as possessing in their caves and fissures the burial places of some long-past chief of influence, or of a succession of dynastic kings, whose resting places are known to the interested few. Gaspar felt the end was near. To his native belief in a future had been added a trust in a resurrection; and that the enthroned Child-King would again come into the world, presaged by an eastern Star, to claim His own.

One morning he looked off toward the great snow-clad peaks of Ruwenzori. He saw their white diadem gleaming rosy in the sun's first kiss. They were the source of strange superstitions among the people whose region they guarded. He had risen above superstition;

to him they spoke of the eternal mystery toward which his life was ebbing. He bade his followers carry him thither, to ascend the mountain side as far as they possibly could toward the white diadem, and there lay him in one of its caves. As they did so, his life passed out, not into a mystery, but into an eternal reality, where he should see in His beauty the King whom he had first seen in Bethlehem as a child.*

*I am aware of the German tradition that the Empress Helena, finding the bones of the Magi, brought them to Constantinople; and that they were subsequently deposited in a reliquary shrine in the Cologne Cathedral. But that legend fails to explain how those men, who had "departed into their own country," happened to be buried in Palestine.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BREAKING OF THE DAWN

"Light of the lonely Pilgrim's heart!
Star of the coming Day!
Arise! and with thy morning beams
Clear all our griefs away!"

The followers of Gaspar, left without a guide, without organization, with no one authoritatively to continue his teachings, were soon scattered among the millions of their countrymen. Though each retained for himself as much of the truth as he had obtained, they had no written word to which to refer, or on which to base appeals that they continued to make among their neighbors and friends. But the clouds of heathenism closed around them. And, as, one by one, they passed out of life, the remaining torches, which they faithfully tried to carry, became fewer and burned more dimly. That generation having passed, and there still being no written word to hand down to their children, their names and words and memories became only tradition; and a long night again settled down on the land.

It might have been said that Gaspar's work had been in vain, were it not that his people never forgot the fact of the existence of a

Great Spirit, the Creator of all things, even though they continued to direct their superstitious worship to lower spirits; nor was the tradition of a Star-of-Long-Ago entirely forgotten, though it became only a folklore legend.

There are rivers that, rushing from snowy mountain sides, plunge through canyons, and out onto dry plains, and apparently disappear, sinking into the sands of the desert. But they are not lost. Trickling their hidden way in the darkness of the earth's strata, through clay, and by rocky fissures, they burst again to light, as springs, as rivulets, from subterranean streams, to gladden the eyes and hearts of dwellers in other parts of the earth.

Gaspar's stream of sacred truth was not lost; it was only hidden for a time in the hand of Him, with whom a thousand years are as one day.

More than eighteen hundred years afterward, to that land of the Nyanza's inland sea, came, one day, a white stranger whom his servants later called "Bula-matari." On the throne of that land sat Mtesa*, a descendant of one of the many successive dynasties that had ruled since the days of Gaspar. The

* That was the name of one of my employés at Benita, on the Equatorial West Coast, in 1870.

stranger was a believer in King Jesus. He wrote for Mtesa, in that king's language, the story of the Child who was born to be King of kings. When this white stranger went back to his own country of the Good Queen, he bore to her Christian subjects a petition from Mtesa that teachers should be sent to guide his people in this new Way. The astute king was thinking only of the benefits of the civilization which he saw was associated with that Way. But he built better than he knew.

That petition was promptly responded to. Preachers and teachers, men and women, went out from England to Uganda. Churches were built; schools were established. Along with the truth for the souls of men, Mackay brought to their hands the tools and mechanical industries that gratified the crafty king, as proofs of a civilization which he valued even though he failed to recognize the Christianity of which that civilization was only a fruit.

With the printed word, the faith of converts was assured. They grew in numbers. Evil customs were changed.

Then, heathenism raged for its threatened throne. And other powers of evil came in to resist the truth. Islam came, with its sensual future. Romanism came, with its

mariolatry. Persecution came; and the stake again claimed its martyrs.

As in past ages, out of martyr dust have sprung up in Central Africa hundreds of churches, and thousands of schools, and tens of thousands of believers on the Babe of Bethlehem.

EPILOGUE

Could Gaspar, from his grave on Ruwenzori, know and see and hear, he would find, in Uganda's churches and worshipers of to-day, the beginning of the realization of the kingdom for which he gave his life. In that mountain cave his earthly dust awaits the coming of the King, to whom, some day, all Ethiopia shall suddenly stretch her hands in humble tribute and reverential adoration.