

F. B.

TREASURE  
IN  
EARTHEN  
VESSELS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By  
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CHARACTERS

IN ACTS I AND IV

- NATHAN - - An old Christian.  
SARAH - - His wife.  
ZABDI - - A young Jew influenced by the Christians.  
ASAPH - - Zabdi's father, a tax-collector.  
TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS.

IN ACTS II AND III, NATHAN'S STORY.

- NATHAN - - The Christian, as a young Jew.  
TOBIAS - - A jovial peasant, his friend.  
TEACHER - - The village teacher at Panath.  
NEKASIM - - The rich man of Panath, and Sarah's father.  
HULDAH - - A peasant.  
TWO OR THREE OTHER PEASANTS.  
JOHN - - Tobias's young son.  
MOTHER - - Nathan's mother.  
SARAH - - Nathan's wife.  
SIMON-BAR-JONAH - A rough fisherman of Capernaum.  
RACHEL - - Simon's wife, and Sarah's domestic help.

(Pronunciation of names. Zabdi is Zab-die; Panath is Par-nath; Nekasim is N'kar-zeem, and the others are as usual.)

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## THE ACTION

ACT I. Nathan's house in Capernaum, A.D. 65.

ACT II. The village of Panath, A.D. 25.

SCENE 1. The village guest-chamber.

SCENE 2. The Field of the Black Earth.

SCENE 3. Nathan's home.

ACT III. Nathan's house in Capernaum, A.D.  
27-29.

SCENE 1. The house, A.D. 27.

SCENE 2. The house, A.D. 29.

SCENE 3. The house, A.D. 29 some months later.

ACT IV. Nathan's house in Capernaum, A.D. 65,  
an hour or so after Act I.

(For the purpose of the play the year 4 B.C. is accepted as the birth-year of Jesus, and A.D. 29 as the crucifixion-year.)

### STAGE DIRECTIONS

Stage directions are all given from the point of view of the actors. Except in Act II, Scene 2, the entrances and exits are all from 'L'—i.e., from the audience's right.

### APPENDIX.

Notes on producing the play, including descriptions of Costumes and Properties, will be found in the Appendix, pp. 62-74. These should be consulted for any difficulties that may arise during the reading (e.g. 'the bosom of his jacket,' p. 7), as well as to get a mental picture of the actors and their dresses.

## Treasure in Earthen Vessels

### ACT I

SCENE.—A ROOM IN NATHAN'S HOME IN CAPERNAUM,  
ABOUT A.D. 65.

(As the curtain rises NATHAN, a venerable old man with a white beard, is seen sitting on a stool in R foreground. He is reading a parchment roll, carefully unwinding it from one spool on to the other as he progresses. A smile irradiates his face from time to time, and he nods approval. His face is full of beauty, the beauty of the soul, in spite of an ugly scar which runs down the right-hand side from temple to chin. His wife SARAH is a little younger than he, but her hair is quite grey. She is busy preparing their simple supper at a rough-hewn table in centre of stage, at which two chairs are placed, one facing audience, the other on L. The supper consists of two round, thin cakes of unleavened bread, and a clotted mass of figs, contained in earthenware dishes. A jug of milk or water, and two mugs—earthenware again—are standing on the table. But there is neither cutlery nor crockery—except the mugs—for the participants in the meal)

SARAH.—Nearly ready now, husband.

NATHAN.—It will be welcome, Sarah. Even we Christians need food for the body. And He (*looking up*) gives it to us . . . (*drawing her attention to the parchment roll*). And He gives us the more sustaining food, Sarah. It was written of old that man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God. And truly, Sarah, I believe that God still has His prophets through whom He speaks.

SARAH (*still bustling about*)—Why truly He has, Nathan. Did we not ourselves hear the words which He spoke through His Holy Servant, Jesus?

NATHAN.—Nay, but Sarah, I believe that He is *still* speaking. Did you not pay attention to the words which I read in the fellowship here last night? It was a copy of the letter which Paul the Pharisee sent to the believers in Corinth.

SARAH.—Yes, Nathan, indeed I did. And truly there was a ring of power in his words. Read them again to me now. I am nearly ready with the food.

NATHAN.—He speaks of ‘the glorious good tidings of the Christ, who is the image of God,’ and then he goes on (*reading in a sonorous voice, as if to a meeting*) ‘For God has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus the Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the marvel of this new power may be seen to come from God, and not from our own poor personalities. And so, although we are hard pressed, we are not really distressed; although perplexed, we do not despair; though persecuted, we are

not deserted; though struck to the ground, we are never destroyed.’

(*During the reading SARAH has finished her preparations, and is now sitting on chair L of table, chin in hands, listening intently, a rapt look on her face. But she pulls herself together as NATHAN finishes this passage, and is once again the practical housewife.*)

SARAH.—Do come along, Nathan, or I shall never be able to get these things cleared away to-night.

NATHAN.—Forgive me, my dear. It is so easy to forget earthly things when walking with the feet of the spirit. I am sorry.

(*NATHAN carefully rolls up the parchment, tying it round with a piece of dark blue tape. He then moves over to the table, at the same time secreting the parchment in the bosom of his jacket. When he is seated, and is in the act of reaching out for the bread, a timid knock is heard at the door. He glances towards it, then nods to SARAH, who rises, and then hesitates.*)

SARAH.—Who can it be, at this time of the night? Perhaps (*a note of terror comes into her voice*) they have heard of the meeting here last night. Perhaps they have come to take us before the magistrates as Christians!

NATHAN.—I should go and see, my dear. Do not be afraid. If it is His will that we should suffer to spread His name, so be it. Go.

(*SARAH goes to door L and asks through it*)

SARAH.—Who is it?

ZABDI (*offstage*)—It's me.

SARAH (*with obvious relief*).—It is a lad's voice, Nathan.

NATHAN.—Let him in, Sarah.

(SARAH pulls the bolt out, and opens the door quickly, admitting ZABDI. She closes it even more quickly, immediately re-bolting it. ZABDI stands just inside the door. He is a boy of fifteen or sixteen, the son of ASAPH, a wealthy tax-collector of Capernaum. He is almost weeping, yet there is a radiance about his face that tells of some inner joy.)

NATHAN.—Well, my boy, and what do you want? . . . (*recognizing him*) Are you not the boy who came into the meeting last night?

ZABDI (*struggling with his tears*)—Yes, sir, I did come to the meeting last night. And now . . . my father has thrown me out of the house! Oh, what shall I do?

(*The last words rush forth with a sob, and ZABDI's tears get the better of him. SARAH puts her arm round his heaving shoulders.*)

SARAH.—There, there! . . . Don't you break your heart, my boy. . . . We'll find some way out. . . . Never you worry. . . . (*As there is a lull in the sobs*) There, that's better!

NATHAN.—Come now, my boy. You will join us in our supper. Food first, troubles after.

(SARAH leads ZABDI to her own chair on L of table, and brings up stool for herself on R of table. She does not bother to get another mug. ZABDI sits

*silently, and gazes with wonder in his eyes as NATHAN tenderly, reverently, takes hold of one of the unleavened cakes and breaks it into three portions, slowly and devoutly saying.)*

NATHAN.—In memory of the Lord Jesus. (*He hands a piece each to ZABDI and SARAH, and retains the other.*)

SARAH.—Now please feel that you are at home, my boy!

NATHAN.—The home of a lover of Jesus is the home of all lovers of Jesus.

SARAH.—Help yourself to some figs, my boy. (*She breaks some off the block, and motions him to do the same. They are to eat with the bread.*) But I can't go on calling you 'boy' always. What is your name?

ZABDI.—Zabdi. My father is Asaph, the collector of taxes for the Roman government.

SARAH (*scornfully, yet with sorrow also in her voice*)—That man?

ZABDI.—Yes, I know he is cruel to the poor people. But he always says, 'We have to live, you know, Zabdi, even if it means squeezing the life-blood from other people into our own veins to do it.'

NATHAN.—There are many answers to that, Zabdi! But we are concerned with you just now. You say he has thrown you out. Why?

ZABDI.—Because I told him I was a Christian.

NATHAN.—A Christian! But last night was the first time that you have been to the fellowship! And you are but a boy!

ZABDI.—Cannot a boy love Jesus, sir? And can he not fall in love with Him in one night?

SARAH.—Well spoken, Zabdi!

NATHAN.—True, Zabdi! Yet to love Jesus truly means more than a mere stirring of the emotions. True love always costs, always means pain. Do you know what it costs to be a Christian, to love Jesus? It means mocking, excommunication, beating—maybe death. The Roman government which your father serves is becoming every day more harsh in punishing those who publicly confess themselves as Christians. Knowing *that* one must have more than a passing attraction for Jesus to remain true to Him.

ZABDI.—Oh, sir, I have! I love Him truly. I am ready to suffer for Him.

SARAH.—How did you come to love Him as much as that, Zabdi?

NATHAN.—It must have happened very suddenly. Like stepping from darkness into light.

ZABDI.—Yes, sir, it was just like that! How did you know?

NATHAN (*smiling*).—Well, Zabdi, you are not the first person in the world to fall in love with Jesus—or the last!

SARAH.—But tell us both how it happened, Zabdi!

ZABDI.—Well, it was while you, sir, were reading that letter last night. (NATHAN'S *hand strays instinctively to where the precious parchment is concealed*) Some of the words you read seemed to go round and round in my head, like words of fire—just as if I had been staring at the sun, and had seen them

written there, and even when I looked away was blinded to everything else. 'This treasure,' they said. 'The light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.' 'This treasure.' And I seemed to see it all quite suddenly—the light in the face of Jesus—and that face was the face of God smiling on me. There was a . . . (*doesn't quite know how to put it*) a kind of a glow all round me. I knew that God loved me. Me! It seemed as though I had been groping about in a dark cave, and then suddenly a door opened, and there was a shining chamber full of blazing gold and gleaming jewels. In fact, sir, I still seem to be walking about in a strange glow of light! . . .

NATHAN.—You have indeed found the treasure which is past all reckoning, Zabdi!

ZABDI (*coming to earth with a bump*).—And then I went home and told my father. I felt sure that he would understand and be glad. But . . . he told me to put such silly nonsense out of my head! He said that I was going to be a business man, not a dreamer. But it *isn't* a dream! I *feel* different now!

NATHAN.—Yes, Zabdi. I know just how you feel. Heaven grant that you may never forget that glow of light when you first saw the treasure of God's love in the face of Jesus!

SARAH (*praying with eyes open, head upwards*).—Amen! Lord Jesus, stay near to the lad!

ZABDI.—Then you believe me, sir?

NATHAN.—Of course I do, my son! Why, Jesus shines from your face! It *isn't* just a dream. You are right, and your father is wrong.

SARAH (*smiling*)—Youth is right, sometimes, then, Nathan?

NATHAN (*also smiling, as he looks at her*)—Yes, my dear, sometimes! (*turning to ZABDI*) Jesus does make men feel different, Zabdi. And when you have seen *Him* you have seen the treasure that is worth more than a hundred caves packed full of gold and jewels.

SARAH.—Nathan *knows*, Zabdi, for when he was a youth he chose wrongly. He did not find the real treasure of life, because he thought that gold could give him all he desired. And while he trusted in gold the years passed by, and the real treasure lay undiscovered. Blessed be the name of Jesus that *you* have found the treasure early in life!

NATHAN.—Yes, Zabdi. When I was still young I was able to tread a pathway paved with gold. And I thought I should be happy. But I was actually very sad at heart. And then I began to walk in the new Way—the Way of Jesus. And I found happiness. I was full of joy. And yet it was a road full of sharp stones!

ZABDI.—It is passing strange, father Nathan!

NATHAN.—It is, Zabdi, my son. It is one of the mysteries of God. The way of gold brings friendships, salutations, what is called 'life.' The way of Jesus brings misunderstanding, blows, perhaps death. It needs courage to tread that way. But it is the way to eternal life—to God!

SARAH.—You will be frightening the lad soon, Nathan.

NATHAN.—His courage must be tested.

SARAH.—Perhaps he would understand better if you told him your story, from the beginning.

ZABDI.—Yes, father Nathan, please do. I feel just now that I don't know which way to go. There are two voices, my father's, and the voice of Jesus. And they call me to different ways . . . Can it be right to disobey my father?

NATHAN.—Sometimes it is right, Zabdi. It is right when the voice of Jesus commands you to disobey—by obeying your earthly father then you would be disobeying the Father in Heaven . . . But listen, then! See if my story helps you to make up your mind.

SARAH.—Do not be afraid to eat, Zabdi! It is a long story, and the mind listens best when the voice of appetite is silent. You are young, and you need more than we old people.

(ZABDI *breaks himself a piece from the second cake, and takes some more figs, and eats slowly while NATHAN proceeds with his story.*)

NATHAN.—We have not always lived here in Capernaum, Zabdi. I used to live with my mother in a little village a day's journey from here. It is called Panath. My father was killed in a bandits' raid when I was but a baby. I was badly hurt, and bear the scar to this day, as you see. But the bandits did not find where my father had hidden his small savings. It was the custom with our people, you see, to bury their money in the ground, or to hide it in holes in rocks, because bandits often used to attack the lonely villages. But mother knew where the money was, and it

was enough to keep us both in food and clothing until I was old enough to earn a little by raising corn on the field allotted to me each year. (*A puzzled frown appears on ZABDI'S brow. NATHAN laughs.*) But I see you are puzzled. You do not know about our country custom of allotting the common ground of the village year by year. I wonder if I can paint a good enough picture of it? I want you to see me—quite a young man then—sitting in the bare village guest-chamber with my neighbours. We are waiting for the village teacher to come and appoint to us by lot our fields for the coming year.

ZABDI (*gazing into distance*)—Yes, I think I can see you, father Nathan!

(*During NATHAN'S last speech the curtain has been gradually closing, and the lights slowly fading. As the stage grows dimmer the voices become softer, as if sounding from far away. ZABDI'S last words are spoken in a whisper, and the remaining small opening in the curtain vanishes. Actors and audience are back in the time of NATHAN'S youth*)

## ACT II

THE VILLAGE OF PANATH, A.D. 25.

SCENE I. THE VILLAGE GUEST-CHAMBER.

(*The village guest-chamber is a small square building, made, like the rest of the houses, of rough-hewn stone. It is devoid of all furniture. The handful of men present, of varying ages, are sitting on the ground tailor-fashion, in an incomplete semi-circle. NATHAN, now a very young man, the youngest present, can be distinguished by the long scar running down his face—he is sitting in the R foreground, so that the scar is quite visible. Next to him, on his L, is TOBIAS, with whom NATHAN is conversing. TOBIAS is stout, jolly, and rather unkempt. Three or four other peasants are arranged in ascending order of age to the L of TOBIAS. They are all waiting for the coming of NEKASIM, the oldest, and the rich man of the village, to complete the semi-circle of squatting figures, and of the village TEACHER, who will be at the centre of the semi-circle.*)

NATHAN (*to TOBIAS*)—I tell you, Tobias, it is not fair. If my father had not been killed by those bandits—

TOBIAS.—Peace, peace, Nathan, my friend. Your father *was* killed. You should be thankful that you were not killed, too! By the life of my beard, it is only because of your good lungs that you are here



to-day, sitting waiting for the Teacher and Nekasim—and grumbling all the time!

NATHAN.—How do you mean—‘because of my good lungs’?

TOBIAS.—Why, has your mother never told you the story, Nathan? (NATHAN shakes his head.) Well, when your poor father was gasping his last, you awoke suddenly and started crying. One of the bandits slashed at you with his knife—you’ll never lose that decoration he gave you, not to your dying day, you won’t! Well, then you yelled fit to raise the dead! And you did raise the living. What with your squalling, and your mother’s screaming, the whole village was awake in no time, and the bandits had to run for it. . . . Yes, Nathan, it’s useful for a baby to have a good pair of lungs—(as he remembers his own troublesome infants)—sometimes, at any rate.

NATHAN.—If only my father had been saved, too!

TOBIAS.—Why, Nathan, even if he were alive he could do nothing. Nekasim is quite within his rights in taking part in the lot-drawing. He still belongs to the village, and he has a share in the common ground.

NATHAN.—But, Tobias, everybody knows that he is a rich man, and that he is going to leave Panath and live in the town! With all the money he’s got from his girls’ dowries he can live in comfort for the rest of his days. And yet he won’t give up his claim to the common ground! It isn’t fair! Why, he might get the best field there is, and I be left with nothing but stones and thistles, as I have been these last three years!

TOBIAS.—We must abide by the lot, Nathan, we must abide by the lot. . . . But, you young dog, I do believe that you’ve another reason for grumbling at old Nekasim! Sarah! I’ve seen you and your sheeps’ eyes! By Jerusalem, I have! (He digs a friendly elbow into NATHAN.) I expect the old man has been asking a whacking big dowry for her, seeing that she’s the last of the bunch. And because you can’t afford to marry his daughter you turn round and call Nekasim all the nasty names you can think of. Yes, that’s it, I’ll be bound! As my old father used to say: ‘What the mouth can’t taste, the stomach turns against!’ You young dog, you! Ha! ha! ha!

(TOBIAS’ guffaws, and NATHAN’S discomfiture, are interrupted by the entry of the TEACHER, stately and benign, NEKASIM, opulent and self-satisfied, and TOBIAS’S small son, JOHN. NEKASIM sits down almost opposite NATHAN, but leaving rather a gap in the semi-circle. His whole attitude suggests, ‘I am not as other men.’ Through the gap the TEACHER steps, leaving young JOHN outside. The TEACHER stands in the centre of the semi-circle, rattling a leather bag containing a number of marked stones.)

TEACHER.—Well, we are all ready now to draw lots for the common land. I have chosen Tobias’s John to assist me this year. Come, John . . . (JOHN comes through the same gap) Now take a pebble and give it to good father Nekasim. . . .

(The TEACHER offers the leather bag to JOHN, who dips his hand in and takes out one of the pebbles,

which he then presents to NEKASIM. This performance is repeated for each of the others. As each receives his pebble he rises to his feet, lifts his eyes towards heaven, and intones the prayer customary on such occasions: 'This is my lot. May God maintain my lot.' Then he sits down, and curiously inspects his pebble, though obviously mystified by the markings—the TEACHER is the only one of them who can read. At the end of the distribution JOHN comes and sits between TOBIAS and NATHAN, while the TEACHER goes round to each man, and reads the name on the pebble.)

TEACHER (to NEKASIM)—'The Field of the Black Earth.'

(The TEACHER moves on and mutters to the others, while NEKASIM jumps to his feet and pours blessings on the kind fates. Various expressions are seen on the faces of the others hearing their year's destiny while he and NATHAN are speaking.)

NEKASIM.—Blessed be the name of the Lord! 'The Field of the Black Earth!' Truly the lot has fallen to me in pleasant places! Blessed be the name of the Lord! (Sits again and gloats over his pebble.)

NATHAN (*sotto voce* to TOBIAS)—I told you so! The old hypocrite, praising God with his mouth and reckoning up in his heart how much the field will be worth to him!

TOBIAS.—Peace, Nathan, the Teacher comes.

TEACHER (to TOBIAS)—'The Field of the Quiet Water.'

TOBIAS.—By the beard of Moses, just what I wanted!

TEACHER (to NATHAN)—'The Field of the Boulders' . . . I am sorry, my boy. The son of a widow deserves better. (He goes to speak to the man next to TOBIAS, who has reached over and plucked his cloak—he again demonstrates the meaning of the stone)

TOBIAS (trying to cheer the despondent NATHAN, who is crushed, mutely accepting the blow of fate)—Cheer up, my lad! You never know, there may be treasure buried in 'The Field of the Boulders'!

NATHAN (*dully*)—No. I have had the field twice in the last three years. I have dug and dug. If there is treasure there it is beyond the reach of a man's spade. It means another year of killing work, for a few bushels of grain . . . Unless . . .

(Acting on his idea NATHAN crosses over to NEKASIM, and suggests his plan. Meanwhile TOBIAS demonstrates the meaning of the pebble to JOHN, and the TEACHER continues his conversation, while the remaining men form a gesticulating group. All are standing now except TOBIAS and JOHN, and NEKASIM, who smirks up at the nervous NATHAN)

NATHAN (*hesitatingly*)—Er . . . Nekasim . . . They tell me that you are leaving the village soon. . . . So you will not be using your lot . . . I wonder . . .

NEKASIM.—Speak up, my boy, speak up. If you have a reasonable proposition to make I shall be glad to hear it. Nekasim is always ready to talk business.

NATHAN (*he knows NEKASIM's business instinct, and it makes him even more timid*)—Well, as you know, Nekasim, my mother and I are very poor. And I have drawn 'The Field of the Boulders' again this year. I wonder . . . perhaps . . . (*at an impatient gesture from NEKASIM the words rush out*) will you change your lot for mine?

NEKASIM (*genuinely astonished*)—Change with you? . . . Ha! What a joke! Come, Nathan! You know that I am not used to doing business in that fashion. Change with you indeed! But come, we will look at my field together, you and I. Perhaps we shall be able to come to some *reasonable* agreement about it. . . . Change indeed! Ha!

(*They stroll out together as NEKASIM's rather sardonic laugh ends his speech. NATHAN looks very sullen. TOBIAS shouts after them.*)

TOBIAS.—I shall be following you shortly, Nathan.

## CURTAIN.

SCENE 2. 'THE FIELD OF THE BLACK EARTH,'  
ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LAST SCENE.

(*The stage is bare except for a few rocks at the back. These are small and loose at the front, rising to a rock barrier at the back. NEKASIM walks in with*

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NATHAN from L. NEKASIM can obviously be pleasant when his business instinct prompts him to it, as it does now. He gesticulates freely throughout the scene. NATHAN also is a typical Oriental haggler, but a little more restrained.)

NEKASIM.—As you can see, my dear Nathan, this is a wonderful piece of ground. A 'field of black earth' to be sure! Black, rich, fertile earth. It will be a great chance for you.

NATHAN.—But, Nekasim, 500 shillings! It is impossible. Why, I could almost *buy* a field for that. . . . I will give you ten shillings.

NEKASIM.—Come, Nathan, be reasonable! You could not *buy* a field like this for ten times 500 shillings! One like your 'Field of the Boulders,' yes! . . . But you are my friend—I will let you have the field for 400 shillings.

NATHAN.—I haven't so much money in the whole world, Nekasim! I will give you twenty.

NEKASIM.—Twenty shillings? Surely you joke, Nathan! Twenty shillings for the best field in the village! . . . But I will meet you—350 shillings.

NATHAN.—I can barely afford it, but I will give you thirty.

NEKASIM.—You have not started to talk real business yet, Nathan. Come, give me a reasonable offer.

NATHAN.—Well . . . forty shillings.

NEKASIM.—You move very slowly, Nathan. Look,

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I will show you! I offer you the use of this magnificent field for 300 shillings! There, you cannot expect anything more generous than that!

NATHAN.—Oh, Nekasim, I thank you, but I could not buy it at that price if I would. I have been saving for five years, and I have only fifty shillings put away. I wanted to reserve some of it, but . . . I will give it to you. Take all that I have—fifty shillings.

NEKASIM (*wagging his head and grinning as if sharing in the joke*)—No, no, Nathan, I am too old a bird to be caught in that snare! You have a nice little nest-egg put away snugly somewhere, I know!

NATHAN.—By the beard of my father I speak the truth! It is all the money I have. I cannot offer you more. . . . Besides, look at these high rocks right across the field.

NEKASIM (*doesn't believe NATHAN, but wags his head again in congratulation*)—You don't deceive me, Nathan! But you'll make a sound business man one day. (*Mimics*) 'I cannot offer you more! Take all that I have!' Ha! . . . But I'll knock off another fifty shillings for the rocks, although I hear that the soil behind there (*pointing*) is even better than this—250 shillings. There! I can't come any lower than that, can I? . . . But think it over a minute, while I go round the other side of the rocks and bring you a sample of the earth there.

(NEKASIM *shuffles off R, grinning and muttering to himself, 'I cannot offer you more. Take all that I*

have!' &c. NATHAN wanders moodily about, kicking the stones lying at the foot of the larger rocks, until he accidentally discloses a hole behind one of them, in L background. He kneels down quickly and reveals a large earthenware jar. He inserts his hand, to bring it out full of gold coins. Then, almost breathless with excitement, he ejaculates in a vibrant sotto voice.)

NATHAN.—Gold! . . . By the mercy of God . . . Gold!

(*He pours it from one hand to the other, then, suddenly recollecting the circumstances, places it back in the jar, which he carefully hides again. He then stands facing the audience, gazing with rapture on his face into the golden future. At the tread of the returning NEKASIM he realizes that he must not betray his excitement. His shoulders sink, and he is again the poverty-stricken labourer, trying to wheedle a bargain out of the hard rich man. But occasionally there are glimpses of how much that bargain means to him*)

NEKASIM (*breezily*)—Well, Nathan, have you made your mind up yet? See what rich earth I bring you from the other side! Truly I was foolish to lower my price to 250 shillings! But then, you are my neighbour.

NATHAN (*feeling earth in NEKASIM's palm*)—Yes, it is quite good. But not so good as this side, I think. . . . I will give you seventy-five shillings for the field—though where I shall get the money from I don't know.

NEKASIM.—Come, come, Nathan, you know that that is no price for a field like this. But I'd like to oblige you, seeing that your mother is a widow. We'll say 200 shillings.

NATHAN.—I do appreciate your generosity, Nekasim. Perhaps I dare go up to 100 shillings. But no more.

NEKASIM.—I begin to lose patience with you, Nathan. I cannot give you the field. Perhaps I shall find somebody else who is willing to talk business. . . . Look here, I'll give you one more chance! I'll meet you half-way—150 shillings! Take it or leave it! (*Turns away, R.*)

NATHAN (*his face contorted, struggling between fear of losing the field and of promising to pay a price which he does not possess*)—I—I—cannot. . . . But (*a half-glance in the direction of the jar*) I must. I take it. I accept. I will buy your field for 150 shillings.

NEKASIM (*turning round, his face beaming, his hands already washing each other a little in anticipation of the bag of money they are shortly to grasp*)—Ah-ha! Now you begin to see reason! I thought you knew a good thing when you saw it!

(*The ghost of a smile flickers across NATHAN's face as he just manages to arrest a would-be glance at the 'good thing.' Then a frown of worry creases his brow.*)

NATHAN.—But . . . I cannot pay you all the price straight away, Nekasim. I will bring you fifty shillings

to-night to seal the bargain, and the rest within a week.

NEKASIM (*pondering, while NATHAN watches him anxiously*)—Um . . . I wonder whether I ought to sell you the field, after all? I might be able to get a better price from Tobias, cash down. And how do I know that you will pay me the other 100 shillings? (*shaking his head*) I don't know whether it's wise.

NATHAN.—By the beard of my father I swear that I will pay you the rest! If I don't you can have the field back and keep the fifty shillings! You can ask the Teacher to put that down in writing if you like.

(*NATHAN has almost betrayed himself in his eagerness. NEKASIM is a little suspicious.*)

NEKASIM.—You seem very eager to close the bargain, Nathan?

NATHAN.—Do I, Nekasim? . . . Why yes! I—I am thinking of my poor mother, and what this means to her. She has no husband to care for her, and a good crop for a change this year will be a blessing from heaven.

NEKASIM.—Ah yes, Nathan, to be sure! 'To comfort the widows and the fatherless!' It is agreed, Nathan. Fifty shillings to-night, and the rest within a week, and the field is yours. (*His better side has been showing itself, but now there is a return to the old shrewd, grasping bargainer. At this point TOBIAS appears at L, but does not like to intrude, so stands listening. They do not notice him.*) But you agree that the field is mine until all the money is paid?

You are not to come near it? And if you don't pay within the week you forfeit the fifty shillings? Is it agreed?

(NATHAN was rather taken aback at the clause about not coming near the field, but he dare not object to it for fear of further rousing NEKASIM'S suspicions. So, after hesitating momentarily, he answers slowly—)

NATHAN.—It is agreed.

NEKASIM.—Then I will go to the Teacher at once and ask him to draw up the agreement in writing.

(TOBIAS and JOHN make themselves observed. TOBIAS is very pleased with life in general, and his field in particular.)

TOBIAS.—Well, Nekasim, you are not the only one whose lot has fallen in pleasant places this year! 'The Field of the Quiet Water' will probably bring me in a two-hundredfold increase! I could really do with an extra ox and plough, so that my nephew could lend me a hand with the field. As my old father used to say, 'More crops, more workmen; more workmen, still more crops!'

NEKASIM.—Well, I must be going now—to see the Teacher. Good-bye, Tobias. Until to-night, Nathan.

TOBIAS.—Good-bye, Nekasim! May your shadow never grow less!

NATHAN.—Until to-night, Nekasim.

(NEKASIM goes out L. TOBIAS comes nearer to NATHAN, and once more digs a friendly elbow into him.)

TOBIAS.—Oh-ho, Nathan! You're getting very pally with old Nekasim to-day. Have you got him to accept a lower dowry for Sarah yet, eh? Or perhaps you'll keep greasing round him for a week or two until you can marry her for nothing? You young dog! But I guess you know what you're doing. As my old father used to say, 'Give a man a good tuck-in before you ask him to lend you a pound!' But the only kind of tuck-in you're giving Nekasim is honeyed words, I'll be bound!

NATHAN.—Indeed, Tobias, I was not asking him to lower Sarah's dowry! She is worth it—aye, and more—to the man that can win her. We were talking business.

TOBIAS.—Talking business, eh? Allow me to give you a word of warning, Nathan. Don't you try any tricks on Nekasim. He's as wily as a pack of mules. And, as my old father used to say, 'Don't try to pull a mule's tail—it bites at both ends!'

NATHAN (neatly turning the conversation off an uncomfortable topic)—Well, Tobias, perhaps it is safe to talk business with you?

TOBIAS.—Of course! You know it is, Nathan. Honest Tobias! That's me! Nobody has ever caught Tobias cheating! I always remember my old father's advice, 'Better steal a shilling and not be found out than a pound and be caught!' But, joking apart, Nathan, you and I are friends. You know I wouldn't take advantage of you. Now what kind of business would you be wanting to talk with me? (A little of

the Jewish business instinct appears in his manner in spite of his cheery good nature.)

NATHAN.—Well, Tobias, it's like this. I'm thinking of leaving Panath. And you mentioned just now that you could do with another ox and plough. Now how would you like to buy mine?

TOBIAS (*the business man now almost—not quite—masks the jovial friend*)—Um . . . I don't know. Your ox is a bit short of wind, isn't it? Getting rather old! And your plough will be needing a new blade soon . . .

(TOBIAS has been walking off R, but finds that NATHAN is not following. He turns, and sees NATHAN standing gazing at the rocks. He is obviously wondering whether he dare take some of the gold to help him in buying the field, though of course TOBIAS does not know this.)

TOBIAS.—Aren't you coming, Nathan? You're not staying here for the day, are you?

NATHAN (*caught a little off his guard, and startled*)—Er—no. No.

TOBIAS.—Having a last look at the field until it's yours, eh? (*casually*) I happened to hear your agreement with Nekasim, you see.

NATHAN (*startled*)—That I shouldn't come near the field till I'd paid, you mean?

TOBIAS.—Yes. He certainly is a mean old scoundrel. Still, that's nothing to worry about, is it?

NATHAN.—N-no. No, of course not.

(But NATHAN still lingers on, until JOHN starts playing round him, kicking the stones about as NATHAN had done when he first discovered the treasure. NATHAN quickly grasps the lad by the hand, and marches him, half unwillingly, after TOBIAS, as TOBIAS'S voice is heard offstage—)

TOBIAS.—Now, about that ox and plough . . .

CURTAIN.

SCENE 3. NATHAN'S HOME IN PANATH,  
A FEW HOURS LATER.

(As the scene opens NATHAN and his MOTHER, a rather nervous little lady with a touch of the mystic in her, are sitting at the table in centre of stage. NATHAN'S chair is on L of table, and MOTHER'S faces audience. There is no other furniture)

MOTHER.—Well, Nathan, my son, this is a rare old excitement over buying a field. I don't know what your father would have said to breaking up our home like this, I'm sure.

NATHAN.—But, mother, never before was there such a field as this! (*lowering voice*) Why, we shall be rich for the rest of our days. We shall be finished with all our worries! We shall have all that our hearts can desire. You will be able to live in comfort, after all these years of hard work! Think of it!

MOTHER (*pondering*)—And yet work is sometimes very sweet. I should have gone mad after your father

was killed if I had not had to work to look after you. I wonder if we shall be really happy without having to work for our money? . . . (*She throws off the heretical thought*) But have you got enough to buy the field, Nathan? . . . Reckon it up.

NATHAN.—Let me see. . . . (*mental arithmetic*) There is the fifty shillings we had saved up—that is safely buried just by the doorstep. . . . Then there is the thirty shillings for the ox and plough, from Tobias. That's eighty. And twenty shillings for the furniture—100. Tobias is bringing the money when he comes back for the table and chairs. Oh, here he is!

(*Enter TOBIAS and JOHN from L. NATHAN and MOTHER rise, and JOHN starts struggling with the chairs, trying to carry them both out at once, while the others stand watching his childish efforts with amusement. After a few minutes, NATHAN comes to the rescue, and together they go out, carrying the two chairs, JOHN making a tremendous show of doing all the work. NATHAN soon returns alone. Meanwhile TOBIAS has been talking to MOTHER*)

TOBIAS.—Well, I'm very sorry that you're leaving us. Sorry to lose Nathan, too. He's been a good pal to me, and it's hard to say good-bye. But, as my old father used to say, 'Better good-bye than good riddance!' (*Enter NATHAN*) Well, Nathan, as I've just been saying to your mother, I'm right down sorry that you're going. But I'd better be going, too, or I shall hear about it at home! (*He picks up the table in a hurry, and is inconvenienced by the bag of money in the bosom of his jacket*) Oh, I nearly forgot to pay

you! (*Laughs*) That would never do! (*Hands bag to NATHAN, again picks up the table, and staggers out, talking the while*) Well, Nathan, we shall all think of you when we sit round this table. I'm sorry you're selling up and leaving us. But, as my old father used to say, 'Better sell your furniture yourself than have the bailiffs sell it for you!'

(*With these words TOBIAS disappears, and NATHAN and MOTHER sit on the floor, MOTHER in foreground R, NATHAN in centre.*)

MOTHER.—There goes a good friend!

NATHAN.—Never mind, mother, we shall have plenty more when we get to town.

MOTHER.—Not like Tobias, my son! The friends drawn by money are far different from those drawn by love.

NATHAN.—Come, mother, I shall soon begin to think that you don't want the treasure! . . . (*A frown creases his brow*) And we haven't got it yet! How much did I say we had?

MOTHER.—100 shillings, wasn't it, Nathan?

NATHAN.—Yes, that's right. Fifty saved up, and fifty from Tobias. What else have we sold besides the furniture?

MOTHER.—There was my headdress, Nathan.

NATHAN.—Oh, yes. That brought us five shillings—105. Then there was my change of raiment, fifteen shillings—120. And the corn we had stored up for seed, another ten—130 shillings. . . . (*realizing the tragedy*) But, mother, we're twenty shillings short yet,



and we have nothing more to sell! What can we do? . . .

(NATHAN gets up and paces the room restlessly, while his MOTHER remains seated. Then HULDAH, a creepy little man, sidles in from L. He has a sly expression and an oily manner. NATHAN halts in centre of stage, regarding him distastefully.)

HULDAH.—Oh, excuse me, Nathan, excuse me. I hope you are well? Yes, I hope you are very well. They tell me that you are leaving us. I am sorry, yes, very sorry. . . . (looking round) And you have sold your furniture! Well, well! (To MOTHER, who has on her head only a square of cloth, tied gipsy-fashion, instead of the usual elaborate headdress) And your headdress, too? Dear, dear, you must be short of money! Now, Nathan, if only you had come to me I would have helped you. Yes, I would have helped you! Why, Nathan, any time you liked you could have had five, or perhaps ten shillings for—that ring. (He stabs his finger in the direction of the conspicuous signet ring on NATHAN's left hand, which NATHAN instinctively hides in the bosom of his jacket) Yes, any time you wished. Why, I will give you five, no, ten shillings for it now, Nathan. Yes, now, cash down. (He jingles the bag of money inside his jacket)

NATHAN (curtly).—The ring is not for sale.

MOTHER (rising).—But Nathan . . .

HULDAH.—Do not be angry with me, Nathan. I have often thought what a pretty ring that was—such a pretty ring. And it would look so well on my hand. I will give you twelve shillings for it.

NATHAN (still more curtly).—The ring is not for sale, I tell you. I cannot sell it. It was my father's!

MOTHER (plucking his jacket).—But, Nathan . . .

HULDAH.—Come, my boy! (His voice is wheedling) You know you need money. I know you do. (at NATHAN's startled expression) I don't pretend to know why. But you do, don't you?

NATHAN (dully).—Yes.

HULDAH.—Of course! I knew you did! Well? The ring was your father's, I know. But he has been dead these many years. And you are not going to be silly about your feelings when you need money. Besides, it will still belong to one of his friends. One of your friends. Yes, one of your very good friends. It isn't really worth more than five shillings, of course—but I am willing to give you twelve, just for your father's sake. We were always good friends, yes, very good friends.

MOTHER (sotto voce to NATHAN).—Nathan, it's our last chance.

(NATHAN's mind has been the battle-ground between sentiment and desire for the treasure. Sentiment has at last suffered defeat, but it must be slaughtered quickly before it regains its strength. NATHAN pulls off the ring, and holds it out to HULDAH, speaking in a firm voice that yet betrays a tremor of emotion now and then.)

NATHAN.—Very well then. I will sell it. But no haggling! I-I could not stand that. . . . You know it is worth at least fifty shillings. Give me twenty.

HULDAH (*shrugging shoulders and raising hands*)—  
Perhaps . . . fifteen—

NATHAN (*threateningly*)—No haggling, I said.  
Twenty shillings.

HULDAH (*cowed, but with eyes shining as he counts the money, at first silently, from his bag into NATHAN'S hand, receiving the ring in return*) . . .  
18, 19, 20. There you are, Nathan. Just for the sake of your father. We were always good friends, yes, very . . .

NATHAN (*cutting him abruptly short, and only just managing to control his own anger*)—And now go! You have got what you want! (HULDAH *slinks out, fingering and gloating over the ring*) And I—I have got what I want. (*There is a tinge of sadness, almost of bitterness, in his voice.*)

MOTHER (*simply*)—So the treasure is ours, Nathan.

NATHAN (*his enthusiasm returning a little*)—Yes, mother, the treasure is ours! We shall have as much money as we can use! What more could we desire?

(*As he speaks the last words he sits down on the floor, lays the coins he has received from HULDAH in a heap in front of him, and pours on to them the coins from TOBIAS' bag. Then he begins rapidly checking them, while his MOTHER, still standing, looks down on him a little sadly.*)

CURTAIN.

### ACT III

NATHAN'S HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM, A.D. 27-29.

SCENE I. THE HOUSE, A.D. 27.

(*Before the scene opens the voice of the old NATHAN of Act I is heard behind the curtain, continuing with his story. The voice is at first a whisper, but quickly grows to normal strength, and it comes from the same position in which NATHAN was sitting when he last spoke in Act I. The same is true of SARAH'S voice.*)

NATHAN.—Yes, Zabdi, and so we came to live in Capernaum, as rich people. We came to this very house where we are now. Of course, it was the house of a rich man then, and not the simple home of a poor Christian, as it is now. Soon after I came I did what Tobias thought I wanted to do—I married Nekasim's daughter, Sarah. But I paid the full dowry!

SARAH.—Yes, Nathan, and a poor bargain you soon thought you had made! (*There is complete love and understanding in the only half-serious reproach.*)

NATHAN.—Well, Sarah, Zabdi shall see for himself. . . . My mother lived long enough to see us safely settled down in our new home, and to share in the new experiences that the treasure made possible for us . . .

(During this last speech NATHAN'S voice fades away again, and with the last words the scene opens on the second phase of his story.)

(It is the same room as in Act I. But there is a great difference. The general atmosphere is one of unhappy luxury. All the furniture is rich, even gaudy, and covered with silk and embroidered cloths. Highly-coloured vases, glazed this time, and silver and bronze ware, ornament the room. The dresses are rich, and jewels are plentiful. There is a large table in the centre, with three chairs set at it. There is also a small table in the background R, and two stools, in foreground R and L. When the scene opens NATHAN is sitting on stool R, and MOTHER on stool L—the latter possibly embroidering, the former just thinking. SARAH is busy tidying the room, replacing the silk cloth on the centre table, &c., after a meal.)

NATHAN (*impatiently*)—Come, wife, let me see if you are worth one-tenth of the dowry I paid Nekasim for you. Bestir yourself! What a time you do take over clearing away a simple meal!

SARAH (*subdued, but a little petulant*)—All right, Nathan. I am being as quick as I can. I've nearly finished now. . . . And there were six other men who were eager to marry me, remember!

NATHAN (*rather bitterly*)—Yes! Six other men more fortunate than I was!

MOTHER.—She is your wife, my son! Remember that!

NATHAN.—Am I ever likely to forget it, with you two women always nagging at me?

(A diversion is created by a raucous voice, off-stage L, trying to sing, to no tune at all, some words from Psalm cvii. The voice belongs to SIMON-BAR-JONAH, a burly, rough fisherman, who lurches drunkenly into the room during the 'singing' of the first phrase.)

SIMON (*singing off-stage*)—'They that go down to the sea (*enters*) in ships' . . . (*thumping chest and shouting*) That's me! . . . (*singing again*) 'That do business in great waters' . . . That's me! (SIMON half comes to himself and peers unseeingly round the room)

MOTHER.—The fellow is drunk!

SIMON.—Be any of you Caleb the tax-collector? I want to see Caleb the tax-collector! I want to see him. Yes, (*as if reassuring himself*) that's what I want.

MOTHER (*decisively*)—Then he *must* be drunk!

SIMON (*hearing MOTHER'S voice and staggering over to her*)—Are you Caleb the tax-collector? (*He pushes his face close to hers, examining her minutely.*)

MOTHER (*a little afraid*)—Oh, Nathan, send him away!

SIMON (*disappointed*)—No, you're not Caleb! You're only a woman! And an old woman at that! (*He turns towards NATHAN, who, after watching the scene amusedly from his stool, has at last risen to his feet and strolled over towards SIMON. SIMON totters a few steps to meet him, and starts fingering the cloth of his robe*) Ah, this feels like a tax-collector's rich cloth! You are Caleb, the tax-collector! (*He grasps NATHAN by the shoulders, and then, wonderingly, feels*

NATHAN'S *arms and body*) No! You're cheating me! You're not Caleb. He is fat and oily. You're not him.

NATHAN.—Of course I'm not, my friend. I never said that I was.

SIMON.—No, you're not Caleb! . . . But take me to him, kind sir! I want to pay a friendly call on Caleb the tax-collector! Yes, a friendly call! Ha! ha! ha! (*He laughs uproariously, and then suddenly and alarmingly becomes furious with rage.*) I'll break every bone in his profiteer's body! The mean, blood-sucking scoundrel!

NATHAN (*keeping quite cool, though the women obviously wilt*)—Come, come, my man! Who are you, and what do you mean by bursting into my house in this unseemly manner?

SIMON (*in an expansive good humour again*)—'Who am I?' he says, 'Who am I?' Ask any fisherman in Capernaum who I am! . . . (*with a melodramatic flourish*) Friends, you see before you none other than Simon-bar-Jonah, the boldest fisherman in Capernaum—(*menacing again*) Deny it if you dare!

NATHAN.—Yes, yes. Of course we believe you, Simon-bar-Jonah. Come along now. (*Takes him by the arm*) I will take you home now. You've got into the wrong house, you know. (*He has managed to steer SIMON, rather unsteadily, it must be admitted, as far as door L. But now he makes an unfortunate error of tactics.*) I should forget about Caleb for to-day, Simon-bar-Jonah.

SIMON (*recollecting his errand, he struggles free, and turns round suddenly on the women, who are fol-*

*lowing. They shrink back again*)—Yes—Caleb! That's who I want, Caleb! Where is he? You're hiding him somewhere, I know!

NATHAN.—No, no, Simon. He isn't here, I tell you! . . . (*an inspiration atones for his former blunder*) He's outside! Come along now. I'll help you find him.

(NATHAN has managed to recapture SIMON, and now safely manoeuvres him out of the door. SARAH flops down on to chair at centre of table, and MOTHER on to chair L.)

SARAH (*a little breathless*)—What a dreadful man! I was afraid for my life!

MOTHER.—But did you see how my son handled him, eh, Sarah? That's the way to deal with a drunken fisherman!

SARAH.—Yes, I must confess that there are times when Nathan makes me admire him. But—at other times he is so moody and short-tempered, in spite of being a rich man and having all that money can buy.

MOTHER (*quietly*)—I think you mean 'because he's a rich man,' Sarah—not 'in spite of being a rich man.'

SARAH.—Perhaps I do. . . . I remember his saying once—the time when he was so angry because I was childless—that money wasn't everything, after all. . . . I wonder if he would have been any happier if we had had a son? . . . But my prayers were not answered.

MOTHER (*reminiscent*)—A son. . . . Yes, I remember praying for a son. And how I rejoiced when one

was born to me! And then the bandits came and killed my husband, and wounded my baby. And we were left alone, and poor.

SARAH.—But Nathan found the treasure, mother-in-law!

MOTHER.—Yes, he did find the treasure, Sarah. And I thought at first that we should be happy. But all the time there seemed to be a silly fear going round in my mind: 'You have lost the treasure, not found it!' And my fear was right. When we had no longer to work for each other, we seemed to lose the comradeship that we had before. And we have found nothing to put in its place. We are not happy now. We have fine food, lovely clothes, beautiful furniture, jewels—he has his wife. But happiness—no! . . .

SARAH (*after a pause in which both are brooding over what might have been*)—What was it that Rabbi Joseph was reading in the synagogue last Sabbath? That was something about a man being happy, wasn't it? It struck me at the time, but afterwards it went from my mind.

MOTHER.—I remember it well, Sarah, for they were words which I learnt when I was but a girl—from the Proverbs of Solomon. (*She recites them with some feeling for their beauty, yet with a strong suspicion of the 'piece' learnt and repeated mechanically.*) 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.'

SARAH (*fascinated*)—Go on, mother-in-law! There was something about jewels next, wasn't there?

MOTHER.—Yes, Sarah. 'She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is everyone that retaineth her.' . . .

SARAH.—Oh, it is beautiful! . . . 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.' . . . 'The gain thereof is better than fine gold!' . . . (*suddenly coming down to earth*) Then there is a treasure greater than gold! Wisdom! . . . But what does it mean by wisdom, mother-in-law?

MOTHER.—I do not know, my daughter. I know only the words.

SARAH (*musings*)—Wisdom . . . wisdom . . . 'Better than fine gold' . . . I wonder if Nathan will ever find that treasure? . . . (*She stares into the future*)

## CURTAIN.

### SCENE 2. THE HOUSE, A.D. 29.

(*The stage is arranged as in the last scene—but MOTHER has been removed by the hand of death, and SARAH now has a domestic help, in the person of RACHEL, the wife of SIMON-BAR-JONAH, the drunken fisherman. SARAH is sitting at the centre table, in the chair facing the audience. RACHEL has removed the chair from R, and has taken it to the small table, background R, where she is so sitting as to be half-*

*obscured by SARAH from the view of any one entering at door L. RACHEL is busy polishing silver and bronze vases, &c., which are arrayed before her on the table. SARAH is embroidering.)*

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress, ever since I married Simon-bar-Jonah I've been a little bit afraid of him. He's very affectionate, of course. He wouldn't hurt a fly really—not to mean it, like. But he loses his temper sometimes, and I'm afraid of him. And when he's drunk—(*shudders*)—I hide then. . . .

SARAH.—Yes, Rachel. I think I understand. He came in here drunk one night. When my husband's mother was alive. He was looking for Caleb, the tax-collector . . . (*reminiscent*) I believe he would have murdered Caleb if he'd found him. But my husband somehow managed to persuade him to go home.

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress. Simon told me about it. He was very grateful—afterwards. He needs somebody with a strong will to lead him and control him—otherwise he does the most reckless things. But once he takes to anybody he's ready to do anything for them.

SARAH.—Let me see, now . . . didn't you say that Simon *had* come under the influence of a new teacher?

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress, he has. And he has been very . . . *changed* since. Why, he hasn't been drunk for three months! It's like living with a different man!

SARAH (*the mention of this teacher was only a polite means of making conversation, and she is only slightly*

*interested*)—Um! What did you say this teacher's name was, now?

RACHEL.—Jesus-ben-Joseph, mistress.

SARAH.—Oh yes, that was it—Jesus-ben-Joseph. A very ordinary sort of name, isn't it?

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress, I suppose it is. But he's not an ordinary man, though, mistress! My Simon is always telling me of the wonderful things he says and does. And the other day I found it out for myself!

SARAH (*her interest is aroused a little now, and her embroidery needle moves more slowly*)—Oh, Rachel? How was that?

RACHEL (*turns round in her chair to face SARAH, her work completely forgotten*)—Well, you see, mistress, Simon asked Jesus-ben-Joseph to have dinner at our house. You can guess how upset my mother was when I told her that there would be a guest for dinner—and such a guest! I felt rather nervous about it myself. But mother seemed to go all over faint, and had to go and lie down. And I was left to prepare by myself.

SARAH.—It's my belief, Rachel, that your mother makes her illnesses up! She's lazy, that's what she is!

RACHEL (*not allowing this to check her story*)—I don't know, I'm sure, mistress. But anyway, when the two men came in Simon asked me where mother was. So I told him that she had gone to bed with a feverish headache. And then Jesus-ben-Joseph turned to Simon and said—'Let me see her, Simon.' So Simon took him to see her, and in a minute or two she was helping me to get the meal ready! I don't

know what he did, but he certainly is a wonderful man!

SARAH.—H'm. I don't know about that. Probably he frightened your mother out of her headache.

(NATHAN comes striding in. The anger in his face and words is the baffled anger of a man up against the Unknown. At his footfall outside RACHEL turns quickly and gets on with her work. In his anger, and because she is half-hidden by SARAH, he does not see RACHEL at first. He strides straight over to SARAH.)

NATHAN.—So you've been blabbing, have you? And I told you not to mention a word about Panath, and about—(sees RACHEL, and stops suddenly)

SARAH.—You'd better go, Rachel.

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress.

(RACHEL goes, creeping round the back of the stage across to door L. NATHAN controls himself until she has gone, and then bursts forth with renewed temper.)

NATHAN.—Yes, I suppose you go about discussing my secrets with your charwomen! You tell everyone how your husband was once a poor nobody, and that you and your precious father picked him up off the rubbish heap because he happened to find some treasure there! (in a towering rage) Why can't you keep a still tongue in your head, woman!

SARAH.—I don't understand, Nathan. I haven't discussed our private affairs with anybody. Nobody in Capernaum knows about the treasure except just us two.

NATHAN.—'Just us two!' eh? You're lying, woman! He knows, and somebody must have told him! And who else but you, gossiping with your Rachel? And then she goes home and tells her husband, who's always hanging around the fellow! You have been blabbing! He knows, I tell you!

SARAH (solemnly)—I swear I have never spoken about the treasure to a living soul, Nathan. By your dead mother I swear it.

NATHAN (suddenly sobered—he cannot help but believe her, although it leaves his mind in a whirl. He speaks slowly)—No, I see you have not told. Then how can he have known? Is he in league with the devil? Or can he read the secrets of men's minds, as well as heal their bodies?

SARAH.—He, Nathan? What do you mean? Who knows about the treasure? (She is half fearing the answer she knows she will receive)

NATHAN.—Why, that man—if he is a man—Jesus-ben-Joseph. He who has made friends of drunken fishermen like Simon-bar-Jonah, and (with obvious repugnance) the very tax-collectors and harlots of the streets!

SARAH (to herself, as NATHAN strides feverishly up and down)—This Jesus-ben-Joseph again!

NATHAN.—I have often seen the crowds gathered round him as he speaks—mostly the riff-raff of the town. The common people listen to him gladly. But to-day there were one or two priests in the crowd, and I thought to myself, 'If they dare venture, so dare I!' And I must admit I was curious about the man.

So I went and stood on the edge of the crowd. The man Jesus was talking about sowing seed. And then he turned towards me—looked right at me, in fact! My stomach seemed to turn to water at his look. And then he started speaking about me—about *me*!

SARAH (*incredulous*)—About you, Nathan?

NATHAN.—Yes, about me! He said—something like this—‘The kingdom of God is like a hoard of treasure buried in a field. (SARAH *puts down her embroidery hurriedly and gazes open-eyed at NATHAN, who has stopped his pacing as he recalls the story which Jesus told*) It lies there for years, and nobody knows about it, until one day a man stumbles across it by accident. He covers it up quickly, and then, full of joy, goes home and sells all that he has in order to buy the field’ . . . (*pacing again*) He knows, I tell you, he knows! . . .

SARAH.—It is indeed very strange, Nathan!

NATHAN (*halting again*)—Yes, and that is not all. . . . As he was speaking, there seemed to be another voice speaking slowly and softly in my mind—‘This . . . is . . . the . . . Son . . . of . . . God . . . Hear ye . . . Him.’ (NATHAN *pulls himself together, and throws such fancies away from him. He again starts pacing the room*) I must be going crazy. And he is certainly a madman. The kingdom of God, indeed! What does he think he means by that? And who is going to be fool enough to sell all that he has because of a mad dream, the impossible imaginings of a crazy preacher?

SARAH (*meditating half to herself*)—‘The kingdom of God’ . . . a treasure . . . I wonder? . . . ‘Happy

is the man that findeth wisdom, for the gain thereof is better than gold.’ . . . I wonder?

NATHAN (*stopping his pacing near stool in foreground R, and turning to face SARAH*)—What are you mumbling about, woman? Are you crazy, too?

SARAH.—No, Nathan. I was only wondering.

NATHAN.—Wondering! . . . (*almost tenderly*) What is the matter, wife?

(*The note of love in his voice as he uses the word ‘wife’ instead of the previous ‘woman’ encourages SARAH. In a rush of emotion the feelings hidden by convention rise to the surface.*)

SARAH.—Oh, Nathan, you know we are not happy here in the town! We never have been, in spite of our money! Why can’t we go away somewhere, and buy a farm? Why can’t we forget all about our riches, and get away from this feverish town life? It only leaves us weary and unhappy! . . .

NATHAN (*thoughtfully silent, as he sinks on to stool in foreground R. Then slowly*)—Perhaps you are right, Sarah. This town life is tiring . . . (*jumping to his feet, crossing over to SARAH, and putting his arm round her shoulder, while she gazes happily up at him*) I know! I will set all my business affairs in order, and then I will go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—perhaps I have let my religion slide a little since I became wealthy—and after that we will go into the country together, and buy peace and happiness on a farm!

SARAH (*wistfully*)—Can we buy peace and happiness, Nathan?



NATHAN.—Of course we can, Sarah! At any rate, we can buy the things that make people peaceful and happy, and that's the same thing, isn't it? Why, with a treasure like ours we can buy almost anything we want. . . . At least, I think we can. (*He started off very enthusiastically, but doubt has gradually crept into his voice, and he finishes lamely.*)

SARAH (*mystically*)—Nathan, I sometimes wonder whether we really have any treasure at all.

(NATHAN stares at her uncomprehendingly.)

### CURTAIN.

SCENE 3. THE HOUSE, A.D. 29, SOME MONTHS LATER.

(*The setting is exactly the same as in the last scene. And the actual events of the scene are almost the same—the conversing of SARAH and RACHEL, the entry of NATHAN, the exit of RACHEL, the conversing of SARAH and NATHAN. But this very fact heightens the contrast between the two scenes. The physical surroundings remain exactly the same, but the atmosphere has undergone a remarkable change. There is less strain, all three characters seem to possess a quietness of soul, and the relations between mistress and maid, wife and husband, are now those of happy comrades. One feels that the influence of Jesus has been at work in the household, perhaps half-unconsciously, through the presence of RACHEL.*)

(*When the scene opens SARAH is again embroidering at the centre table, and RACHEL polishing a brass vase*

*at the small table. But it is a transformed RACHEL. Never will the vase shine with the radiance of her own face.*)

SARAH.—And so your husband left you to follow that preacher, Jesus-ben-Joseph, Rachel?

RACHEL.—Yes, mistress. He did not want to go at first. He was half afraid of leaving me in Capernaum with only my mother. But I made him go. You see, Jesus needed him. (*She speaks the name of JESUS with a tender, reverent love*) Jesus said he was going to make Simon earn a new name—Peter, the rock upon which God's new temple would be founded. . . . And Simon is waiting now at Jerusalem, ready to carry on the work of Jesus.

SARAH.—I wonder if my husband has seen anything of Simon in Jerusalem? I am expecting him home any day now. . . . But this man Jesus . . . He had a strange attraction: and yet they put him to death like a common criminal—crucified him! (*She shudders*) Ugh!

RACHEL.—But he was *not* a criminal, mistress! He was a good man!

SARAH.—I believe you are right, Rachel. He *was* a good man.

RACHEL.—I *know* I am right, mistress! Something within tells me that Jesus was a good man. He was so good that wicked people were afraid that he might make them good, too. So they . . . (*in a whisper*) crucified him.

(NATHAN rushes in. *On his face, too, is the*

radiance. He stops just inside the door and shares his good news in a voice which thrills!)

NATHAN.—Sarah, he lives! Jesus lives! And he has shown me the real treasure! . . . (SARAH puts her work down on the table and rises. They stand looking at each other a moment, and then come towards each other, NATHAN putting his arm round SARAH'S shoulders) Oh, my wife, you were right! I had no treasure! But at last I have found it! I have found it!

SARAH.—Oh, Nathan, I felt that you would! I am so happy!

RACHEL (turning round in her chair, a smile of understanding on her face)—I, too, am happy, master! I have prayed that God might make known His love to you through His Servant Jesus! And my prayer has been answered!

SARAH.—But, Nathan, why have you come back here? Why did you not stay at Jerusalem with Simon—Peter, I mean—and help him to build the new temple?

(With NATHAN'S arm still round SARAH'S shoulder, she on his L, they have walked slowly across to the centre table. Now NATHAN sits down in the centre chair, with her embroidery before him, and motions her to chair L.)

NATHAN.—I have come back at their bidding—and at the bidding of the Lord Jesus! . . . Let me tell you how it was. . . . When I first heard Simon—Peter—and his friends preaching at Jerusalem I was amazed. There was such power and boldness in their

words. But when I discovered just what they were trying to prove, my heart fell—I thought that they had gone mad, or else were dead drunk. . . . They were saying that this Jesus had come to life again, and was living in their hearts! . . . But as the days passed by, and their madness did not change its form, I began to wonder whether there might not be some kind of foundation for what they were saying. Perhaps they had seen somebody who pretended to be Jesus! But I soon realized that that was not a good enough explanation. For these men were *different* from when I had known them before! They really seemed to have a new kind of life! They said that they were happy—and they looked happy. Indeed their faces shone with the glory of God. And I realized that they *had* seen Jesus—unbelievable as it may sound!

RACHEL.—Nothing is unbelievable of Him, master!—Except an unkind action.

NATHAN.—I think you are right, Rachel, though I did not think so then. . . . Well, one day your husband Simon—Peter, as they call him now—was preaching, and he quoted some words that Jesus had spoken: 'The kingdom of God is within you' . . . 'The kingdom of God'! That set me thinking. Where had I heard those words before? And then I remembered. It was in the market-place of Capernaum here. *He* had said: 'the kingdom of God is like a treasure'! . . . 'A treasure'—and 'within you.' Suddenly light shone in my mind! I had always thought that treasure was something with which to clothe and feed and pamper your body. But

now I saw that the real treasure was something *within*! Happiness had to do with what you felt, not what you possessed. All my property, my money—my treasure, as I called it—was really only like an earthen vessel in which a spiritual treasure of happiness *might* be hidden. And mine was empty. . . . But Jesus had that treasure, and he called it ‘the kingdom of God.’ And he wanted to pass it on to me. So I went before his disciples, and offered them all my riches if they would help me to find the treasure of ‘the kingdom of God.’ I suggested that they could use my money to build their new temple, as Jesus had told them to. Peter knew me, of course. He was very kind, and spoke to me as gently as Jesus did to children. He told me that the temple they were building for Jesus was to be built in the hearts of men—just as the treasure of the kingdom was to be found there. But, he said, if I would dedicate my earthly treasure to the service of Jesus, I should find that Jesus was giving me the heavenly treasure. I said I would. And then Peter told me to come back to Capernaum, and with my money to relieve the poor, and comfort those who were suffering. . . . So I have come.

SARAH.—And you are ready to pay the price of the new treasure, my husband?

NATHAN.—I am, Sarah. (*He gets up, walks over to RACHEL'S table, and gathers up the vases, &c., into the embroidered cloth which covers the table*) Go and sell these, Rachel, and buy medicine for your mother. (*RACHEL goes, a look of supreme happiness on her face, but obviously not because of the gift itself*) There

goes the first portion of the price, Sarah, as an earnest of my sincerity. But although I sell my all, I shall never be able to *pay* him for the gift, his treasure!

SARAH.—You *will* be selling all, then, Nathan?

NATHAN (*coming back to his chair*)—No, Sarah, not quite all. We shall keep this house—keep it for him. We shall still live here—but it will be his house, not ours, from now on. Everything I have is his. I know that I cannot keep the treasure unless I am ready to sell all that I have to buy it.—And yet I cannot buy it, for it is beyond price—I can only accept it as a marvellous gift from him, and give to others so that I can keep what he has given to me.

SARAH (*radiant*)—‘Happy is the man that findeth wisdom! For the gain thereof is better than fine gold!’

NATHAN.—Yes, Sarah, ‘and happy is everyone that retaineth her’ . . .

(*They gaze into each other's face with complete love and understanding.*)

CURTAIN.

## ACT IV

NATHAN'S HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM, AN HOUR OR SO  
AFTER ACT I.

*(The stage is set exactly as at the close of Act I, NATHAN sitting at centre of table, SARAH on R, and ZABDI on L. To indicate the resumption of actual life after the story the voices start as whispers, and gain in strength as the curtain gradually opens, and the stage is slowly illuminated, at the same speed as the reverse process was performed at the end of Act I.)*

NATHAN.—And so, Zabdi, we found the greatest treasure of all, and began to live as servants of Jesus, so that we might keep the treasure.

ZABDI.—And of course you *did* keep it, father Nathan?

NATHAN.—Yes, my boy, we did. That is why we are here now. We are old, we have seen many troubles. We hear of this monster Nero throwing the believers to the lions, but we are not afraid. The treasure still shines as brightly as ever.

SARAH.—Perhaps, Nathan, it is because we enjoy such wonderful happiness while our bodies are still suffering that it is so wonderful. Like the treasure of gold you found in the old jar at Panath; this treasure is given to us in the earthen vessels of bodies which are liable to suffer, and so it shines the more brightly.

NATHAN.—The eyes of your soul see clearly, as always, Sarah! We *have* our treasure in earthen vessels—and it shines very brightly! And when we forget our selfish bodies altogether and are simply content to serve God's purpose, then the treasure shines brightest of all! . . .

ZABDI.—Oh, thank you, father Nathan, for your story! . . . Now I know which voice to obey. And I feel that I have the strength to obey it. I, too, must not lose the treasure. I *will* not lose it!

NATHAN.—You are truly wise, my son!—Though there are many who will call you foolish. Their stomachs cry out for the husks that feed the body, and they refuse the jewels of wisdom that will give new life to their souls. But the Lord Jesus Himself said that it was useless to cast pearls before pigs. They would only grunt, and go back to their swill.

*(A loud knock is heard at the door. SARAH goes, at a nod from NATHAN. Then a loud, menacing voice is heard offstage. It belongs to ASAPH, ZABDI'S tax-collector father)*

ASAPH (*offstage*)—Let me in, there!

ZABDI.—My father! (*Terrified, he runs round to the other side of NATHAN, and stands in the fold of NATHAN'S right arm*)

ASAPH.—Let me in, I say! My son is here. I know he is. . . . Let me in—or it will be the worse for you!

NATHAN.—Let him in, Sarah.

*(SARAH has been hesitating with her hand on the*

bolt, but now she pulls it out and opens the door. ASAPH enters. He is hard, materialistic, even cruel. In her excitement SARAH forgets to close and re-bolt the door, but rushes over to stand by the R of ZABDI, while ASAPH remains standing just inside the door.)

ASAPH (as he steps into the room)—Ha, there he is! I knew he was here! Now, you young rascal, are you coming home with me at once, and putting those mad dreams out of your head? . . . It is to-night or never, remember! I mean what I say!

ZABDI (quite simply)—I still love Jesus, father.

ASAPH.—Love Jesus, you young fool! How can you? He is dead!

ZABDI.—No, father, He is alive. He is living in my heart. Oh, father, if only you could believe the joy He has brought to me! If only (he is a missionary already) you could know that joy for yourself!

ASAPH.—Huh! I'm not fool enough to leave a good home, and come to a hovel like this for the sake of a mad dream! . . . (A note of parental affection creeps into his voice and manner) Come, my son! I have built up a good business, and all for you. You will be rich, you will be in favour with the Roman government, you will be able to marry a beautiful wife. Come, leave these—paupers!

ZABDI.—Father, these—paupers—are richer, far richer, than you know!

ASAPH.—Oh-ho! Rich, are they? Then I shall have to arrange that their taxes are raised. But, (doubtfully) if they are rich why are they not in better clothes, and why don't they buy more furniture?

NATHAN.—Your eyes are blind to the real treasure of life, my friend.

ASAPH.—Hold your tongue! I was speaking to my son!

ZABDI.—But father, you do not understand. The riches I speak of will not buy clothes and furniture, but they *do* give happiness!

ASAPH (sarcastically)—This is a strange kind of money, indeed! You'd better explain yourself, Zabdi, or I shall begin to think that you really are mad!

ZABDI.—Oh, father, it is a treasure in the heart that they have—and that I have, too. And it is wonderful—wonderful!

ASAPH.—Well, if it is as wonderful as all that, (banteringly) I shouldn't mind having a share of it myself.

NATHAN.—It is only given to those who first give themselves in the service of God.

ASAPH.—Well, don't I pay tithes of all I possess? Don't I say my prayers as often as any man? Don't I offer sacrifices for my sins? Surely a share, at any rate, of your precious treasure, should be due to me?

NATHAN.—The treasure is given, not earned. And it is given only to the *true* servants of God. To God the words of the mouth and the gifts of the hand matter little. It is the love of the heart that counts.

ASAPH (his face has hardened at this scolding of his boasted piety)—Oh-ho! So you set up to be a prophet, do you?

NATHAN.—No, I am just a humble instrument in the hands of the Master.

ASAPH (*a gleam of malice in his eyes*)—The Master? And who may that be?

NATHAN (*simply*)—Our Lord Jesus the Christ.

ASAPH.—Ah-ha! Now I have caught you, my fine fellow. From your own lips you have convicted yourself. You are a Christian! . . . I wonder if you have heard of our new emperor, Nero?

(*At the mention of this dreaded name, SARAH, who has been standing with her left arm round ZABDI'S shoulder sinks on to chair at R. of table.*)

NATHAN.—I have.

ASAPH (*with an evil leer on his face. He is deliberately torturing his victims*) Then perhaps you know that he is not over fond of Christians?

NATHAN.—I do.

ASAPH.—I wonder if you understand what it means if I hand you over to the Romans, and you refuse to recant?

NATHAN.—Yes, I do. But I cannot deny my Lord Jesus!

ASAPH.—Ha! (*He is enjoying himself now*) But you may change your mind when I tell you that I brought a couple of Roman soldiers along with me. They are only waiting for my call. I told them that I expected to find two Christians trying to pervert my son, who had been sent as a bait. I only wanted a direct confession from your own lips. And I have it! (*mocks*) 'I cannot deny my Lord Jesus!' You'll have to deny him—or die for him! . . . (*to ZABDI, as he steps into the doorway*) There, Zabdi, now you

can see what I have saved you from! It's a lucky thing for you I thought of getting them arrested!

NATHAN.—Yes, Asaph, I knew quite well why you came here.

ASAPH (*turning in the doorway, a look of amazement on his face*)—You knew! Then why did you answer my questions? Why did you give yourself away?

NATHAN.—Because a true Christian is ready to suffer for his faith. The treasure he possesses is worth far more than earthly riches. And it is worth more than earthly life itself. Besides, the seed of the good tidings of Jesus must be sown, even if it be watered by the blood of martyrs.

(*NATHAN'S courage has impressed ASAPH momentarily, but he is now cruel and unyielding again.*)

ASAPH.—You can tell that to the lions! They won't leave much of your treasure!

(*ASAPH is quite conscious of the grimness of his jest. SARAH and ZABDI both shudder at his words, but NATHAN'S face remains calm.*)

NATHAN.—They will not touch my treasure. It will await me in heaven.

ASAPH.—You seem very sure of your treasure, my friend. . . . We will see! (*He opens the door wide, and shouts*) Here, my men! Come quickly! (*Enter two Roman soldiers, who take up positions on either side of the door*) Take that man to the magistrates. He is a self-confessed Christian.

(NATHAN rises and walks towards the door, but ZABDI rushes in front of him, facing soldiers with arms outspread as if to shield him from arrest. NATHAN gently moves him away, and steps towards the waiting soldiers. ZABDI, repulsed, finds himself near the centre chair, and sinks on to it, burying his head in his arms on the table.)

NATHAN.—No, Zabdi. A true Christian is ready to suffer without resisting, if Jesus calls him to it. (to the soldiers) I am ready. I am a Christian.

ASAPH.—And his wife! She is a Christian too!

(SARAH steps forward silently, beside her husband. As they are led out by the soldiers NATHAN comforts himself and SARAH by reciting words of Jesus, slowly, but in a strong, unflinching voice.)

NATHAN.—‘In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.’

(As they get farther offstage the voice fades, and by the end of this speech the words are become an almost indistinct murmur. As the voice of NATHAN dies away in the distance ASAPH, who has been triumphantly gazing at the gaping doorway, goes quietly across to ZABDI, and touches him on the shoulder. The touch seems to galvanize ZABDI. He leaps to his feet, faces his father tearfully yet boldly, and bursts out—)

ZABDI.—I, too! I am a Christian! And I cannot lose my treasure!

(ZABDI darts off after the others. ASAPH stands

dumbfounded for a moment, then strides quickly over to the door, and cries—)

ASAPH.—My son! My son!

(The first ‘My son!’ was a real attempt to call ZABDI back—the second the despairing cry of a man who knows his son is lost. ASAPH turns, a broken man, to the centre of the stage. He stumbles as far as chair L. of table, and catches at it for support. Still silent, he gazes into the arena, and sees the lions tearing his son’s body. His hands leap to his face, and he shuts out the dreadful sight. Then he sobs brokenly.) His treasure . . . I called it a mad dream . . . and he is ready to die for it!

(He sinks on to the chair L, and sobs convulsively, head in arms on table, shoulders heaving)

CURTAIN.

## APPENDIX

### NOTES ON PRODUCING THE PLAY.

These notes are designed chiefly to assist those whose dramatical means are limited, by smallness of stage, scarcity of costumes, or lack of experience. A satisfactory production of the play is possible for a small society, as very little scenery is needed, and that of the simplest, while the costumes can be made effectively by amateurs, as a good fit is not essential. But the notes may be of practical assistance to large societies also.

#### FOR A VERY SMALL STAGE.

Only minor changes need to be made. The greatest number of players on the stage at once is in Act II, Scene 1—the guest-chamber scene. As there is no scenery at all needed for this, it should be fairly simple to arrange the six or seven peasants round the sides and back of the stage, the centre being occupied by the Teacher.

If there is only one entrance to the stage, that can be used all the way through without confusion, whether it be L or R. All exits and entrances in Act II, Scene 2 will perforce be from the same side, and slight adjustments of the stage-directions will have to be made, of course, if it is R.

The finding of the treasure, Act II, Scene 2, may be done offstage if desired, to obviate rock scenery. Nathan is heard to stumble against the stone—then he exclaims—'Gold,' &c. But the simplest form of rock-scenery onstage is preferable to this.

The small table in Act III will probably have to go. Rachel can then polish her brasses at the big table, sitting on chair R.

#### THE STAGING OF NATHAN'S STORY.

Care must be taken with the fading-out at the end of Act I, and with the reverse process at the beginning of Act IV. Synchronization of stage effects and the gradual changing of voices should be practised assiduously to make the illusion effective.

The simplest method of gaining the attention of the audience in the combination of both processes at the beginning of Act III is probably the best—the switching off of the auditorium lights, which should cause silence and focus attention on the curtain. Other methods may be devised, however, such as the following: The curtain may be half-opened, with both auditorium and stage lights off, while two strong electric torches held in the gap shield the stage from the eyes of the audience, while at the same time providing sufficient reflected light for the necessarily rapid exit of the story-tellers.

#### ALLOTING OF CHARACTERS.

It will probably be found desirable to divide the character of Nathan into Old Nathan (Acts I and IV)



and Young Nathan (Acts II and III). The continuity in the part will be maintained by the scar, which has been noticed and referred to in Act I, and is conspicuous immediately Act II starts. The same could be done with the part of Sarah if the female roles be deemed too few.

Duplicating of characters can also be done easily. The obvious case is with the extra peasants and the Roman soldiers. Owing to many characters being confined to single Acts or Scenes, it can also be done in other ways if necessary. For instance, Simon, with a differently coloured beard, could be a peasant, and with no beard at all, a soldier. Zabdi, or even Old Nathan (if the part of Nathan is divided), could don a dark beard, and swell the ranks of the peasants. Other ways of combining the characters may be easily devised. If there is real dramatic talent two characters such as Huldah and Asaph, or Tobias and Asaph, may be attempted by one man. To assist in arranging such duplications, a list of the characters needed for each scene is appended.

#### COSTUMES.

If appropriate Oriental costumes are not otherwise available, the following descriptions may be of use in making them. It should first be understood, however, that *exact* knowledge of the garments used in New Testament times is not always available, and the Hebrew and Greek terms used to describe clothes are often interpreted differently by different scholars. In these hints what are felt to be the most *probable* descriptions of garments are given, without discussion.

*Peasants.* The men wear the *kuttoneth*—a kind of tunic or undergarment—and the *jacket*. The *kuttoneth* may be imitated by a back-to-front shirt or a large white bib, which is seen through the open front of the jacket. The latter is a loose, shapeless garment rather like a big night-shirt. The sleeves reach half-way to the elbows, and the skirt to the knees or a little lower. The neck opening is like that of an ordinary tunic shirt, only without buttons. The jacket is made of coarse, heavy, woollen material, of some 'serviceable' colour. A *girdle*, made of rough leather, woven rushes, or coarse cloth, is tied round the waist, forming the bottom of a kind of pocket between the loose flabbiness of the top of the jacket and the *kuttoneth*—the 'bosom of the jacket.' This costume is needed by Tobias, Nathan (Act II), Huldah and the other peasants, and Simon.

Nathan (Acts I and IV) has a rather longer jacket, and under it a *haluk*, rather like a night-gown in shape and material, reaching a few inches below his jacket, and having long sleeves.

Zabdi and John have only one garment showing, the jacket, which in the case of boys and women is not open at the neck. Otherwise it is the same as the men's jacket.

The women's jacket, besides being closed at the neck, is roomier and longer, being designed to conceal the figure. The same kind of material is used, and the girdle is worn. This is necessary for Sarah (Acts I and IV), for Mother (Act II), and for Rachel.

*Rich Jews.* These, like the Christian Nathan (Acts

I and IV), wear the haluk as an undergarment instead of the kuttoneth. Over this they wear the *meil*. This is made rather like a long dressing-gown, with long, wide sleeves, and open all down the front. The haluk is of plain white linen, the *meil* of rich, fine, material, and probably highly coloured. For the girdle, which is worn around the *meil*, a richly-coloured sash, or an ornamental leather belt, will be used. For outdoor wear a *cloak* is added, of heavy material. It is loose, open down the front like the *meil*, and has no sleeves. Haluk, *meil*, girdle and cloak are all necessary for Nekasim, Teacher (in rather more sombre colours, but not drab like the peasants' clothes), Nathan (Act III), and Asaph.

The rich women also wear a *meil* of fine cloth, but, as with the peasant woman's jacket, it is closed down the front; it is also rather longer than the men's. It is like a very gaudy night-gown. Shawls and sashes of bright material should be used. Mother (Act III), and Sarah (Act III) should be thus accoutred.

*Headdress.* The men's headdress, for outdoor use only, consists of a large square of cloth folded diagonally, and so placed on the head that one corner covers the neck from the heat of the sun, while the other two are drawn round under the chin and thrown back over the shoulders—or the three ends may be knotted at the back, gipsy-fashion. It is kept in place by a cord of thick wool, or a rolled cloth, encircling the skull. Nathan (Act II, Scenes 1 and 2), Tobias, Huldah and the other peasants, and Simon, will need such a headdress, probably rather sombre in hue. The rich men, Nekasim, Teacher, Nathan (Act III), and

Asaph, will require something a little brighter. Zabdi and John do not need any headdress.

The women also wear a piece of cloth tied gipsy-fashion, both outdoors and in. But they add a jingling appendage of discs, sequins, jewels, &c., attached to a background of bright cloth, which reaches halfway down the back. It is this appendage that Mother has sold in Act II, Scene 3—but her head is still covered with the square of cloth. There is little difference between the poor and the rich women in this matter of headdress—it is the poor woman's one lavish gesture to her poverty. Mother (Act III), Sarah (Act III), and Rachel, wear complete headdresses, Mother (Act II) just a square of cloth, and Sarah (Acts I and IV) simply her own hair, gathered up at the back—she is not a Jew now, but a Christian. (Rather, however, than horrify Nathan by the sight of a bobbed or shingled head, Sarah (Acts I and IV) may wear a square of cloth over her hair.)

*Sandals.* These may be made of almost any kind of sole—leather, wood, cardboard—and attached to the foot by almost any kind of thong. The easiest method of fastening them is by a strap fixed to the front of the sole and passing through the opening kindly provided for the purpose by Nature between the great toe and its neighbour; this strap joins another one which is fixed to the back of the heel and comes round each side of the ankle. There was a great variety of sandals used, however, so there is little chance of any sandals seeming out of place—always provided that zip-fasteners are not used!

Sandals should strictly be worn only in outdoor

scenes. Exception might be made in the case of Simon, who is drunk and doesn't realize the insult he is giving to the household by entering with his feet shod, and in the case of Asaph, who is sober and intends the insult—and, of course, the soldiers, who are Romans and know no better. Zabdi and John should have bare feet both indoors and outdoors. If it is thought desirable, however, this convention may be ignored for the comfort of the actors.

*Ornaments.* The rich men should have ear-rings and finger-rings. Nathan (Act II) has a distinctive finger-ring. The rich women, in addition to rings, should have necklaces of pearl or coral—wrapped round the throat, not dangling—with little shining sequins and jewels hanging from them. They should also have armlets, bracelets, and anklets. They might conceivably be wearing nose-rings and toe-rings, but these would probably be too provocative of the Western sense of humour, and so are better omitted.

*Beards and Hair.* Beards are really essential to all the male characters except Zabdi and John, who are too young, the Roman soldiers, who are clean-shaven, and possibly Asaph, who may be looked upon as a renegade Jew, corrupted by Roman influence. To have to shave off one's beard was considered a disgrace—it was done only in the case of leprosy, or, very rarely, as a mourning custom.

Quite realistic beards may be made by the simple process of fraying out cottonwool, and dyeing to the appropriate colour. Or there is a kind of compressed curly wool, already coloured in different shades, which can be obtained through many large chemists' shops.

This, when pulled out to appropriate shapes, makes even more successful beards.

In Acts I and IV Nathan's hair should be white, to go with his white beard—it may be thickly powdered if a wig is not available. In Acts II and III he need not wear a wig, but his beard must be made to match the colour of his own hair, since he has to appear without headdress.

*The Soldiers.* The foundation garment is a coarse linen tunic, with square neck, short sleeves (about 5in. or 6in.), and short skirt (halfway to the knees). On this is built up the armour. This can be made from milliner's buckram or cardboard, covered with silver paper. Black lines, either of buckram or paint, should be left to mark the different sections of each piece of armour. The different pieces needed are:

Body-armour, a large piece curved round the front of the body, from armpits down to hips, with a superimposed part like a sporran, about 6in. wide, and reaching to the bottom of the skirt. The body-armour is divided horizontally into twelve sections, the sporran vertically into three or four, each of which tapers to a point at the bottom.

Pieces corresponding to epaulets, about 6in. wide, coming down 1in. or 2in. below the top of the body armour, and divided into two or three sections vertically.

Greaves, similar in shape to hockey shin-guards.

Leather baldric, slung from R shoulder to L hip, and supporting a broad-bladed dagger in leather sheath.

The helmet can be made on the foundation of an old bowler hat crown, with ear-pieces and visor-like front-piece of silver paper 'armour.' The crest can be made from a piece of wood 2in. thick, curving concavely from the 3in. base to the convex top, which will be about 9in. long. This wooden crest has its top ornamented by a large number of short lengths of black rug-wool, fastened in position by strings running the length of the crest and tacked down at the ends. These represent the horse-hair plume. The crest can be nailed on to the crown from the inside.

The sandals are of heavy leather—probably hob-nailed.

#### EXCHANGE OF COSTUMES.

Since Jewish clothes were made to cover, and not specially to fit, the body, exchanges of garments were simple and by no means unusual (cf. David and Jonathan changing clothes to symbolize their union in friendship). Therefore if, for reasons of economy, exchanges of costumes during the play are desirable, they may easily be effected, as follows:

With different girdles and headdresses the costumes of Simon and Zabdi could be used for the peasants in Act II, Scene I. Even if these two characters play the parts of peasants in this scene there is no reason why an exchange of garments should not assist in disguising them.

In the same way Sarah (Acts I and IV), Mother (Act II), and Rachel, could all use the same fundamental costume, with different accessories.

Mother (Act III) and Rachel could use the same ornamental headdress, with a different square of cloth for the actual head-covering.

The clothes used by Nekasim and the Teacher could be differently combined for use again by Nathan (Act III) and Asaph.

Other combinations may be thought out if desired.

#### PROPERTIES NEEDED.

Apart from the costumes, ornaments, beards, &c., which have been described, the following properties will be needed:

#### ACT I.

Table, rough-hewn if possible.

Two rough chairs.

Stool with reed-woven top.

Parchment on two wooden rollers—a long piece of buff-coloured paper about 10in. wide would do—tied with blue tape.

Two earthenware dishes.

Two earthenware mugs.

Earthenware jug, with water or milk.

Two circular cakes of unleavened bread, about 8in. diameter and  $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick.

Block of figs.

(Plates are undesirable, but if used must be earthenware. No cutlery—fingers must be used.)

The door is of wood, and bolted by a bar of wood pushed through wooden slots fastened on door and jamb. The knocker on the outside is an iron ring.

ACT II, SCENE 1.

No scenery. (Or, if desired, mud-plastered stone walls.)

Leather bag with seven or eight marked pebbles.

ACT II, SCENE 2.

A few stones at back, and if possible something to suggest barrier of rocks round which Nekasim goes.

Earthenware jar.

Handful of gold discs.

Handful of dark earth—tobacco or tea could be used.

ACT II, SCENE 3.

Rough table.

Two chairs.

Leather bag of silver coins for Huldah—more than twenty.

Leather bag of silver coins for Tobias—supposed to be fifty, but thirty or forty will do.

(These bags, like the one which contained the stones, are small sacks, drawn together at the mouth by a cord. They may be made of wash-leather, if desired. For the coins, coppers covered with silver paper are infinitely preferable to the usual imitation coins made of cardboard.)

ACT III, SCENE 1.

Large table.

Small table—a large brass tray on folding legs is ideal.

Three chairs.

Two stools.

(All the furniture must look expensive. If the same is used as for the other Acts, there must be no doubt about the richness of the trappings.)

Plenty of embroidered silk cloths, lavishly used to decorate the chairs and tables.

Silver and brass vases, and a bowl or two of glazed ware.

Cheap jewellery in abundance, on furniture as well as persons.

ACT III, SCENE 2.

As Act III, Scene 1, and in addition:

Polishing-cloth for Rachel.

Embroidery for Sarah.

ACT III, SCENE 3.

As Act III, Scene 2.

ACT IV.

As Act I.

CHARACTERS NEEDED IN EACH SCENE.

ACT I.

Nathan (old), Sarah, Zabdi.

ACT II.

SCENE 1. Nathan (young), Tobias, Nekasim, Teacher, John, Huldah, two or three other peasants.

SCENE 2. Nekasim, Nathan (young), Tobias, John.

SCENE 3. Nathan (young), Mother, Tobias, John, Huldah.

### ACT III.

SCENE 1. Nathan (young), Sarah, Mother,  
Simon-bar-Jonah.

SCENE 2. Rachel, Sarah, Nathan (young).

SCENE 3. Rachel, Sarah, Nathan (young).

### ACT IV.

Nathan (old), Sarah, Zabdi, Asaph, two Roman  
soldiers.

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