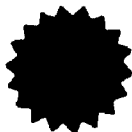


PASSOVER-NIGHT

A BIBLE MYSTERY-PLAY IN
THREE SCENES

BY

W. H. T. GAIRDNER



LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1921

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ISRAELITES

MANASSEH, the head of a family.

MIRIAM, his wife.

ITHAMAR, their firstborn.

RUTH, their little girl.

SARAH, sister to MIRIAM.

ELDAD, messenger to Moses and Aaron.

ELDERS of the community.

EGYPTIANS

ATÔTHIS, the head of a family.

NOFERT, his wife.

BEBA, their firstborn.

A ROYAL MESSENGER.

Other Egyptians.

PASSOVER-NIGHT

A BIBLE MYSTERY-PLAY IN THREE SCENES

SCENE I.

Within the hut of an Israelite in the land of Goshen. The door to the courtyard is on the right. A door to the back leads into an inner room. A window is opposite the outer door. An urgent knock is heard at the outer door. Enter MANASSEH from the inner room.

MANASSEH. I will see who it is, Miriam (*looking back to the inner room*).

(He opens the door, and ELDAD enters hurriedly.)

ELDAD. Peace be to thee, neighbour Manasseh!

MANASSEH. And to thee peace, and the blessing of God! Whence this haste, neighbour Eldad?

ELDAD. Manasseh, I come from the Elders of the village. They are making a visitation, and they bid you and your family be ready to receive them. They are making the round of the houses, and yours is the last.

MANASSEH. The matter, neighbour, must be of fearful moment! I tremble; for all these days are very dreadful, even though here in Goshen land we have escaped the horrors of these nine plagues—strangely and wonderfully escaped them all.

ELDAD. Manasseh, it is as you say! The matter is of fearful moment. I know it, for 'twas I who had

to summon these Elders to meet the lord Moses to receive his commands. Listen; he has seen the King for the last time! This time he has broken with him for ever. He went out of his presence in anger!

MANASSEH. Your words amaze me. Tell me more. Eldad! What is this news?

ELDAD. The horror of that darkness which could be felt ceased on the third day, and the lord Moses stood once more before Pharaoh. Aaron his brother was with him, and I was in attendance at the door. The Queen sat by the side of her lord. There sat they in state like those statues of them in front of the temple-pylons yonder. And little Prince Amen-Hotep their firstborn sat at their footstool. The terror of the darkness had shaken the King, and this time he was willing to let us go, but on his own terms—shifty then, as he had been shifty before. But our leader swept aside the subtleties of his scheming; he demanded our exodus from the land—man, woman, and child; sheep, goat, and ox. He stood like a rock before the King. Then Pharaoh's dark face darkened yet more. It hardened with the hardening of his heart, and he said: "I will not let thy people go. Forth from my face!" And he beckoned furiously to call his guards.

MANASSEH. And our leader? Did the guards set upon him?

ELDAD. Is it not known to you that the man Moses is very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and the sight of all the people? Not a man of the guard dared to stir! Yes, and then Pharaoh himself quailed, and sat biting his nails. Terrible was the silence.

MANASSEH. And then the lord Moses went forth?

ELDAD. No; in that dreadful stillness the Lord God

spoke to him—I knew it by the expression of his face and of his eyes, as they seemed to gaze at everything and at nothing. . . . Then suddenly he turned to Pharaoh and spoke a terrible word: “Hear then, O Pharaoh, the word of the Lord: *‘Yet one more plague will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne—’*”

MANASSEH. Amen-Hotep! The little Prince!

ELDAD. Aye, and here his glance rested on him, and the Queen caught her son to separate between him and that glance!

MANASSEH. *‘From the firstborn of Pharaoh . . .’*

ELDAD. *‘To the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of cattle. And there shall be a great cry through the land of Egypt, such as there hath been none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not one dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.’* And all these thy servants” (and here he pointed to the crowded court) “shall come down unto me and bow down themselves unto me saying, Get thee out and all the people that follow after thee: and after that I will go out.”

MANASSEH. Eldad, what awful threat is this? Did not Pharaoh quail?

ELDAD. No; the fury of the anger which he had been nursing now boiled up, and he thundered: “Get thee from me! Take heed to thyself—see my face no more!” And again he beckoned furiously to his guards.

MANASSEH. And our leader?

ELDAD. Never saw I him as in that hour. You know that the man Moses is very meek, above all men that are upon the face of the earth. But in that hour the eyes of that meek man blazed, his face lit with wrath—the holy wrath of God; and he said, slowly, in tones far lower but far more terrible than Pharaoh's: "Thou hast spoken well; I *will* see thy face no more." For a moment that seemed an hour the two looked in each other's eyes. Then Pharaoh dropped his eyes. In a silence that could be heard, the lords and nobles fell apart, to right and to left, as Moses, in hot anger, went forth from before the King.

MANASSEH. Eldad, your words send to my heart a thrill of horror—yet also of a hope that I scarce dare utter. For your words signify that the end draws very nigh!

ELDAD (*in a low tone*). As nigh as this night!

MANASSEH. This night?

ELDAD. Hist! They come.

Enter the Elders of the village.

FIRST ELDER. Peace be to this house! Summon the whole family to hear the message of our lord.

(MANASSEH goes into the inner room and comes forth with MIRIAM his wife, bearing an infant in her arms. Her sister SARAH follows. He himself leads ITHAMAR, a little boy of seven. A still younger girl is clinging to her mother's skirts.)

FIRST ELDER. Listen for your lives! The lord Moses called us Elders together and said to us that on this night—*this night*, do you understand?—about midnight, the Lord will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all firstborn in the land shall die. . . .

MIRIAM AND SARAH. Ah! Ithamar!

FIRST ELDER. Listen, my daughters! It is peace. He therefore told us to take us lambs according to our families: each head of a family shall take a lamb without blemish and kill it. And then he shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood, and after that none of the family shall go out of the door of the house till the morning. Thus shall ye kill the passover—

MANASSEH. The passover?

ELDER. For about midnight the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side-posts He will "*pass over*" the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto that house to smite. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance for ever. 'Tis the word of the Lord by Moses His servant.

(The whole family bows low, then raise their arms in worship.)

SECOND ELDER. Take therefore to yourselves a lamb. We have requisitioned all the spotless lambs, yet they have scarce gone round our families.

MANASSEH. Give us one of the requisitioned lambs, I pray you, my father.

SECOND ELDER. They are all distributed—all. Have you no lamb without blemish here with you?

MANASSEH. Yes, we have one, my little firstborn's own, his pet.

FIRST ELDER. 'Tis well; 'tis fitting: 'tis for himself, for his own life. *(He lays his hand on ITHAMAR'S head.)* 'Tis for you, my little son! *(To MANASSEH.)* Is all understood? His life depends on it!

PASSOVER-NIGHT

(To SECOND ELDER.) Instruct them yet further concerning the paschal meal, and that they be ready for the summons to depart hastily betwixt midnight and the dawn. To-night in Egypt! To-morrow free!

(All the Elders go out, except the SECOND.)

SECOND ELDER (to ELDAD). Bring him and all the heads of families to thy house at the ninth hour.

ELDAD. It shall be done, my father. *(Exit SECOND ELDER.)* The ninth hour, Manasseh! *(MANASSEH inclines his head. Exit ELDAD.)*

MANASSEH. Ithamar, go and fetch your lamb.

ITHAMAR. What did the Chief Elder mean, father?

MANASSEH. Afterwards you shall understand, my boy. *(Exit ITHAMAR by the outer door; MANASSEH follows him to the open door and looks out.)* See! he calls the lamb! How willingly, how obediently he comes! 'Tis a sight brings tears to the eyes. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. Our lamb, without blemish and without spot! Obedient even to death!

(MIRIAM and her sister have gathered round, watching.

Re-enter ITHAMAR backwards as if looking outside the open door.)

ITHAMAR. Come!

(The scene closes.)

SCENE II.

Outside the hut. To the left is the outer door. Late afternoon. MANASSEH stands at the door, shading his eyes with his hand and looking westward to the opposite horizon.

MANASSEH. The sun is nearing the verge of the western sky. In what glory does our last day in Egypt close! The Lord preserve us from the terrors of this night! The hour is come. *(He looks within.)* Miriam!

MIRIAM *(from within)*. Here am I, my husband!

MANASSEH. Come forth with the children, and thy sister Sarah. Bring even the infant out. Not one soul of this family must be wanting at such an hour as this.

Enter MIRIAM, leading the little girl, and with the infant in her arms; her sister SARAH; and ITHAMAR.

MANASSEH. You heard the message which the Elders brought to us and to the neighbours from the lord Moses. We are now met to do according to his word. Go then, Sarah, my wife's sister, and fetch the hyssop. And Ithamar, my little son, my firstborn, go thou and fetch the bowl of blood. Nay, do not cry, little boy!

ITHAMAR. My lamb! My little lamb!

MIRIAM. Do not cry, beloved. Comfort him, father.

ITHAMAR *(sobbing)*. 'Twas my lamb; I loved him. Why were you so cruel?

(MANASSEH seats himself on the stone at the door of the house, and draws ITHAMAR to his knees. ITHAMAR hides his head on his father's shoulder.)

ITHAMAR (*between his sobs*). You called him, and he came so obediently, so meekly. He was dumb; he did not open his mouth. But he looked up at me—I cannot forget how he looked up—as if he loved me; and he did! And then you killed him. Oh, oh! . . . And then he lay so still, so still. My lamb! he was my very own, and now . . . (*He buries his face again.*)

MANASSEH (*who has been patting the child and comforting him*). There was no other, none. He was “without blemish, a male of the first year,” pure, and white as snow. The Elders, when they went forth to requisition, hardly found lambs for all our families; and when they heard of him, they allotted him to us—to you.

ITHAMAR. My little lamb!

THE LITTLE GIRL. Issimar’s little lamb!

MANASSEH. Yes, Ithamar’s little lamb, and now his more than ever; for, Ithamar, do you know that your lamb has given up his small life for you—for you, mine own boy?

MIRIAM. Oh, my son, my precious little son!

SARAH. Our darling, light of our eyes!

THE LITTLE GIRL. Me loves Issimar too.

MANASSEH. His life for yours. Were his life-blood not shed, then to-morrow morning there would be no little Ithamar; Ithamar would be lying cold and still, just like his little lamb.

ITHAMAR (*still sobbing on his father’s shoulder*). He loved me so!

MANASSEH. Poor little lamb! He could not understand. But do you not think that if he *could* have understood, he would have laid down his life for his master just as meekly and gently and willingly?

MIRIAM. Blessed little lamb, we owe to him our Ithamar; blessed little lamb!

MANASSEH. The Lord chose him, chose him for you, for us.

ITHAMAR (*looking up and drying his eyes*). Then, father, he is the Lord's lamb.

MANASSEH. Aye, the Lamb of God!

ITHAMAR. Thank you, lamb—dear, dear, dear little lamb!

MIRIAM. Take the infant, sister. Oh, Ithamar, come to your mother.

(*As MANASSEH re-enters the house, the mother draws ITHAMAR to her with a passionate embrace. The father returns, carrying the bowl and the hyssop. Meanwhile ATÔTHIS, his wife NOFERT, and their small son BEBA, have entered from the back unnoticed, and are quietly watching.*)

MANASSEH. The hour has come. Ithamar, it must be you to hold the bowl; for truly, truly this blood has redeemed your life from destruction.

ITHAMAR (*receiving the bowl*). I do not yet understand, father.

MANASSEH. Very soon you shall understand. (*He dips the hyssop in the blood and raises his voice.*) Lo, here do I, obedient to the word of God by Moses His servant, dip the hyssop in the blood of the Lamb of God and strike the lintel (*he strikes*) and the two side-posts (*he dips twice and strikes twice*), that when the Lord shall pass through this night He may see the blood upon the lintel and upon the two side-posts, and so pass over this door, and not suffer the destroyer to come into this house to smite it. Jehovah, hear! Jehovah, behold! (*In*

a lower voice, but full of emotion.) And now, praise to the God of Israel, we are safe! sheltered under the blood of the Lamb of God! It remains only to prepare that last meal, to wait the signal, and then good-bye to the Land of Bondage for ever!

ATÔTHIS (*hailing Manasseh from the back*). What strange thing is forward with you, neighbour Manasseh?

ITHAMAR. Beba, Beba, such strange things! I want to tell you all about it—all about my little lamb.

BEBA. Ithamar!

(The two boys run to each other, embrace, and converse.)

MANASSEH. Neighbour Atôthis, we have been good neighbours, and you have been kind to us. Oh, then, save Beba, and come with us.

ATÔTHIS (*laughing*). You have gone mad, neighbour, it would appear! Beba and I have been watching you this long while. Plastering your house in such wise! Truly, a sorry jest, upon my soul.

NOFERT. My man says truth. You have given us a laugh, neighbour Miriam.

MIRIAM. Jest not, sister. Oh, your Beba! Look to him, protect him, shelter him. Oh, my heart is woe to look at him playing with Ithamar there!

NOFERT. And what of him?

MIRIAM (*awestruck*). Oh! the shadow of death is on him: do you not see?

NOFERT (*angry*). Silence, woman! You lie! You have the evil eye; for this now I shall have expense and trouble, for I shall have to call in the priest of Ptah, to sacrifice and pray to-night, and so to avert your most evil eye.

ATÔTHIS. Ha, ha! Nofert and her priest! *He* will be nothing loth!

MANASSEH. He will avail naught, neighbour. Listen. Miriam's eye is not evil; she desires the child's salvation. The time is short, I cannot waste words, for the sun is setting in the west, and by twilight we must be within this door, never to come forth from it again save to leave you for ever—unless you will obey my words. Listen, nay *listen!* Is not the man Moses very great in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of all your people? (ATÔTHIS, *suddenly grave, assents.*) Has one word of his failed? Has not your land been smitten these nine times at his word, spoken in the name of our God?

ATÔTHIS. Your god—in Egypt! Our gods must be weak indeed if they are not stronger in their own country than a god who (with your pardon) is a pilgrim and a wanderer, with no country of his own for abode!

MANASSEH. Oh, neighbour, are you *so* foolish and hard of heart? Oh, blind, blind! What! have not these nine plagues been nine several judgments on all your gods? The god of your land, the god of your sky—aye, the god of your sacred Nile itself, all discomfited, defiled, deprived of might? Your magicians and mighty men silenced, brought to naught? All this by the Name of Jehovah our God, through Moses, His servant. When he raised his rod, did not a plague descend? and was ever that plague stayed, until your King, himself (as you think) a god, implored him to intercede with Jehovah, the God of Israel?

ATÔTHIS (*sullenly*). I follow my King. He has dismissed the man Moses, and has refused to see his face again, lest he die. It must be that he knows that the

man has reached the end of his power and of his enchantments.

MANASSEH (*with still greater earnestness*). Oh, listen, ere too late: 'tis my last word. (*In a low voice.*) Look you, the word has been passed round to the Elders, and by them to us, that yet one more plague will Jehovah bring upon Pharaoh and on Egypt; and that this time—yea, on this very night, this fourteenth of Nisan—Pharaoh will indeed let us go; and we shall say farewell to this land for ever. For on this very night, about midnight, the Lord will go out into the midst of Egypt, and pass through all the houses in this land, and all the firstborn in your land shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh on his throne to the firstborn of your slave-girl behind the mill. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt. But over the houses—oh, listen!—over the houses sheltered under the blood of the redeeming lamb the destroying angel will pass. Our Ithamar is safe. But your Beba—ah, poor innocent, my heart bleeds for him. Oh, Atôthis! oh, my friend and neighbour; for your kindness to us in this land, come and shelter under our roof; be one family with us. The redeeming blood will avail you, too, your Beba with our Ithamar. And then go forth with us on the morrow, for there are strangers in our midst, and I have heard that many are going forth with us ere the morning dawns: the promise is not to Israel alone. Come, oh, come! Enter with us the house, for the sun sinks, and I dare not stay. (*He grips ATÔTHIS with terrible intensity.*)

ATÔTHIS (*laughing uneasily*). Old wives' tales! Yet your word has come true each time before, I confess And truly Beba is most dear. . . .

NOFERT (*shrilly*). Out on you, man! Are you lending these slaves your ear, and you free-born? Come, it grows cold. Come, Beba.

MIRIAM. Nay, neighbour Nofert—ah, stay.

SARAH. Neighbour, neighbour, take him not away.

NOFERT. Be still, evil women!

ATÔTHIS (*breaking away*). It is too late. Never shall I move her. Well, I'll pin my faith to Pharaoh. Would he risk the life of Prince Amen-Hotep? Good-night, Manasseh. In the morning I will come to congratulate you that your story has been but an evil dream. Come, Beba.

BEBA. Good-night, Ithamar: to-morrow we will play with my kid, since your lamb is gone. Yes, father dear. . . . (*He embraces ITHAMAR.*)

MANASSEH (*in a low tone*). Ah, poor innocent. Ah, son of death! Look, he goes to his doom, and knows it not.

MIRIAM. Ithamar, Ithamar!

(*She passionately embraces him again. The other family goes slowly off, BEBA looking back and waving his hand, smiling.*)

MANASSEH. Shelter we ourselves and Ithamar under the redeeming blood of the Lamb of God.

(*With a solemn gesture he slowly leads the way into the house, the others following, the mother last, still embracing her boy. The sun sets.*)

SCENE III.

Within the house. The father is sitting at a low table, from which the meal has just been cleared away. His two children are on either side. The father's staff is in his hand, and all are dressed as though for a journey. The infant is asleep on a small mattress. The two women, also with headdresses, etc., as though for a journey, are washing some dishes at the side. A kneading-trough lies on the ground near them. A candle and the brilliant moonlight illuminate the scene.

ITHAMAR. I am so sleepy, father.

GIRL. And Ruth is sleepy, too.

MOTHER (*alarmed*). Is Ithamar well? Can it be . . .
(*She pauses from her work, hand to heart, looking across.*)

MANASSEH. Trust the word of the Lord, O my wife. Our boy is sheltered. No marvel that he is sleepy—'tis near midnight.

MIRIAM. Midnight! Oh, this awful hour!

(*A pause.*)

ITHAMAR. The bread was not nice this evening, father; it did not taste nice.

MANASSEH. There was no time to leaven it, my boy.

ITHAMAR. Why, father?

GIRL. Why, father?

MANASSEH. Because mother had to make it in such haste, and we ate it in haste too.

ITHAMAR. Why? And I did not like the vegetables—they were so nasty and bitter.

MANASSEH. Look at my staff, and our outdoor things!

We ate in a hurry because we are going to start on a journey—this very night—it may be this very hour. So we must be ready, quite ready. Oh, haste, mother and sister: I feel that the hour is drawing nigh.

ITHAMAR. Are we going on a journey, father? Oh, how excited I am!

GIRL. And me too! (A pause.)

ITHAMAR. Why did I stay up to supper to-night, father? And why did we have a service at supper? We never had before.

MANASSEH. It was the Sacrifice of the Lord's Passover. And next year, please God, and for many a year, you, Ithamar, shall ask that same question on this same night, and so we shall never forget it.

MIRIAM. It is a night to be much remembered, and observed unto Jehovah for bringing us out of the land of Egypt. Yes, this is that night of the Lord, to be observed by us and our children and our children's children for ever.

MANASSEH (*solemnly*). Amen. Yes, when you are a father, Ithamar, and have a little Manasseh, he shall ask the same question, and you shall tell him about this wonderful, this terrible night.

ITHAMAR. Why terrible, father?

GIRL. Why tellible?

MIRIAM. Oh, hush, darlings. We shall too soon know; but you, mine own boy, are safe, safe, safe. *(She has finished her work, and has come behind, and takes him to her bosom.)* (A pause.)

MANASSEH. To-night in Egypt; to-morrow free, with faces to the land of promise. Just think, wife: to-night slaves in Egypt; to-morrow who knows where? But free, frée!

SARAH. We have prepared no victuals; and how shall we carry all our stuff?

MANASSEH. We shall carry what we can. Take your unleavened dough, and the kneading-trough, and you will be able to make unleavened cakes. And "in the mountain of the Lord it shall be provided."

(A pause.)

ITHAMAR. I *am* so sleepy, mother. Please let go of me, and let me lie down. See, my little sister is fast asleep now.

MIRIAM. My son, my son, don't lie down, don't sleep, don't close your eyes—I could not bear it. What if . . . It would be too like as if . . .

MANASSEH *(gently)*. Hush, my wife! Remember the sheltering blood.

MIRIAM. I know it. I believe—I do believe. But I could not bear to see him lying asleep this night. Wait till the midnight hour be past.

MANASSEH. Be not afraid for the terror by night, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness.

MIRIAM. I am not afraid, Manasseh. But this night is very still, very dreadful. When will It come? I can hardly bear this silence.

MANASSEH *(going to the door)*. It is midnight; see, the full moon of Nisan is due south. It is the hour of doom. Let us watch and let us pray.

(They kneel. A silence, which grows tenser. The Israelites raise their hands in supplication.)

MIRIAM *(in a terrified voice)*. Ha! What was that?

MANASSEH *(going to the door)*. I see nothing: I hear nothing.

MIRIAM. I heard nothing. But I felt . . . Oh, listen to the silence!

SARAH. I felt it too.

MANASSEH. You are right. The whole air is full of terror, of Presence.

(They have risen to their feet, and are listening with strained faces and staring eyes. MIRIAM is holding ITHAMAR to her bosom.)

MANASSEH *(suddenly)*. It is IT! It is passing over. Worship ye. . . .

(They prostrate themselves. The moonlight wanes and glooms. . . . Some moments of awful suspense, and then the terrible, long-drawn cry of NOFERT rises from without, rending the silence.)

NOFERT'S voice. Ah—h! Beba! Dead!

(From a further distance rises another mother's shriek; then another. The air is filled with wailing: MIRIAM clutches ITHAMAR convulsively.)

MIRIAM. Oh, Manasseh, my husband. Beba! And our Ithamar, safe, safe, safe!

(The moonlight floods the room once more.)

NOFERT'S voice. Dead! Dead! Oh, my son! My son!

ATÔTHIS. Wake, Beba, wake! Open your eyes!

NOFERT. No, no, no, no! Dead, dead, dead! Ye gods! Ah—h!

MIRIAM. As a mother waiting for her firstborn. Ah, Nofert!

MANASSEH. They would not shelter under the blood of the Lamb of God. Ah, poor neighbours! a house of death, and ours a house of life. Ithamar saved; Beba lost.

PASSOVER-NIGHT

Enter ATÔTHIS distraught.

ATÔTHIS. Dead, dead, dead ! And Ithamar ? (*Sees him in his mother's arms*) Alive ? The blood availed, then ? Fool that I was not to take your warning. Beba dead ; and the kid that we spared dead also. Fool, fool ! (*He beats his head and breast.*)

Enter a Royal Messenger.

MESSENGER. Woe, woe, woe ! Prince Amen-Hotep dead. I proclaim Pharaoh's royal command : " Rise up and get you forth from among my people, and go and serve the Lord, as ye have said, and take your flocks and herds, as ye have said, and *be gone* ! And bless me also."

ATÔTHIS. A god, the son of a god dead, and Ithamar alive ?

MESSENGER. Dead in his sleep at midnight. The Queen rose up and found him dead. Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and found their firstborn dead. There is a great cry in the land of Egypt this night, for there is not a house where there is not one dead.

NOFERT's *voice*. Beba ! - Ah—h !

ATÔTHIS. Miserable woman ! And she restrained me !

[*Exit.*

MESSENGER. Get you gone, or we be all dead men ! I go to pass on my message. Woe worth the day ! Woe worth the night !

[*Exit.*

Enter ELDAD.

ELDAD. From the lords Moses and Aaron. It is the hour. Rise and come ! Are you ready ?

MANASSEH. The lords' servants have been ready since dark.

ELDAD. 'Tis well. The trysting-place is the outer pylon of the temple. I go to pass on the word. Haste ye, haste. To-night Egypt; by morning free!

[He goes out with a gesture of exultation.]

MANASSEH. Freedom! By morning free!

(The women have been packing the kneading-trough and a few necessities into the bundles of clothes. Re-enter ATÔTHIS and other Egyptians.)

ATÔTHIS. Get you gone, terrible nation! Take these jewels of silver and of gold, but go! And bless me also.

OTHER EGYPTIANS. Take these, and these, and these—but go—oh, haste! Go, go, or we be dead men. And bless us also.

(A fresh outbreak of wailing from without.)

EGYPTIANS. Ai! Ai! Ai! Back to the mothers bereft! Back to the sonless homes!

(They go out with gestures of grief and despair.

The Israelites have now shouldered their burdens. The father leads forth the girl. SARAH takes the infant. The mother comes last, half-embracing ITHAMAR. As they reach the threshold the wail of BEBA'S mother is again heard.)

MIRIAM. Saved by the blood! *(She pauses with a gesture of ecstasy, then passes out.)*

ITHAMAR. The Lamb of God! who redeemed me!

(He kisses the side-posts, first one and then the other, and passes out. The room is left empty.)

PASSOVER-NIGHT

The light of dawn has gradually been overpowering the full moonlight. As the eastern casement opposite the door glows golden, the long distant note of a trumpet is heard from out the sun-rising, followed by a mighty distant shout :

VOICES OF THE FIRSTBORN. *HOSANNA !*

VOICES OF ALL THE PEOPLE. *FREE !*

(The curtain falls.)