A

STAR BOOK

THE SON OF MAN

THE STORY OF JESUS

BY

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Translated from the German
by Eden and Cedar Paul

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AFTER REMBRANDT

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IN MEMORIAM
HUJUS AETATIS
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

While chapter and verse can be given for every statement about Jesus made in *The Son of Man,* and in especial for Jesus' own utterances and for things said to him, the wording differs in many instances from that familiar to readers of the authorised version of the New Testament. These changes have been made by the translators in conformity with the German original, and with the conception of Jesus expounded by the author in his foreword. In pursuance of that conception, Herr Ludwig has not only combined passages from the various gospels, but has almost always modernised the phrasing, so that there might not be a glaring contrast between these passages and his own contemporary style. It was in accordance with the author's express instructions that the translators followed the same plan in preparing the English version.

TO THE READER

THE world is familiar with the general substance of that part of the history of my race which is retold in the ensuing chapters. Furthermore, the attempt to write the life of Jesus from a purely historical standpoint is older than the days of the Enlightenment.

Could biographical portraiture be more difficult than in the present instance? We have to depict a man concerning whom practically nothing is known until he reached the age of thirty, least of all his personal appearance, the mirror of the soul; whilst of the two years, more or less, which preceded his early death, we have only conflicting stories. The gospels, the four main sources of knowledge, contradict one another in many respects, and are upon some points contradicted by the scanty non-Christian authorities. Thus even the material we have must be carefully sifted.

Moreover, there is a confusion in the serial arrangement, a confusion which has been deplored throughout the centuries. We have accounts of very little more than the beginning and the end, the baptism and the trial. What lies between is chaotic. "The gospels," wrote Luther, "do not keep order in their account of the miracles and deeds of Jesus. This is of small moment.

When there is a dispute about Holy Writ, and no comparison is possible, let the matter drop." Almost all the contradictions arise out of the disorderly nature of the reports. As soon as we arrange them psychologically, everything is seen to be logical. Not till then do the two great periods in Jesus' life become comprehensible: the period of humble-minded but cheerful teaching; and the period when he was filled with the consciousness of a Messianic mission. When the account of the latter period is made to follow the account of the former in a natural fashion, the character of Jesus is freed from its contradictions, and manifests a human, a simple, course of development.

This book deals with "Jesus," and has not a word to say about "Christ." The author does not meddle with theology; that arose later, and he does not pretend to understand it. He tells the story as if the tremendous consequences of the life he describes were unknown to him—as they were unknown to Jesus, and unwilled. The book, therefore, ignores the interpolations in the gospels, whether made retrospectively to show the confirmation of ancient prophecies, or prospectively to provide support for the still youthful Church. Much has been omited because modern research has rejected it as spurious. If the reader misses some text endeared to him from childhood, let him remember that libraries are filled with discussions as to the genuineness of such passages. Since in these days most persons derive their impressions of the story of Jesus from pictures of a comparatively recent date rather than from the gospels, a good deal escapes their

notice. They fail, for instance, to observe that neither in Mark nor in Matthew are we told that Jesus visited the temple when he was a child; and that only one of the four evangelists says that Mary and John were present when he died on the cross.

In this account, when any reference is made to the miracles, they are interpreted naturalistically, for I am writing history and building up a picture of human characters. All Jesus' miracles might be shown to have been no miracles, or a hundred new miracles might be successfully ascribed to him; neither the one nor the other would diminish his greatness. That is why I have made so little use of the gospel of John, which has been most exposed to the fire of modern criticism, and have drawn mainly upon the accounts of Mark and Matthew. But I have combined all the reports in such a way as will best elucidate the incident with which I am dealing.

On the other hand, nothing has been superadded; that is why the book is short. The mishmash which is called a historical novel (caricaturing, as Goethe said, both romance and history, and hardly practicable when the sources are so exiguous) would have been in this case immoral as well. One who would venture to ascribe to Jesus imaginary sayings and doings, should be a person at least equal to Jesus in intuitive power. Chapter and verse in one or more of the gospels can be given for everything that Jesus is here portrayed as having said or done; only in outlooks and methods of expression, only in the bridges of thought whereby the words and the deeds are interconnected,

has the author necessarily given free reign to imagination. Since I have endeavoured to do this in a purely human way, by telling of human conflicts and inhibitions and resolves, I may hope that my account will not arouse that sense of something utterly remote from contemporary experience which continually disturbs the modern reader of the gospels, and drags him out of the depths into the shallows. If the attempt to give coloured picture (an attempt which misleads us into an excessive use of imagination) were to be avoided, nothing remained but to limn this portrait after the manner of a woodcut.

Far from its being my purpose to shake the faith which those who live in Christ have in the divinity of Christ, my aim, rather, is to convince those who regard the personality of Jesus as artificially constructed, that he is a real and intensely human figure. "Had he never lived," says Rousseau, "the writers of the gospels would themselves have been as great as Jesus."

My aim is, not to expound teaching with which all are familiar, but to portray the inner life of the prophet. What interests us here is, not his later influence, exercised through the instrumentality of others, but the world of his own feelings. The development of that world of self-feeling, the aims and motives of a leader, his struggles and weaknesses and disappointments; the great spiritual battle between self-assertion and humility, between responsibility and discouragement, between the claims of his mission and his longing for personal happiness—these must be described. A prophet was to be portrayed, a man greater than all

his contemporaries and nevertheless unable to cope with the world into which he had been born. Not that the author supposes the interpretation here put forward to be the only one conceivable! It is one among many possible interpretations; and aspires, at least, to be in harmony with the spirit of our own time.

In a prelude, I give the political and mental atmosphere out of which a prophet of such a kind and of such a way of thinking could emerge. The manner in which he welded together, remodelled, and made glorious the catchwords of his day, would alone suffice to prove the greatness of his genius.

Yet the key to his nature is found, not in his genius, but in his human heart.

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Prelude

JERUSALEM

I

NIGHT still broods in the halls of the temple. The priests who are keeping watch peer through the darkness. Some of them are crouching, others lying. They can see one another only in dim outlines, can just discern the shadowy movements of one another's arms as they draw their mantles more closely round them; they can recognize one another only by the murmur of voices. Through the arcades of the upper terrace, the wind from the sea blows keen, for the end of March is near, and the waters are vexed by the equinoctial gales. At the foot of the Holy of Holies the great stone city lies slumbering. All are asleep: Jews and Gentiles; sages, beggars, and rich men; priests and people; pride and wisdom. There is much hatred betwixt house and house; but in the houses, love. Little joy but much hope—for it is a conquered city, and the conquered despise their conquerors. Power lies asleep in Jerusalem; the cold steel weapons do not stir, nor do harsh commands break the silence of the night. Peace seems to breathe down from the firmament, now that for a generation and more there has been no clash of arms in the Jewish capital. Nevertheless, hatred of the conquerors smoulders in the heart of the people. Even while the conquered are sleeping and while hate is in

abeyance in their relaxed limbs, still through the dreams of men and women alike looms faith in the one God. "He will return as King of the Jews and Lord of the world!"

Now comes a sound of heavy footsteps, the measured tread of armed men. Light flits through the arches of the hall, vanishes for a moment, and then returns in force. Those who are lying on the ground leap to their feet. It is the captain of the temple who has come with his men. Thrice every night this guard makes the round. The pretext is that the Romans are watching over the safety of the holy hill, but in truth they have an eye to their own safety as well. In the flicker of the torches the two parties glare at one another while their traditional enmity gleams in their eyes. No one speaks. Enough that they see one another, while orders are fulfilled.

What do the priests see in the torchlight? They see men who are sturdy rather than tall; men whose harness in this illumination has a golden-red sheen; men whose arms and legs are bare, while their bodies are clad in scale-armour. Some of them carry spears; others, swords. The faces beneath the hemispherical helmets are beardless, brown, and wiry; faces showing hardness and reserve; the face of young men who think little, but can make long marches. Men who laugh readily, eat heartily, and are prone to be rough-and-ready wooers. The captain, whose armour is half hidden by a cloak, has gentler lineaments, and seems lost in thought. In truth, it is his way to hide the scorn with which the

sight of these priests inspires him. For his part, as he contemplates the Israelites, he sees bent figures, some long and lean, some short and stout, all wearing gabardines which fall from their shoulders to their sandals; men with yellow faces, black hair and black beards. Men who are wearied with watching, and who fear their Roman conquerors. Yet from their dark eyes flash fanaticism, hope, and pride.

Thus do the two worlds face one another, men of faith and men of war, conquered and conquerors. Thus do the Jews and the Romans face one another this night in Jerusalem.

Three hours later the sun has risen behind the bare hills eastward of Jordan, revealing the familiar scene to the priests and the soldiers who comprise this twofold temple guard. Rocky hills, grey and yellow, cold and repellent, waterless and well-nigh treeless, surround the great white town wherein rocks and walls seem one. The place was a natural fortress, and all that human hands need do was to crown the rocky rampart with walls, combining the whole with simple art, until the city was fitted into its place among the five hills.

Where they are standing, upon the flattened summit which Solomon long since had levelled for the first temple, the second temple, begun after the return from Babylon, now rises. Looking southwestward, their eyes rest on another hill, on which clear-cut shadows are cast by the rising sun. To this a bridge leads. Taller and finer than the temple hill is the Mount of Zion, where in the days beyond recall (days for whose return devout

Jews hope unceasingly) King David had built his stronghold. On Zion are the homes of the well-to-do. Northward, facing this eminence, is the detested acropolis of the Romans, Antonia by name, on the hilltop which the Maccabees had fortified two hundred years earlier, when Israel rose against the heathen. Behind, on the marshy ground to the north of the town, dwell the poorer folk. Thus he who holds the fortress commands the temple and the gates, controls the metropolis of this turbulent nation, sits astride the southern end of the narrow land—which, it seems, might be crossed in a few strides from the desert to the Mediterranean shore.

II

Below, in the crowded dwellings, the people are now awake. There is stir and bustle and colour in the narrow streets. The cries of the street sellers are echoing from the stone walls. Many thousand strangers throng the town. Three days from now comes the Feast of Passover; the inns and their stables are filled with men and camels. Workers and traders, shoemakers and tailors, barbers and scribes, venders of vegetables and dried figs, are plying for custom. Asses, heavily laden, are driven from street to street, carrying merchandise to prospective buyers.

The general movement is toward the temple hill, although there is nothing more afoot there than on any other day. Built in a square, five hundred ells each side, its walls are surmounted by three great terraces. Towards these the crowd is moving, to gain the huge lower arcades, where no business is done, but where we meet every one.

This is the outer court, the court of the heathen, placarded with inscriptions in Greek and Latin warning unbelievers against access to the second terrace. Nineteen steps separate the faithful from the unfaithful, and every Gentile knows that to mount the steps is for him a crime punishable with death.

On the lower terrace, then, Romans and Greeks must stay their steps, though the former belong to the conquering race, and the latter may be rich merchants. Here, too, Arabs and Babylonians, anciently at war with one another, and aforetime masters of this city, must likewise pause. Farther than this no unbeliever may go. Proud, therefore, are the Jews that even the poorest and raggedest among them may climb the nineteen great steps to the second terrace, to stand in the inner court between high walls, amid tall columns, gazing yet higher, up the twelve steps that lead to the innermost temple on the crown of the hilltop, where, as all know, is the Holy of Holies.

The crowd is waiting. Up there the priests have left their cells, have performed their ablutions, have put on clean raiment. Now they are preparing for their daily duties. One must slay the morning sacrifice; another must lay the firing upon the altar; another must clear away the ashes, must see to the incense, must trim the lights, must replenish the shew-bread, must care for the vessels. All is made ready. The lamb is led to the altar, beside which in the twilight each takes up his position. Are the singers in their places? Are the basins ready? Some one gives a signal. Slowly, with a harsh clangour, the huge gates yield to the pressure of many hands, and open. A trumpet sounds thrice, and, from the two terraces below, all eyes are uplifted. At this instant the morning sacrifice is slain; its blood consecrates the temple. Then the priests move in procession into the pillared halls. Prayers follow, and the