



THE GODS OF PEGANA

LORD DUNSANY

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BY
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Then Mung sent Umbool back to his waste in Afrik to breathe again upon the rocks, and parch the desert, and to sear the memory of Afrik into the brains of all who ever bring their bones away.

And Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion sang again, and walked once more in their accustomed haunts, and played the game of Life and Death with fishes and frogs, but never essayed to play it any more with men, as do the gods of Pegana.

OF DOROZHAND

(Whose Eyes Regard The End)

Sitting above the lives of the people, and looking, doth Dorozhand see that which is to be.

The god of Destiny is Dorozhand. Upon whom have looked the eyes of Dorozhand he goeth forward to an end that naught may stay; he becometh the arrow from the bow of Dorozhand hurled forward at a mark he may not see—to the goal of Dorozhand. Beyond the thinking of men, beyond the sight of all the other gods, regard the eyes of Dorozhand.

He hath chosen his slaves. And them doth the destiny god drive onward where he will, who, knowing not whither nor even knowing why, feel only his scourge behind them or hear his cry before.

There is something that Dorozhand would fain achieve, and, therefore, hath he set the people striving, with none to cease or rest in all the worlds. But the gods of Pegana, speaking to the gods, say: "What is it that Dorozhand would fain achieve?"

It hath been written and said that not only the destinies of men are the care of Dorozhand but that even the gods of Pegana be not unconcerned by his will.

All the gods of Pegana have felt a fear, for they have seen a look in the eyes of Dorozhand that regardeth beyond the gods.

The reason and purpose of the Worlds is that there should be Life upon the Worlds, and Life is the instrument of Dorozhand wherewith he would achieve his end.

Therefore the Worlds go on, and the rivers run to the sea, and Life ariseth and flieth even in all the Worlds, and the gods of Pegana do the work of the gods—and all for Dorozhand. But when the end of Dorozhand hath been achieved there will be need no longer of Life upon the Worlds, nor any more

a game for the small gods to play. Then will Kib tiptoe gently across Pegana to the resting-place in Highest Pegana of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and touching reverently his hand, the hand that wrought the gods, say: "MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, thou hast rested long."

And MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall say: "Not so; for I have rested for but fifty aeons of the gods, each of them scarce more than ten million mortal years of the Worlds that ye have made."

And then shall the gods be afraid when they find that MANA knoweth that they have made Worlds while he rested. And they shall answer: "Nay; but the Worlds came all of themselves."

Then MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, as one who would have done with an irksome matter, will lightly wave his hand—the hand that wrought the gods—and there shall be gods no more.

When there shall be three moons towards the north above the Star of the Abiding, three moons that neither wax nor wane but regard towards the North.

Or when the comet ceaseth from his seeking and stands still, not any longer moving among the Worlds but tarrying as one who rests after the end of search, then shall arise from resting, because it is THE END, the Greater One, who rested of old time, even MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Then shall the Times that were be Times no more; and it may be that the old, dead days shall return from beyond the Rim, and we who have wept for them shall see those days again, as one who, returning from long travel to his home, comes suddenly on dear, remembered things.

For none shall know of MANA who hath rested for so long, whether he be a harsh or merciful god. It may be that he shall have mercy, and that these things shall be.

THE EYE IN THE WASTE

There lie seven deserts beyond Bodrahan, which is the city of the caravans' end. None goeth beyond. In the first desert lie the tracks of mighty travellers outward from Bodrahan, and some returning. And in the second lie only outward tracks, and none return.

The third is a desert untrodden by the feet of men.

The fourth is the desert of sand, and the fifth is the desert of dust, and the sixth is the desert of stones, and the seventh is the Desert of Deserts.

In the midst of the last of the deserts that lie beyond Bodrahan, in the centre of the Desert of Deserts, standeth the image that hath been hewn of old out of the living hill whose name is Ranorada—the eye in the waste.

About the base of Ranorada is carved in mystic letters that are vaster than the beds of streams these words:

To the god who knows.

Now, beyond the second desert are no tracks, and there is no water in all the seven deserts that lie beyond Bodrahan. Therefore came no man thither to hew that statue from the living hills, and Ranorada was wrought by the hands of gods. Men tell in Bodrahan, where the caravans end and all the drivers of the camels rest, how once the gods hewed Ranorada from the living hill, hammering all night long beyond the deserts. Moreover, they say that Ranorada is carved in the likeness of the god Hoodrazai, who hath found the secret of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and knoweth the wherefore of the making of the gods.

They say that Hoodrazai stands all alone in Pegana and speaks to none because he knows what is hidden from the gods.

Therefore the gods have made his image in a lonely land as one who thinks and is silent—the eye in the waste.

They say that Hoodrazai had heard the murmers of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI as he muttered to himself, and gleaned the meaning, and knew; and that he was the god of mirth and of abundant joy, but became from the moment of his knowing a mirthless god, even as his image, which regards the deserts beyond the track of man.

But the camel drivers, as they sit and listen to the tales of the old men in the market-place of Bodrahan, at evening, while the camels rest, say:

"If Hoodrazai is so very wise and yet is sad, let us drink wine, and banish wisdom to the wastes that lie beyond Bodrahan." Therefore is there feasting and laughter all night long in the city where the caravans end.

All this the camel drivers tell when the caravans come in from Bodrahan; but who shall credit tales that camel drivers have heard from aged men in so remote a city?

OF THE THING THAT IS NEITHER GOD NOR BEAST

Seeing that wisdom is not in cities nor happiness in wisdom, and because Yadin the prophet was doomed by the gods ere he was born to go in search of wisdom, he followed the caravans to Bodrahan. There in the evening, where the camels rest, when the wind of the day ebbs out into the desert sighing amid the palms its last farewells and leaving the caravans still, he sent his prayer with the wind to drift into the desert calling to Hoodrazai.

And down the wind his prayer went calling: "Why do the gods endure, and play their game with men? Why doth not Skarl forsake his drumming, and MANA cease to rest?" and the echo of seven deserts answered: "Who knows? Who knows?"

But out in the waste, beyond the seven deserts where Ranorada looms enormous in the dusk, at evening his prayer was heard; and from the rim of the waste whither had gone his prayer, came three flamingoes flying, and their voices said: "Going South, Going South" at every stroke of their wings.

But as they passed by the prophet they seemed so cool and free and the desert so blinding and hot that he stretched up his arms towards them. Then it seemed happy to fly and pleasant to follow behind great white wings, and he was with the three flamingoes up in the cool above the desert, and their voices cried before him: "Going South, Going South," and the desert below him mumbled: "Who knows? Who knows?"

Sometimes the earth stretched up towards them with peaks of mountains, sometimes it fell away in steep ravines, blue rivers sang to them as they passed above them, or very faintly came the song of breezes in lone orchards, and far away the sea sang mighty dirges of old forsaken isles. But it seemed that in all the world there was nothing only to be going South.

It seemed that somewhere the South was calling to her own, and that they were going South.

But when the prophet saw that they had passed above the edge of Earth, and that far away to the North of them lay the Moon, he perceived that he was following no mortal birds but some strange messengers of Hoodrazai whose nest had lain in one of Pegana's vales below the mountains whereon sit the gods.

Still they went South, passing by all the Worlds and leaving them to the North, till only Araxes, Zadres, and Hyraglion lay still to the South of them, where great Ingazi seemed only a point of light, and Yo and Mindo could be seen no more.

Still they went South till they passed below the South and came to the Rim of the Worlds.

There there is neither South nor East nor West, but only North and Beyond; there is only North of it where lie the Worlds, and Beyond it where lies the Silence, and the Rim is a mass of rocks that were never used by the gods when They made the Worlds, and on it sat Trogool. Trogool is the Thing that is neither god nor beast, who neither howls nor breathes, only *It* turns over the leaves of a great book, black and white, black and white for ever until THE END.

And all that is to be is written in the book is also all that was.

When *It* turneth a black page it is night, and when *It* turneth a white page it is day.

Because it is written that there are gods—there are the gods.

Also there is writing about thee and me until the page where our names no more are written.

Then as the prophet watched *It*, Trogool turned a page—a black one, and night was over, and day shone on the Worlds.

Trogool is the Thing that men in many countries have called by many names, *It* is the Thing that sits behind the gods, whose book is the Scheme of Things.

But when Yadin saw that old remembered days were hidden away with the part that *It* had turned, and knew that upon one whose name is writ no more the last page had turned for ever a thousand pages back. Then did he utter his prayer in the fact of Trogool who only turns the pages and never answers prayer. He prayed in the face of Trogool: "Only turn back thy pages to the name of one which is writ no more, and far away upon a place named Earth shall rise the prayers of a little people that acclaim the name of Trogool, for there is indeed far off a place called Earth where men shall pray to Trogool."

Then spake Trogool who turns the pages and never answers prayer, and his voice was like the murmurs of the waste at night when echoes have been lost: "Though the whirlwind of the South should tug with his claws at a page that hath been turned yet shall he not be able to ever turn it back."

Then because of words in the book that said that it should be so, Yadin found himself lying in the desert where one gave him water, and afterwards carried him on a camel into Bodrahan.

There some said that he had but dreamed when thirst seized him while he wandered among the rocks in the desert. But certain aged men of Bodrahan say that indeed there sitteth somewhere a Thing that is called Trogool, that is neither god nor beast, that turneth the leaves of a book, black and white, black and white, until he come to the words: *Mai Doon Izahn*, which means The End For Ever, and book and gods and worlds shall be no more.

YONATH THE PROPHET

Yonath was the first among prophets who uttered unto men.

These are the words of Yonath, the first among all prophets:

There be gods upon Pegana.

Upon a night I slept. And in my sleep Pegana came very near. And Pegana was full of gods.

I saw the gods beside me as one might see wanted things.

Only I saw not MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

And in that hour, in the hour of my sleep, I knew.

And the end and the beginning of my knowing, and all of my knowing that there was, was this—that Man Knoweth Not.

Seek thou to find at night the utter edge of the darkness, or seek to find the birthplace of the rainbow where he leapeth upward from the hills, only seek not concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods.

The gods have set a brightness upon the farther side of the Things to Come that they may appear more felicitous to men than the Things that Are.

To the gods the Things to Come are but as the Things that Are, and nothing altereth in Pegana.

The gods, although not merciful, are not ferocious gods. They are the destroyers of the Days that Were, but they set a glory about the Days to Be.

Man must endure the Days that Are, but the gods have left him his ignorance as a solace.

Seek not to know. Thy seeking will weary thee, and thou wilt return much worn, to rest at last about the place from whence thou settest out upon thy seeking.

Seek not to know. Even I, Yonath, the oldest prophet, burdened with the wisdom of great years, and worn with seeking, know only that man knoweth not.

Once I set out seeking to know all things. Now I know one thing only, and soon the Years will carry me away.

The path of my seeking, that leadeth to seeking again, must be trodden by very many more, when Yonath is no longer even Yonath.

Set not thy foot upon that path.

Seek not to know.

These be the Words of Yonath.

YUG THE PROPHET

When the Years had carries away Yonath, and Yonath was dead, there was no longer a prophet among men.

And still men sought to know.

Therefore they said unto Yug: "Be thou our prophet, and know all things, and tell us concerning the wherefore of It All."

And Yug said: "I know all things." And men were pleased.

And Yug said of the Beginning that it was in Yug's own garden, and of the End that it was in the sight of Yug.

And men forgot Yug.

One day Yug saw Mung behind the hills making the sign of Mung. And Yug was Yug no more.

ALHIRETH-HOTEP THE PROPHET

When Yug was Yug no more men said unto Alhireth-Hotep: "Be thou our prophet, and be as wise as Yug."

And Alhireth-Hotep said: "I am as wise as Yug." And men were very glad.

And Alhireth-Hotep said of Life and Death: "These be the affairs of Alhireth-Hotep." And men brought gifts to him.

One day Alhireth-Hotep wrote in a book: "Alhireth-Hotep knoweth All Things, for he hath spoken with Mung."

And Mung stepped from behind him, making the sign of Mung, saying: "Knowest thou All Things, then, Alhireth-Hotep?" And Alhireth-Hotep became among the Things that Were.

KABOK THE PROPHET

When Alhireth-Hotep was among the Things that Were, and still men sought to know, they said unto Kabok: "Be thou as wise as was Alhireth-Hotep."

And Kabok grew wise in his own sight and in the sight of men.

And Kabok said: "Mung maketh his signs against men or withholdeth it by the advice of Kabok."

And he said unto one: "Thou hast sinned against Kabok, therefore will Mung make the sign of Mung against thee." And to another: "Thou has brought Kabok gifts, therefore shall Mung forbear to make against thee the sign of Mung."

One night as Kabok fattened upon the gifts that men had brought him he heard the tread of Mung treading in the garden of Kabok about his house at night.

And because the night was very still it seemed most evil to Kabok that Mung should be treading in his garden, without the advice of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok, who knew All Things, grew afraid, for the treading was very loud and the night still, and he knew not what lay behind the back of Mung, which none had ever seen.

But when the morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, and Mung trod no longer in the garden, Kabok forgot his fears, and said: "Perhaps it was but a herd of cattle that stampeded in the garden of Kabok."

And Kabok went about his business, which was that of knowing All Things, and telling All Things unto men, and making light of Mung.

But that night Mung trod again in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night, and stood before the window of the house like a shadow standing erect, so that Kabok knew indeed that it was Mung.

And a great fear fell upon the throat of Kabok, so that his speech was hoarse; and he cried out: "Thou art Mung!"

And Mung slightly inclined his head, and went on to tread in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok lay and listened with horror at his heart.

But when the second morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, Mung went from treading in the garden of Kabok; and for a little while Kabok hoped, but looked with great dread for the coming of the third night.

And when the third night was come, and the bat had gone to his home, and the wind had sank, the night was very still.

And Kabok lay and listened, to whom the wings of the night flew very slow.

But, ere night met the morning upon the highway between Pegana and the Worlds, there came the tread of Mung in the garden of Kabok towards Kabok's door.

And Kabok fled out of his house as flees a hunted beast and flung himself before Mung.

And Mung made the sign of Mung, pointing towards THE END.

And the fears of Kabok had rest from troubling Kabok any more, for they and he were among accomplished things.

OF THE CALAMITY THAT BEFEL YUN-ILARA BY THE SEA, AND OF THE BUILDING OF THE TOWER OF THE ENDING OF DAYS

When Kabok and his fears had rest the people sought a prophet who should have no fear of Mung, whose hand was against the prophets.

And at last they found Yun-Ilara, who tended sheep and had no fear of Mung, and the people brought him to the town that he might be their prophet.

And Yun-Ilara builded a tower towards the sea that looked upon the setting of the Sun. And he called it the Tower of the Ending of Days.

And about the ending of the day would Yun-Ilara go up to his tower's top and look towards the setting of the Sun to cry his curses against Mung, crying: "O Mung! whose hand is against the Sun, whom men abhor but worship because they fear thee, here stands and speaks a man who fears thee not. Assassin lord of murder and dark things, abhorrent, merciless, make thou the sign of Mung against me when thou wilt, but until silence settles upon my lips, because of the sign of Mung, I will curse Mung to his face." And the people in the street below would gaze up with wonder towards Yun-Ilara, who had no fear of Mung, and brought him gifts; only in their homes after the falling of the night would they pray again with reverence to Mung. But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?"

And still Mung came not nigh to Yun-Ilara as he cried his curses against Mung from his tower towards the sea.

And Sish throughout the Worlds hurled Time away, and slew the Hours that had served him well, and called up more out of the timeless waste that lieth beyond the Worlds, and drave them forth to assail all things. And Sish cast a whiteness over the hairs of Yun-Ilara, and ivy about his tower, and weariness over his limbs, for Mung passed by him still.

And when Sish became a god less durable to Yun-Ilara than ever Mung hath been he ceased at last to cry from his tower's top his curses against Mung whenever the sun went down, till there came the day when weariness of the gift of Kib fell heavily upon Yun-Ilara.

Then from the tower of the Ending of Days did Yun-Ilara cry out thus to Mung, crying: "O Mung! O loveliest of the gods! O Mung, most dearly to be desired! thy gift of Death is the heritage of Man, with ease and rest and silence and returning to the Earth. Kib giveth but toil and trouble; and Sish, he sendeth regrets with each of his hours wherewith he assails the World. Yoharneth-Lahai cometh nigh no more. I can no longer be glad with Limpang-Tung. When the other gods forsake him a man hath only Mung."

But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?"

And every day and all night long did Yun-Ilara cry aloud: "Ah, now for the hour of the mourning of many, and the pleasant garlands of flowers and the tears, and the moist, dark earth. Ah, for repose down underneath the grass, where the firm feet of the trees grip hold upon the world, where never shall come the wind that now blows through my bones, and the rain shall come warm and trickling, not driven by storm, where is the easeful falling asunder of bone from bone in the dark." Thus prayed Yun-Ilara, who had cursed in his folly and youth, while never heeded Mung.

Still from a heap of bones that are Yun-Ilara still, lying about the ruined base of the tower that once he builded, goes up a shrill voice with the wind crying out for the mercy of Mung, if any such there be.

OF HOW THE GODS WHELMED SIDITH

There was dole in the valley of Sidith. For three years there had been pestilence, and in the last of the three a famine; moreover, there was imminence of war.

Throughout all Sidith men died night and day, and night and day within the Temple of All the gods save One (for none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI) did the priests of the gods pray hard.

For they said: "For a long while a man may hear the droning of little insects and yet not be aware that he hath heard them, so may the gods not hear our prayers at first until they have been very oft repeated. But when your praying has troubled the silence long it may be that some god as he strolls in Pegana's glades may come on one of our lost prayers, that flutters like a butterfly tossed in storm when all its wings are broken; then if the gods be merciful they may ease our fears in Sidith, or else they may crush us, being petulant gods, and so we shall see trouble in Sidith no longer, with its pestilence and dearth and fears of war."

But in the fourth year of the pestilence and in the second year of the famine, and while still there was imminence of war, came all the people of Sidith to the door of the Temple of All the gods save One, where none may enter but the priests—but only leave gifts and go.

And there the people cried out: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, what doest thou within the Temple of All the gods save One?"

And Arb-Rin-Hadith, who was the High Prophet, answered: "I pray for all the People."

But the people answered: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, for four

long years hast thou prayed with the priests of all thine order, while we brought ye gifts and died. Now, therefore, since They have not heard thee in four grim years, thou must go and carry to Their faces the prayer of the people of Sidith when They go to drive the thunder to his pasture upon the mountain Aghrinaun, or else there shall no longer be gifts upon thy temple door, whenever falls the dew, that thou and thine order may fatten.

"Then thou shalt say before Their faces: 'O All the gods save One, Lords of the Worlds, whose child is the eclipse, take back thy pestilence from Sidith, for ye have played the game of the gods too long with the people of Sidith, who would fain have done with the gods'."

Then in great fear answered the High Prophet, saying: "What if the gods be angry and whelm Sidith?" And the people answered: "Then are we sooner done with pestilence and famine and the imminence of war."

That night the thunder howled upon Aghrinaun, which stood a peak above all others in the land of Sidith. And the people took Arb-Rin-Hadith from his Temple and drave him to Aghrinaun, for they said: "There walk to-night upon the mountain All the gods save One."

And Arb-Rin-Hadith went trembling to the gods.

Next morning, white and frightened from Aghrinaun, came Arb-Rin-Hadith back into the valley, and there spake to the people, saying: "The faces of the gods are iron and their mouths set hard. There is no hope from the gods."

Then said the people: "Thou shalt go to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, to whom no man may pray: seek him upon Aghrinaun where it lifts clear into the stillness before morning, and on its summit, where all things seem to rest surely there rests also MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Go to him, and say: 'Thou hast made evil gods, and They smite Sidith.' Perchance he hath forgotten all his gods, or hath not heard of Sidith. Thou hast escaped the thunder of the gods, surely thou shalt also escape the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI."

Upon a morning when the sky and lakes were clear and the world still, and Aghrinaun was stiller than the world, Arb-Rin-Hadith crept in fear towards the slopes of Aghrinaun because the people were urgent.

All that day men saw him climbing. At night he rested near the top. But ere the morning of the day that followed, such as rose early saw him in the silence, a speck against the blue, stretch up his arms upon the summit to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Then instantly they saw him not, nor was he ever seen of men again who had dared to trouble the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Such as now speak of Sidith tell of a fierce and potent tribe that smote away a people in a valley enfeebled by pestilence, where stood a temple to "All the gods save One" in which was no high priest.

OF HOW IMBAUN BECAME HIGH PROPHET IN ARADEC OF ALL THE GODS SAVE ONE

Imbaun was to be made High Prophet in Aradec, of All the Gods save One.

From Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond came all High Prophets of the Earth to the Temple in Aradec of All the gods save One.

And then they told Imbaun how The Secret of Things was upon the summit of the dome of the Hall of Night, but faintly writ, and in an unknown tongue.

Midway in the night, between the setting and the rising sun, they led Imbaun into the Hall of Night, and said to him, chaunting altogether:

"Imbaun, Imbaun, Imbaun, look up to the roof, where is writ The Secret of Things, but faintly, and in an unknown tongue."

And Imbaun looked up, but darkness was so deep within the Hall of Night that Imbaun was not even the High Prophets who came from Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond, nor saw he aught in the Hall of Night at all.

Then called the High Prophets: "What seest thou, Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I see naught."

Then called the High Prophets: "What knowest thou Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I know naught."

Then spake the High Prophet of Eld of All the gods save One, who is first on Earth of prophets: "O Imbaun! we have all looked upwards in the Hall of Night towards the secret of Things, and ever it was dark, and the Secret faint and in an unknown tongue. And now thou knowest what all High Prophets know."

And Imbaun answered: "I know."

So Imbaun became High Prophet in Aradec of All the gods save One, and prayed for all the people, who knew not that there was darkness in the Hall of Night or that the secret was writ faint and in an unknown tongue.

These are the words of Imbaun that he wrote in a book that all the people might know:

"In the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon, as night came up the valley, I performed the mystic rites of each of the gods in the temple as is my wont, lest any of the gods should grow angry in the night and whelm us while we slept.

"And as I uttered the last of certain secret words I fell asleep in the temple, for I was weary, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand. Then in the stillness, as I slept, there entered Dorozhand by the temple door in the guise of a man, and touched me on the shoulder, and I awoke.

"But when I saw that his eyes shone blue and lit the whole of the temple I knew that he was a god though he came in mortal guise. And Dorozhand said: 'Prophet of Dorozhand, behold that the people may know.' And he showed me the paths of Sish stretching far down into the future time. Then he bade me arise and follow whither he pointed, speaking no words but commanding with his eyes.

"Therefore upon the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon I walked with Dorozhand adown the paths of Sish into the future time.

"And ever beside the way did men slay men. And the sum of their slaying was greater than the slaying of the pestilence of any of the evils of the gods.

"And cities arose and shed their houses in dust, and ever the desert returned again to its own, and covered over and hid the last of all that had troubled its repose.

"And still men slew men.

"And I came at last to a time when men set their yoke no longer upon beasts but made them beasts of iron.

"And after that did men slay men with mists.

"Then, because the slaying exceeded their desire, there came peace upon the world that was brought by the hand of the slayer, and men slew men no more.

"And cities multiplied, and overthrew the desert and conquered its repose.

"And suddenly I beheld that THE END was near, for there was a stirring above Pegana as of One who grows weary of resting, and I saw the hound Time crouch to spring, with his eyes upon the throats of the gods, shifting from throat to throat, and the drumming of Skarl grew faint.

"And if a god may fear, it seemed that there was fear upon the face of Dorozhand, and he seized me by the hand and led me back along the paths of Time that I might not see THE END.

"Then I saw cities rise out of the dust again and fall back into the desert whence they had arisen; and again I slept in the Temple of All the gods save One, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand.

"Then again the Temple was alight, but not with light from the eyes of Dorozhand; only dawn came all blue out of the East and shone through the arches of the Temple. Then I awoke and performed the morning rites and mysteries of All the gods save One, lest any of the gods be angry in the day and take away the Sun.

"And I knew that because I who had been so near to it had not beheld THE END that a man should never behold it or know the doom of the gods. This They have hidden."

OF HOW IMBAUN MET ZODRAK

The prophet of the gods lay resting by the river to watch the stream run by.

And as he lay he pondered on the Scheme of Things and the works of all the gods. And it seemed to the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by that the Scheme was a right scheme and the gods benignant gods; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds. It seemed that Kib was bountiful, that Mung calmed all who suffer, that Sish dealt not too harshly with the hours, and that all the gods were good; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds.

Then said the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by: "There is some other god of whom naught is writ." And suddenly the prophet was aware of an old man who bemoaned beside the river, crying: "Alas! alas!"

His face was marked by the sign and the seal of exceeding many years, and there was yet vigour in his frame. These be the words of the prophet that he wrote in his book: "I said: 'Who art thou that bemoans beside the river?' And he answered: 'I am the fool.' I said: 'Upon thy brow are the marks of wisdom such as is stored in books.' He said: 'I am Zodrak. Thousands of years ago I tended sheep upon a hill that sloped towards the sea. The gods have many moods. Thousands of years ago They were in a mirthful mood. They said: 'Let Us call up a man before Us that We may laugh in Pegana.'"

"And Their eyes that looked on me saw not me alone but also saw THE BEGINNING and THE END and all the Worlds besides. Then said the gods, speaking as speak the gods: "Go, back to thy sheep."

"But I, who am the fool, had heard it said on earth that whoso seeth the gods upon Pegana becometh as the gods, if so he demand to Their faces, who may not slay him who hath looked them in the eyes.

"And I, the fool, said: "I have looked in the eyes of the gods, and I demand what a man may demand of the gods when he hath seen Them in Pegana." And the gods inclined Their heads and Hoodrazai said: "It is the law of the gods."

"And I, who was only a shepherd, how could I know?

"I said: "I will make men rich." And the gods said: "What is rich?"

"And I said: "I will send them love." And the gods said: "What is love?" And I sent gold into the Worlds, and, alas! I sent with it poverty and strife. And I sent love into the Worlds, and with it grief.

"And now I have mixed gold and love most woefully together, and I can never remedy what I have done, for the deeds of the gods are done, and nothing may undo them.

"Then I said: "I will give men wisdom that they may be glad." And those who got my wisdom found that they knew nothing, and from having been happy became glad no more.

"And I, who would make men happy, have made them sad, and I have spoiled the beautiful scheme of the gods.

"And now my hand is for ever on the handle of Their plough. I was only a shepherd, and how should I have known?

"Now I come to thee as thou retest by the river to ask of thee thy forgiveness, for I would fain have the forgiveness of a man.'

"And I answered: 'O Lord of seven skies, whose children are the storms, shall a man forgive a god?'

"He answered: 'Men have sinned not against the gods as the gods have sinned against men since I came into Their councils.'

"And I, the prophet, answered: 'O Lord of seven skies, whose plaything is the thunder, thou art amongst the gods, what need hast thou for words from any man?'

"He said: 'Indeed I am amongst the gods, who speak to me as they speak to other gods, yet is there always a smile about Their mouths, and a look in Their eyes that saith: "Thou wert a man."'

"I said: 'O Lord of seven skies, about whose feet the Worlds are as drifted sand, because thou biddest me, I, a man, forgive thee.'

"And he answered: 'I was but a shepherd, and I could not know.' Then he was gone."

PEGANA

The prophet of the gods cried out to the gods: "O! All the gods save One" for none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, "where shall the life of a man abide when Mung hath made against his body the sign of Mung?—for the people with whom ye play have sought to know."

But the gods answered, speaking through the mist:

"Though thou shouldst tell thy secrets to the beasts, even that the beasts should understand, yet will not the gods divulge the secret of the gods to thee, that gods and beasts and men shall be all the same, all knowing the same things."

That night Yoharneth-Lahai came to Aradec, and said unto Imbaun:

"Wherefore wouldst thou know the secret of the gods that not the gods may tell thee?"

"When the wind blows not, where, then, is the wind?"

"Or when thou art not living, where art thou?"

"What should the wind care for the hours of calm or thou for death?"

"Thy life is long, Eternity is short.

"So short that, shouldst thou die and Eternity should pass, and after the passing of Eternity thou shouldst live again, thou wouldst say: 'I closed mine eyes but for an instant.'

"There is an eternity behind thee as well as one before. Hast thou bewailed the aeons that passed without thee, who art so much afraid of the aeons that shall pass?"

Then said the prophet: "How shall I tell the people that the gods have not spoken and their prophet doth not know? For then should I be prophet no longer, and another would take the people's gifts instead of me."

Then said Imbaun to the people: "The gods have spoken, saying: 'O Imbaun, Our prophet, it is as the people believe whose wisdom hath discovered the secret of the gods, and the people when they die shall come to Pegana, and there live with the gods, and there have pleasure without toil. And Pegana is a place all white with the peaks of mountains, on each of them a god, and the people shall lie upon the slopes of the mountains each under the god that he hath worshipped most when his lot was in the Worlds. And there shall music beyond thy dreaming come drifting through the scent of all the orchards in the Worlds, with somewhere someone singing an old song that shall be as a half-remembered thing. And there shall be gardens that have always sunlight, and streams that are lost in no sea beneath skies for ever blue. And there shall be no rain nor no regrets. Only the roses that in highest Pegana have achieved their prime shall shed their petals in showers at thy feet, and only far away on the forgotten earth shall voices drift up to thee that cheered thee in thy childhood about the gardens of thy youth. And if thou sighest for any memory of earth because thou hearest unforgotten voices, then will the gods send messengers on wings to soothe thee in Pegana, saying to them: "There one sigheth who hath remembered Earth." And they shall make Pegana more seductive for thee still, and they shall take thee by the hand and whisper in thine ear till the old voices are forgot.

"And besides the flowers of Pegana there shall have climbed by then until it hath reached to Pegana the rose that clambered about the house where thou wast born. Thither shall also come the wandering echoes of all such music as charmed thee long ago.

"Moreover, as thou sittest on the orchard lawns that clothe Pegana's mountains, and as thou hearkenest to melody that sways the souls of the gods, there shall stretch away far down beneath thee the great unhappy Earth, till gazing from rapture upon sorrows thou shalt be glad that thou wert dead.

"And from the three great mountains that stand aloof and over all the others—Grimbol, Zeebol, and Trehagobol—shall blow the wind of the morning and the wind of all the day, borne upon the wings of all the butterflies that have died upon the Worlds, to cool the gods and Pegana.

"Far through Pegana a silvery fountain, lured upward by the gods from the Central Sea, shall fling its waters aloft, and over the highest of Pegana's peaks, above Trehagobol, shall burst into gleaming mists, to cover Highest Pegana, and make a curtain about the resting-place of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

"Alone, still and remote below the base of one of the inner mountains, lieth a great blue pool.

"Whoever looketh down into its waters may behold all his life that was upon the Worlds and all the deeds that he hath done.

"None walk by the pool and none regard its depths, for all in Pegana have suffered and all have sinned some sin, and it lieth in the pool.

"And there is no darkness in Pegana, for when night hath conquered the sun and stilled the Worlds and turned the white peaks of Pegana into grey then shine the blue eyes of the gods like sunlight on the sea, where each god sits upon his mountain.

"And at the Last, upon some afternoon, perhaps in summer, shall the gods say, speaking to the gods: "What is the likeness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and what THE END?"

"And then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI draw back with his hand the mists that cover his resting, saying: "This is the Face of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and this THE END.""

Then said the people to the prophet: "Shall not black hills draw round in some forsaken land, to make a vale-wide cauldron wherein the molten rock shall seethe and roar, and where the crags of mountains shall be hurled upward to the surface and bubble and go down again, that there our enemies may boil for ever?" And the prophet answered: "It is writ large about the bases of Pegana's mountains, upon which sit the gods: 'Thine Enemies Are Forgiven.'"

THE SAYINGS OF IMBAUN

The Prophet of the gods said: "Yonder beside the road there sitteth a false prophet; and to all who seek to know the hidden days he saith: 'Upon the morrow the King shall speak to thee as his chariot goeth by.'"

Moreover, all the people bring him gifts, and the false prophet hath more to listen to his words than hath the Prophet of the gods.

Then said Imbaun: "What knoweth the Prophet of the gods? I know only that I and men know naught concerning the gods or aught concerning men. Shall I, who am their prophet, tell the people this?"

"For wherefore have the people chosen prophets but that they should speak the hopes of the people, and tell the people that their hopes be true?"

The false prophet saith: "Upon the morrow the king shall speak to thee."

Shall not I say: "Upon The Morrow the gods shall speak with thee as thou retest upon Pegana?"

So shall the people be happy, and know that their hopes be true who have believed the words that they have chosen a prophet to say.

But what shall know the Prophet of the gods, to whom none may come to say: "Thy hopes are true," for whom none may make strange signs before his eyes to quench his fear of death, for whom alone the chaunt of his priests availeth naught?

The Prophet of the gods hath sold his happiness for wisdom, and hath given his hopes for the people.

Said also Imbaun: "When thou art angry at night observe how calm be the stars; and shall small ones rail when there is such a calm among the great ones? Or when thou art angry by day regard the distant hills, and see the calm that doth adorn their faces. Shalt thou be angry while they stand so serene?"

And then shall the hound, springing, tear out the throat of Mung, who, making for the last time the sign of Mung, shall bring down Death crashing through the shoulders of the hound, and in the blood of Time that Sword shall rust away.

Then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI be all alone, with neither Death nor Time, and never the hours singing in his ears, nor the swish of the passing lives.

But far away from Pegana shall go the galleons of gold that bear the gods away, upon whose faces shall be utter calm, because They are the gods knowing that it is THE END.

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