

of water," he said as he tightened his arm about her.

PART SEVEN

Of Solomon

Chapter I

Impression I
Between Two Worlds

The people of Portgrave warmed to the story of Solomon Dreen as George pictured him in his first installment. Solomon was not merely a figment of the mind, a mythical figure of the past, created and fashioned by the sculptor's ¹mallet and chisel, but one of flesh and blood, who lived in their midst. Those who had seen him in his little theatre, or on the streets, remembered him as a man of a distant land, on the horizon of memory. They wanted a closer view. What did he know or think of them? What did he think of the land of his adoption? How does a sensitive soul feel at the moment of departure from one's land of birth for the Unknown?

Explorings through the vigils of the long night brought to the two friends a communion of minds, an understanding an akinness of thought, a kinship, as lucent as the rainbow that rises through the cloud. George saw with the clearness of a vision through the vistas of Solomon's past - as Solomon reconnoitred and reconstructed them, as if they were of the present, and touched with the nostalgia of a beautiful dream. A pouring out of the soul, with its pain and anguish, but with sublime joy also. The warm heart-beat for the greatness and glorious vastness of his New Land, for its great founders and the everlasting foundation they had laid; but also his heart-ache and grief for the few marauders and destroyers!

.....
Hello, hello ——— not goodbye. Because you REMEMBER!
.....

Swift are the changes, but you will remember.

You must remember. You can't help but remember.

Remember the sea, the first sea, Solomon, when you left your little town to go to America!

The grey, the misty, the monster, the brown monster of the sea. The mist of the shore that made the sea a brown monster, an invisible monster because you couldn't see the invisible sea. The mist is a shroud and you can't see the sea for the shroud. But you hear it. The lake in your little town you always knew, shroud or no. It was within the vastness and limits of your comprehension, because it had limits, and because you knew the lake when it was not restless, when it was calm under the sun, the moon and stars. It had a limited vastness. And you could see it day or night, darkness or mist. But this thing has a vastness, a distance and circumference that's beyond your encompassment and you can't even begin to see ~~the~~ the beginning of the immenseness of the water which is the sea. The mist dwarfs the waves: the tall walls of the waves. "Waves tall as tall-buildings", the fat man ^{who had come home} from Africa ^{of} had related the wonders of the sea. You well remember the man - the first man ^{had} that come back with African gold that was counted by pounds instead of rubels. By the standards of little Zabel he was rich and fat. You can't remember when you didn't remember him. Remember, remember, remember! A lifetime to remember. An old life, and now a new life. An old land, an old homeland, and still an older one from the Bible; and a new homeland. But remember. the past, for the past is the kernel of the future. Nations are born from the past; and earths, and continents, and suns and solar systems; to be buried in the past, to become the past. Everything in the past is in the future, and the future is in the past. Kinships! The fat man had said that those breaker-walls of the ocean would swallow a man if he came near them. The

monsters of the sea. But the sea is whispering, is talking to you in its own language. It's alive, it speaks softly, it thunders, but is not a monster.

Listen!

An unceasing murmuring. A thousand whispering rest^Sless sounds, a million prayers, a million souls! The bodies were born in the sea; when the bodies decay, they are spewed back into the sea - to be re-born in heaven.

The sweet, nostalgic sound. In the sound of the sea you hear the sound of the lake in the little town of your birth.

The inimitable sound. The sound of your blood is in the sea; and the sound of the earth; ~~the sound of the earth~~ and the sea is in the earth, and the earth makes a sound and the sea carries the sound in its millions of waves and its millions of sounds; and the wind comes and sweeps the surface of the sea and it makes sounds, and the sea carries the sound. And the sea, the earth, the wind and the sky!

The lake and the fresh cool-running streams in your little town; the meadows the orchards, the cows, the sheep, the dogs, even the swine that root in the dung - a "how-do-you-do" to you all! The worms that crawl in the soft warm spring showers, the swarming black beetles, the frogs and grasshoppers, the tadpoles in green scum-surfaced pools, the first swallows that come to build their nests, and all the birds that build and twitter in the trees - to all of you!

Greetings and hellos to you all. And let not the sound of your voice be barricaded by the near or distant roar of the sea. Let the sound of your greetings come from the morning freshness of the dew-laved tree-tops in the orchards, where they tremble at the edge of the lake in the east of the town.

Come ye, little waves, tender radiant souls, swift as the wind and light as the beams, and whisper the tidings to the echoes in the hills, in

the valleys, and in the forests - that the past is an enchanting memory. That it is the light, the white purity of heart and soul.

A chill, salty humidness in the air, the breath of the sea. A grey-ness in the sky and in the air. The shore is receding. Imperceptibly it is moving away from you; soft, as on well-oiled shafts. Farewell to the old shore - but not a last farewell. You hear the million-tongued little wave-messages that lap the side of your boat, the same little waves that bear you to another shore: one bridge, in a million parts, between the old and new home.

And the fair image, and the last image of her. She, where you first drew breath, where the sunbeams first played upon your still unseeing eyes; whose soft air first caressed ^{the} reddened-raw blushing skin, still stained with the meconium discharge of another world, whose soft green meadow cushioned your body, whose ^e streams could ^e your fevered flesh with the love of a mother's hand, whose breezes were laden with summer fragrance and spring longing; the brilliant sun-setting in the demure fall; the endless terracing of the multicolored foliage in the nodding branches; the sharp clear winter whiteness that rang the drums of drunken delirium of joy in your ears, and sent your blood racing. She, who was new-born every spring, and skipped and romped with the ^{sprightly} robin and blue-bird; she, who lay supine, large-breasted and fruitful in the long hot summer afternoon; ^{then} awake ^{again} again in virgin whiteness at the first touch and sparkle of snow.

At the side-railing of the boat Solomon stood silent far into the evening dusk. The darkening waters swept swifter and swifter in swirling whirlpools at the ship's steel ribs. The chills went through him, for the air and the sea still had the lingering breath of the winter. The dinner gong rang, and he followed the sound to the steerage dining room and his first meal at sea. A strange world, a confining world in the deep of the sea; a world delimited by a dimly lit space swallowed by the sea, separate

ted from its black depths by the thin walls of the ship; the bare planks that boarded the long tables, and the benches that were equally bare and measured the same length; the sharp saltiness of the fried cod; the subterranean world of loud mastication and degluttion; the slopping suck and swilling swallow of the brown muck that went for tea or coffee; the creak and crack of the swaying, bending timbers - the little confining world deep under the sea.

But you can't taste food on this first night. You are thinking of the old world, and the new-. This temporary hell in the stygian darkness before the dawn when you glimpse the shining new shore. You hurry back to the deck where you listen to the million-tongued waves that bear you to the new land.

It is the last lonely night-vigil on the ship, but you are guided by the bright star of your dream. The boat is swift, as if drawn to its goal by a powerful magnet. The sea runs swiftly on.

Morning of the next day. The New York skyline hoves into view on the horizon, a far enchanted distant island. It dips and rises with the swell of the waves, a gentle heave of its motherly bosom, and bouyed up with joy in the reflection of the fresh sun in its sparkling surface a wave plays with the boat as with a toy, bounding it over to its destination, the approaching shore. Passengers are arrayed at the railings, eyes straining with anticipation of a distant vision. Hearts are filled with joy, but also with apprehension for the unknown, where they will be strangers in a strange ^{land} ~~aldn~~.

The great harbor is busy with ocean-going traffick; a tooting of whistles and a bustling about. Majestically the liner noses its way, guided by tug-boats; to its berth. Guy lines are thrown overboard, and after scrapings and creakings the ship is tied fast to its moorings, a gang

plank is thrown out in the middle waist of the lower deck, and the march of immigrants into the wide corridors of Ellis Island (Castle Garden) begins. Single file, hedged in by iron palings, they pass muster under the Island's official eye. Those that are chalk-marked on the back are to be detained, the others to be released as soon as provision is made for them according to regulations.

That night Solomon slept on the crowded floor of the detention building, for though unmarked he had to wait until his sponsor claimed him next morning.