

Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed

Today is the most exciting day in the Christian calendar. Today, we celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the victory over sin and death for all those who trust in Christ. In one manner THE Resurrection is the “bow tie” in the Scarlet Thread of Redemption. Christ’s resurrection guarantees us the gift of salvation and eternal life. Christ died for our sins and paid the debt to secure our salvation by His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

Today, like last Sunday, I am sharing a legendary story based on the historical event of the Bible. I am going to share an adapted story written by Henry Van Dyke called “The Other Wise Man”.

Below is an adaption by Joy Swartley Sawastsky

<https://decandsusan.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/the-fourth-wise-man2.pdf>

There are many other versions but I have just chosen this one as an example. I will also include the original story by Henry Van Dyke after this shorter summary in case you want to read the original. I will be retelling the story and adding a new ending using my own words as led by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this story is to remind us to be faithful to God’s call in our lives and obey Him no matter how difficult or how God may lead us to follow Him in a way that differs from our human perspective. Faith obedience and trust is the key take away.

“In the days when Augustus Caesar was master of many kings and Herod reigned in Jerusalem high on the hill overlooking the region of Persia, sat the estate of Artaban the Median, a priest of the Magi, a king in his own right. On this particular night, as he stood on the terrace of his roof, dawn was threatening to arrive. The cool and quiet that reaches its peak just before the first rays of sunlight appear had begun. Far over the eastern plain a white mist stretched like a lake. Just above that, the sky was perfectly clear. Artaban was trying to free his mind from all that had happened just hours before, trying to make sense of it, actually. His friends could not comprehend his new found understanding, that the answers were no longer in the stars. They refused to go with him on his journey to find the King who was to be born this night. In fact, they had wondered out loud: what had happened to Artaban’s rational mind, his predictability, even his sanity. They had known him as a scientist...not a believer in a child born to become the King, and to be the hope of the world, out of some vague predictions. Artaban held on to the knowledge that at least three of his colleagues among the Magi believed with him. They understood why he would sell his home and all of his possessions, and use what he received in order to buy gifts for this king yet to be born. Gaspar, Melchior & Balthezar would be the ones who would join together with him to journey to find this one to be born Kind of Israel. He reached into the pocket of his robe and drew out three great gems – one blue as a fragment of the night sky, one redder than a ray of sunrise, and one as pure as the peak of a snow mountain at sunrise. His gifts to the king – his tribute, to honor him. “Religion without a great hope, would be like an altar without a living fire. It would be pointless.” Artaban spoke, if only to himself. Artaban believed with all of his heart that this child, yet to be born, would be that hope.

As Artaban looked back to the sky his eyes opened wide with wonder! Out of the darkness began an explosion of color. It was as if the colors of the jewels in his hand mixed together and finally exploded into a point of white radiance. The star shone in the distance.

This is it...It is the sign!” He said. “The King is coming, and I will go to meet him!”

And before the sun began its journey across the sky, the Fourth Wise Man was in the saddle of his swiftest, most trusted horse, riding to meet his friends.

Artiban knew he must ride wisely and well if he was to arrive at the appointed hour with the other Magi.

Fifteen parasangs, was the absolute most that he could push the horse to travel in a day. At that pace, he would reach the Temple of the Seven just before midnight on the tenth day...the appointed place and time of meeting.

Artaban's prize horse was almost spent as he arrived, at nightfall of the tenth day, beneath the shattered walls of Babylon. He would have turned into the city to find rest and food for himself and his horse, except that he knew that he had three hour's journey yet to the Temple of the Seven Spheres, and he must reach the place by midnight if he were to find his comrades waiting. So he did not stop, but continued on.

A grove of date-palms made an island of gloom up ahead. As the horse passed into the shadow of it she slowed her pace and began to pick her way more carefully.

Near the farther end of the darkness, caution seemed to overtake the horse. She sensed some danger or difficulty. The grove was close and silent as a tomb; not a leaf rustled, not a bird sang.

At last she stood stock-still, quivering in every muscle, before a dark object in the shadow of the last palm tree.

Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. His humble dress and the outline of his haggard face showed that he was probably one of the poor Hebrew exiles who still dwelt in great numbers in the vicinity. The chill of death was in his lean hand, and as Artaban released it, the arm fell back limply on to the motionless breast.

He turned away with a thought of pity, resigning the body to that strange burial which the Priests of the Magi deemed most fitting – the funeral of the desert where vultures and varmints would pick the bones clean.

But as he turned, a long, faint, ghostly sigh came from the man's lips, and the brown, bony fingers closed on the hem of the Priestly Magi's robe and held him fast. Artaban's heart leaped to his throat, not so much with fear, but with a dumb resentment at the inopportunity of the timing...of the possibility of a delay while so close to his destination.

How could he stay here in the darkness to minister to a dying stranger? What was his duty? If he was delayed for even an hour he could hardly reach the meeting place at the appointed time, and his companions would think he had given up the journey. They would go

without him. He would lose his quest, the quest he had invested so much in.

But if he went now, the man would surely die. His spirit was in agonizing turmoil. Should he turn aside, if only for a moment, from the following of the star, to give a cup of cold water to a poor, perishing Hebrew?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which only you know."

Then he turned back to the sick man. Loosening the grasp of his hand, he carried him to a little mound at the foot of the palm-tree.

Assuring first that he was comfortable, he brought water from one of the small canals nearby, and moistened the sufferer's brow and mouth. He mixed a drink of one of those simple but potent remedies which he carried always in his girdle – for the Magis were physicians as well as astrologers – and poured it slowly between the colorless lips. Hour after hour he labored as only a skillful healer of disease can do; and, at last, the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him.

"Who are you?" He said, in the uneducated dialect of the country,

"I am Artaban, of the Magi, and I am going to Jerusalem in search of one who is to be born King of the Jews, a great Prince and Deliverer of ALL. I can not delay any longer on my journey, for the caravan that has waited for me may leave without me.

Here is all that I have left of bread and wine and here is a potion of healing herbs. When your strength is restored you can find your way home.

The Jew raised his trembling hand solemnly to heaven.

He looked at Artaban, "I have nothing to give you in return for what you have done for me – only this; that I can tell you where the Messiah must be sought. For our prophets have said that he should be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem of Judah. May the Lord bring you safely to that place, because you have had pity upon the sick."

It was already long past midnight. Artaban rode as quickly as was possible. The great horse restored by the brief rest, dipped into her last remaining strength and fled over the ground like a gazelle.

Even so, the first beam of the sun sent a shadow before the horse as she entered the final steps of the journey, and the eyes of Artaban, anxiously scanning the first glimpses of the Temple of the Seven Spheres, could detect no trace of his friends.

He dismounted and climbed to the highest terrace, looking out toward the west.

The huge desolation of the marshes stretched away to the horizon to the border of the desert. There was no sign of the caravan of the three wise men, far or near.

At the edge of the terrace he saw a little pile of broken bricks, and under them a piece of parchment. He picked up the parchment and read: "We have waited past the midnight hour and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert."

Artaban sat down upon the ground and covered his head in despair. "How can I cross the desert," he moaned, "with no food and with a spent horse? I will have to return to Babylon, sell one of my jewels, and buy a train of camels and provisions for the journey. I may never overtake my friends. Only God the merciful knows whether I shall lose the sight of the King because I stopped to show mercy."

So Artaban did indeed return to Babylon, and with his sapphire he purchased what he needed for the journey.

Through heat and cold, Artaban, Priest of the Magi, the Fourth Wise Man, moved steadily onward – crossing the desert

He arrived weary, but full of hope in Bethlehem, bearing yet his ruby and his pearl to offer to the King. "Now at last," he said, "I shall surely find him. This is the place the Hebrew exile told me that the prophets had spoken of.

As he searched for the place where the baby lay, he was awed of the desolation of the streets. All was an eerie quiet. From the open door of a low stone cottage he heard the sound of a woman's voice singing softly. He entered and found a young mother hushing her baby to rest. She told him of the three wise men that had appeared in the village three days ago, and how they said that a star had guided them to the place where Joseph of Nazareth was lodging with his wife, Mary, and her newborn child, and she told how they had given many rich gifts to the child to honor him.

"But the travelers disappeared again, as suddenly as they had come. And the man of Nazareth took the babe and his wife and fled away that same night secretly, and it was whispered that they were going far away to Egypt.

Ever since there has been a spell upon the village; something evil hangs over it. They say that the Roman soldiers are coming from Jerusalem to force a new tax from us, and the men have driven the flocks and herds far back among the hills, and hidden themselves to escape it."

The young mother laid the babe in its cradle, and rose to care for the strange guest. She set food out for him, what little food she had, - graciously offered, and the gratefully received.

Suddenly there came the noise of wild confusion and uproar in the streets of the village, a shrieking and wailing of women's voices, a clanging of swords, and desperate cries: "The soldiers! The soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children!"

The young mother's face grew white with terror. She held her child close to her, and crouched motionless in the darkest corner of the room, covering him with the folds of her robe, praying he would not wake up and cry. Artaban went quickly and stood in the doorway of the house. His royal bearing filled the opening, blocking any sight of the home within.

The soldiers came hurrying down the street with bloody hands and dripping swords. At the sight of the stranger in his imposing dress they hesitated with surprise. Artaban did not move. But said, in a low voice;

"I am all alone in this place, waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

He showed the ruby, glistening in the hollow of his hand like a great drop of blood.

The captain barely hesitated, but stretched out his hand and took the ruby greedily.

"March on!" he cried to his men. "There is no child here.

The clamor and the clang of arms moved down the street. Artaban re-entered the cottage. He turned his face to the east and prayed:

“God of truth, forgive my sin! I have said the thing that is not, to save the life of a child. And two of my gifts are gone. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?”

But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy in the shadow behind him, said, very gently:

“Because you have saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

So, the Fourth Wise Man traveled from place to place Beginning in Egypt, he searched among the people of the dispersion, he saw hunger and famine, plague stricken cities, imprisoned and enslaved. In all the morass of humanity, he found none to worship – but many to help. He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the captive; and his years went by ore swiftly than the weaver’s shuttle through the loom, leaving behind a pattern of love and compassion. It seemed almost as if he had forgotten his quest.

Thirty-three years of the life of Artaban passed away, and he still was a pilgrim, and a seeker after light. His hair was now white as the wintry snow. Worn and weary and ready to die, but still looking for the king, he had come for the last time to Jerusalem. He had often visited the holy city before, and had searched through all its lanes and crowded hovels and black prisons without finding any trace of the family of Nazarenes who had fled from Bethlehem long ago. But now it seemed as if he must make one more effort, and something whispered in his heart that, at last, he just might succeed.

It was the season of the Passover. The city was teeming with strangers and many languages.

But on this day there was a singular agitation visible in the multitude. The sky was veiled with a dark and rolling gloom. And Artaban joined company with a group of people from his own country, Parthian Jews who had come up to keep the Passover, and inquired of them the cause of the agitation, and where they were going.

“We are going,” they answered, “to the place called Golgotha, outside the city walls, where there is to be an execution. Haven’t you heard what has happened? Two

famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them another, called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they love him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that he must die, because he named himself as the Son of God. And Pilate has sent him to the cross because he said that he was the ‘King of the Jews.’”

Artaban’s heart beat quickly. Could it be the same one who had been born in Bethlehem thirty-three years ago, at whose birth the star had appeared in heaven? He said within himself: Could it be that my last pearl is just in time to offer for His ransom and save his life.

So the old man followed the crowd. Just beyond the entrance of the guard-house a troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and matted hair. As the once noble and stately Magi, still priestly in his bearing, paused to look at her with compassion, she suddenly broke from the hands of her tormentors and threw herself at his feet.

“Have pity on me,” she cried, “and save me, for the sake of the God of purity! I also am a daughter of the true religion which is taught by the Magi. My father was a merchant of Parthis, but he is dead, and I am seized for debts to be sold as a slave. Save me from this fate worse than death.”

Artaban trembled. It was the old conflict in his soul, which had come to him in the palm grove of Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem – the conflict between the expectation and the impulse of love. The conflict between the gift he hoped to offer the king and the open faced need right before his eyes. This was his last time to face this choice.

One thing only was sure to his divided heart – to rescue this helpless girl would be a true deed of love. And is not love the light of the soul? He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant, so full of tender, living luster. As he looked at it, a soft and iridescent light, full of shifting gleams of blue and rose, trembled upon its surface. It seemed to have absorbed some reflection of the colors of the lost ruby and sapphire. He took one last look and laid it in the hand of the slave.

“This is your ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King.” While he spoke, the darkness of the sky thickened, and shuddering tremors ran through the earth.

The walls of the house where they stood in the shadows rocked back and forth. Stones were loosened and crashed into the street. Dust-clouds filled the air. The soldiers fled in terror. But Artaban and the girl whom he had ransomed crouched helpless beneath the wall of the Praetorium. What did he have to fear? What did he have to live for? He had given away the last gift to the king, his tribute. And with that he gave up the hope of ever finding Him. The quest was over, and it had failed. But, even in that thought, there was peace. It was not resignation. It was not submission. It was something more profound and searching. He knew that all was well, because he had done the best that he could, from day to day. He had been true to the light that had been given to him. One more lingering tremor of the earthquake quivered through the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale, with his white head resting on the young girl's shoulder, and the blood trickling from the wound.

June 26, 2005 by Joy Swartley Sawatzky.
<http://www.storytellingforthesoul.com/other-wise-man.shtml>

Added new ending:

The young woman had Artiban brought to an Inn where the young woman care for him and watched over him until Sunday morning when they heard a great commotion from soldiers running from the area of the tomb district. But her attention was soon brought back to Artiban as he began to speak in a soft yet confusing manner. It appeared as if he was talking with someone else in the room, as she turned around she saw no one but felt a strange and holy presence. Artiban said, "But Lord, when did I see you hungry, and poor and naked". When Lord, I have missed you at every step of my journey. I failed you, Lord, I am so sorry." But then a voice spoke so soft and still, yet this time even the young woman heard it clearly.

"Verily, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

At that moment Artiban understood. That even though he had hoped to serve The Christ is a way that he had great plans for, Christ had another, better plan. To serve Christ by serving others with love, mercy and compassion. Being the very hands, voice and love of Christ to people who needed it so very badly. Artiban then slipped into a blissful sleep and passed into the gates of heaven and was there met by his nailed scarred Savior, Jesus Christ Who said lovingly, "*Welcome home, Well done my good and faithful servant*". Artiban reached out his hand and placed it in the strong yet tender hand of His Savior and Lord.

Our task today and each and every day for the rest of our lives, my friends, is to carry out the task and mission of Christ as we Love God, and Love One Another. The resurrected Christ must live and move and live in each of us. This is how we can honor and serve our Lord and King.

Will you join in "God's Good News Story" and tell and show God's love to a world that needs Him so very badly?

Following is the original story in its full length.

THE STORY OF THE OTHER WISE MAN

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

*Who seeks for heaven alone to save his
soul,
May keep the path, but will not reach the
goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
Yet God will bring him where the blessed
are.*

You know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East, and how they travelled from far away to offer their gifts at the manger-cradle in Bethlehem. But have you ever heard the story of the Other Wise Man, who also saw the star in its rising, and set out to follow it, yet did not arrive with his brethren in the presence of the young child Jesus? Of the great desire of this fourth pilgrim, and how it was denied, yet accomplished in the denial; of his many wanderings and the probations of his soul; of the long way of his seeking, and the strange way of his finding, the One whom he sought—I would tell the tale as I have heard fragments of it in the Hall of Dreams, in the palace of the Heart of Man.

THE SIGN IN THE SKY

In the days when Augustus Caesar was master of many kings and Herod reigned in Jerusalem, there lived in the city of Ecbatana, among the mountains of Persia, a certain man named Artaban, the Median. His house stood close to the outermost of the seven walls which encircled the royal treasury. From his roof he could look over the rising battlements of black and white and crimson and blue and red and silver and gold, to the hill where the summer palace of the Parthian emperors glittered like a jewel in a sevenfold crown.

Around the dwelling of Artaban spread a fair garden, a tangle of flowers and fruit-trees, watered by a score of streams descending from the slopes of Mount Orontes, and made musical by innumerable birds. But all colour was lost in the soft and odorous darkness of the late September night, and all sounds were hushed in the deep charm of its silence, save the plashing of the water, like a voice half sobbing and half laughing under the shadows. High above the trees a dim glow of light shone through the curtained arches of the upper

chamber, where the master of the house was holding council with his friends.

He stood by the doorway to greet his guests—a tall, dark man of about forty years, with brilliant eyes set near together under his broad brow, and firm lines graven around his fine, thin lips; the brow of a dreamer and the mouth of a soldier, a man of sensitive feeling but inflexible will—one of those who, in whatever age they may live, are born for inward conflict and a life of quest.

His robe was of pure white wool, thrown over a tunic of silk; and a white, pointed cap, with long lapels at the sides, rested on his flowing black hair. It was the dress of the ancient priesthood of the Magi, called the fire-worshippers.

"Welcome!" he said, in his low, pleasant voice, as one after another entered the room—"welcome, Abdus; peace be with you, Rhodaspes and Tigranes, and with you my father, Abgarus. You are all welcome, and this house grows bright with the joy of your presence."

There were nine of the men, differing widely in age, but alike in the richness of their dress of many-coloured silks, and in the massive golden collars around their necks, marking them as Parthian nobles, and in the winged circles of gold resting upon their breasts. (Hymn of AHura Mazda deleted)

The floor was laid with tiles of dark blue veined with white; pilasters of twisted silver stood out against the blue walls; the clearstory of round-arched windows above them was hung with azure silk; the vaulted ceiling was a pavement of sapphires, like the body of heaven in its clearness, sown with silver stars. From the four corners of the roof hung four golden magic-wheels, called the tongues of the gods. At the eastern end, behind the altar, there were two dark-red pillars of porphyry; above them a lintel of the same stone, on which was carved the figure of a winged archer, with his arrow set to the string and his bow drawn.

The doorway between the pillars, which opened upon the terrace of the roof, was covered with a heavy curtain of the colour of a ripe pomegranate, embroidered with innumerable golden rays shooting upward from the floor. In effect the room was like a quiet, starry night, all azure and silver, flushed in the East with rosy promise of the dawn. It was, as the house of a man should be, an expression of the character and spirit of the master.

He turned to his friends when the song was ended, and invited them to be seated on the divan at the western end of the room.

"You have come to-night," said he, looking around the circle, "at my call, as the faithful scholars of Zoroaster, to renew your worship and rekindle your faith in the God of Purity, even as this fire has been rekindled on the altar. We worship not the fire, but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol, because it is the purest of all created things. It speaks to us of one who is Light and Truth. Is it not so, my father?"

"It is well said, my son," answered the venerable Abgarus. "The enlightened are never idolaters. They lift the veil of the form and go in to the shrine of the reality, and new light and truth are coming to them continually through the old symbols." "Hear me, then, my father and my friends," said Artaban, very quietly, "while I tell you of the new light and truth that have come to me through the most ancient of all signs. We have searched the secrets of nature together, and studied the healing virtues of water and fire and the plants. We have read also the books of prophecy in which the future is dimly foretold in words that are hard to understand. But the highest of all learning is the knowledge of the stars. To trace their courses is to untangle the threads of the mystery of life from the beginning to the end. If we could follow them perfectly, nothing would be hidden from us. But is not our knowledge of them still incomplete? Are there not many stars still beyond our horizon—lights that are known only to the dwellers in the far south-land, among the spice-trees of Punt and the gold mines of Ophir?"

There was a murmur of assent among the listeners.

"The stars," said Tigranes, "are the thoughts of the Eternal. They are numberless. But the thoughts of man can be counted, like the years of his life. The wisdom of the Magi is the greatest of all wisdoms on earth, because it knows its own ignorance. And that is the secret of power. We keep men always looking and waiting for a new sunrise. But we ourselves know that the darkness is equal to the light, and that the conflict between them will never be ended."

"That does not satisfy me," answered Artaban, "for, if the waiting must be endless, if there could be no fulfilment of it, then it would not be wisdom to look and wait. We should become like those new teachers of the Greeks, who say that there is no truth, and that the only wise men are those who spend their lives in discovering and exposing the lies that have been

believed in the world. But the new sunrise will certainly dawn in the appointed time. Do not our own books tell us that this will come to pass, and that men will see the brightness of a great light?"

"That is true," said the voice of Abgarus; "every faithful disciple of Zoroaster knows the prophecy of the Avesta and carries the word in his heart. 'In that day Sosiosh the Victorious shall arise out of the number of the prophets in the east country. Around him shall shine a mighty brightness, and he shall make life everlasting, incorruptible, and immortal, and the dead shall rise again.'"

"This is a dark saying," said Tigranes, "and it may be that we shall never understand it. It is better to consider the things that are near at hand, and to increase the influence of the Magi in their own country, rather than to look for one who may be a stranger, and to whom we must resign our power."

The others seemed to approve these words. There was a silent feeling of agreement manifest among them; their looks responded with that indefinable expression which always follows when a speaker has uttered the thought that has been slumbering in the hearts of his listeners. But Artaban turned to Abgarus with a glow on his face, and said:

"My father, I have kept this prophecy in the secret place of my soul. Religion without a great hope would be like an altar without a living fire. And now the flame has burned more brightly, and by the light of it I have read other words which also have come from the fountain of Truth, and speak yet more clearly of the rising of the Victorious One in his brightness."

He drew from the breast of his tunic two small rolls of fine linen, with writing upon them, and unfolded them carefully upon his knee.

"In the years that are lost in the past, long before our fathers came into the land of Babylon, there were wise men in Chaldea, from whom the first of the Magi learned the secret of the heavens. And of these Balaam the son of Beor was one of the mightiest. Hear the words of his prophecy: 'There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.'"

The lips of Tigranes drew downward with contempt, as he said:

"Judah was a captive by the waters of Babylon, and the sons of Jacob were in bondage to our kings. The tribes of Israel are scattered through the mountains like

lost sheep, and from the remnant that dwells in Judea under the yoke of Rome neither star nor sceptre shall arise."

"And yet," answered Artaban, "it was the Hebrew Daniel, the mighty searcher of dreams, the counsellor of kings, the wise Belteshazzar, who was most honored and beloved of our great King Cyrus. A prophet of sure things and a reader of the thoughts of God, Daniel proved himself to our people. And these are the words that he wrote." (Artaban read from the second roll:) "Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem, unto the Anointed One, the Prince, the time shall be seven and threescore and two weeks."

"But, my son," said Abgarus, doubtfully, "these are mystical numbers. Who can interpret them, or who can find the key that shall unlock their meaning?"

Artaban answered: "It has been shown to me and to my three companions among the Magi—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. We have searched the ancient tablets of Chaldea and computed the time. It falls in this year. We have studied the sky, and in the spring of the year we saw two of the greatest stars draw near together in the sign of the Fish, which is the house of the Hebrews. We also saw a new star there, which shone for one night and then vanished. Now again the two great planets are meeting. This night is their conjunction. My three brothers are watching at the ancient temple of the Seven Spheres, at Borsippa, in Babylonia, and I am watching here. If the star shines again, they will wait ten days for me at the temple, and then we will set out together for Jerusalem, to see and worship the promised one who shall be born King of Israel. I believe the sign will come. I have made ready for the journey. I have sold my house and my possessions, and bought these three jewels—a sapphire, a ruby, and a pearl—to carry them as tribute to the King. And I ask you to go with me on the pilgrimage, that we may have joy together in finding the Prince who is worthy to be served."

While he was speaking he thrust his hand into the inmost fold of his girdle and drew out three great gems—one blue as a fragment of the night sky, one redder than a ray of sunrise, and one as pure as the peak of a snow mountain at twilight—and laid them on the outspread linen scrolls before him.

But his friends looked on with strange and alien eyes. A veil of doubt and mistrust came over their faces, like a fog creeping up from the marshes to hide the hills.

They glanced at each other with looks of wonder and pity, as those who have listened to incredible sayings, the story of a wild vision, or the proposal of an impossible enterprise.

At last Tigranes said: "Artaban, this is a vain dream. It comes from too much looking upon the stars and the cherishing of lofty thoughts. It would be wiser to spend the time in gathering money for the new fire-temple at Chala. No king will ever rise from the broken race of Israel, and no end will ever come to the eternal strife of light and darkness. He who looks for it is a chaser of shadows. Farewell."

And another said: "Artaban, I have no knowledge of these things, and my office as guardian of the royal treasure binds me here. The quest is not for me. But if thou must follow it, fare thee well."

And another said: "In my house there sleeps a new bride, and I cannot leave her nor take her with me on this strange journey. This quest is not for me. But may thy steps be prospered wherever thou goest. So, farewell."

And another said: "I am ill and unfit for hardship, but there is a man among my servants whom I will send with thee when thou goest, to bring me word how thou farest."

But Abgarus, the oldest and the one who loved Artaban the best, lingered after the others had gone, and said, gravely: "My son, it may be that the light of truth is in this sign that has appeared in the skies, and then it will surely lead to the Prince and the mighty brightness. Or it may be that it is only a shadow of the light, as Tigranes has said, and then he who follows it will have only a long pilgrimage and an empty search. But it is better to follow even the shadow of the best than to remain content with the worst. And those who would see wonderful things must often be ready to travel alone. I am too old for this journey, but my heart shall be a companion of the pilgrimage day and night, and I shall know the end of thy quest. Go in peace."

So one by one they went out of the azure chamber with its silver stars, and Artaban was left in solitude.

He gathered up the jewels and replaced them in his girdle. For a long time he stood and watched the flame that flickered and sank upon the altar. Then he crossed the hall, lifted the heavy curtain, and passed out between the dull red pillars of porphyry to the terrace on the roof.

The shiver that thrills through the earth ere she rouses from her night sleep had already begun, and the cool wind that heralds the daybreak was drawing downward from the lofty snow-traced ravines of Mount Orontes. Birds, half awakened, crept and chirped among the rustling leaves, and the smell of ripened grapes came in brief wafts from the arbours.

Far over the eastern plain a white mist stretched like a lake. But where the distant peak of Zagros serrated the western horizon the sky was clear. Jupiter and Saturn rolled together like drops of lambent flame about to blend in one.

As Artaban watched them, behold, an azure spark was born out of the darkness beneath, rounding itself with purple splendours to a crimson sphere, and spiring upward through rays of saffron and orange into a point of white radiance. Tiny and infinitely remote, yet perfect in every part, it pulsated in the enormous vault as if the three jewels in the Magian's breast had mingled and been transformed into a living heart of light. He bowed his head. He covered his brow with his hands. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming, and I will go to meet him."

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

All night long Vasda, the swiftest of Artaban's horses, had been waiting, saddled and bridled, in her stall, pawing the ground impatiently, and shaking her bit as if she shared the eagerness of her master's purpose, though she knew not its meaning.

Before the birds had fully roused to their strong, high, joyful chant of morning song, before the white mist had begun to lift lazily from the plain, the other wise man was in the saddle, riding swiftly along the high-road, which skirted the base of Mount Orontes, westward.

How close, how intimate is the comradeship between a man and his favourite horse on a long journey. It is a silent, comprehensive friendship, an intercourse beyond the need of words. They drink at the same way-side springs, and sleep under the same guardian stars. They are conscious together of the subduing spell of nightfall and the quickening joy of daybreak. The master shares his evening meal with his hungry companion, and feels the soft, moist lips caressing the palm of his hand as they close over the morsel of bread. In the gray dawn he is roused from his bivouac by the gentle stir of a warm,

sweet breath over his sleeping face, and looks up into the eyes of his faithful fellow-traveller, ready and waiting for the toil of the day. Surely, unless he is a pagan and an unbeliever, by whatever name he calls upon his God, he will thank Him for this voiceless sympathy, this dumb affection, and his morning prayer will embrace a double blessing—God bless us both, and keep our feet from falling and our souls from death!

And then, through the keen morning air, the swift hoofs beat their spirited music along the road, keeping time to the pulsing of two hearts that are moved with the same eager desire—to conquer space, to devour the distance, to attain the goal of the journey.

Artaban must indeed ride wisely and well if he would keep the appointed hour with the other Magi; for the route was a hundred and fifty parasangs, and fifteen was the utmost that he could travel in a day. But he knew Vasda's strength, and pushed forward without anxiety, making the fixed distance every day, though he must travel late into the night, and in the morning long before sunrise.

He passed along the brown slopes of Mt. Orontes, furrowed by the rocky courses of a hundred torrents.

He crossed the level plains of the Nisaeans, where the famous herds of horses, feeding in the wide pastures, tossed their heads at Vasda's approach, and galloped away with a thunder of many hoofs, and flocks of wild birds rose suddenly from the swampy meadows, wheeling in great circles with a shining flutter of innumerable wings and shrill cries of surprise.

He traversed the fertile fields of Concabar, where the dust from the threshing-floors filled the air with a golden mist, half hiding the huge temple of Astarte with its four hundred pillars.

At Baghistan, among the rich gardens watered by fountains from the rock, he looked up at the mountain thrusting its immense rugged brow out over the road, and saw the figure of King Darius trampling upon his fallen foes, and the proud list of his wars and conquests graven high upon the face of the eternal cliff.

Over many a cold and desolate pass, crawling painfully across the wind-swept shoulders of the hills; down many a black mountain-gorge, where the river roared and raced before him like a savage guide; across many a smiling vale, with terraces of yellow limestone full of vines and fruit-trees; through the oak-groves of Carine and the dark Gates of Zagros, walled in by precipices; into the ancient city of Chala, where the

people of Samaria had been kept in captivity long ago; and out again by the mighty portal, riven through the encircling hills, where he saw the image of the High Priest of the Magi sculptured on the wall of rock, with hand uplifted as if to bless the centuries of pilgrims; past the entrance of the narrow defile, filled from end to end with orchards of peaches and figs, through which the river Gyndes foamed down to meet him; over the broad rice-fields, where the autumnal vapours spread their deathly mists; following along the course of the river, under tremulous shadows of poplar and tamarind, among the lower hills; and out upon the flat plain, where the road ran straight as an arrow through the stubble-fields and parched meadows; past the city of Ctesiphon, where the Parthian emperors reigned, and the vast metropolis of Seleucia which Alexander built; across the swirling floods of Tigris and the many channels of Euphrates, flowing yellow through the corn-lands—Artaban pressed onward until he arrived, at nightfall of the tenth day, beneath the shattered walls of populous Babylon.

Vasda was almost spent, and he would gladly have turned into the city to find rest and refreshment for himself and for her. But he knew that it was three hours' journey yet to the Temple of the Seven Spheres, and he must reach the place by midnight if he would find his comrades waiting. So he did not halt, but rode steadily across the stubble-fields.

A grove of date-palms made an island of gloom in the pale yellow sea. As she passed into the shadow Vasda slackened her pace, and began to pick her way more carefully.

Near the farther end of the darkness an access of caution seemed to fall upon her. She scented some danger or difficulty; it was not in her heart to fly from it—only to be prepared for it, and to meet it wisely, as a good horse should do. The grove was close and silent as the tomb; not a leaf rustled, not a bird sang.

She felt her steps before her delicately, carrying her head low, and sighing now and then with apprehension. At last she gave a quick breath of anxiety and dismay, and stood stock-still, quivering in every muscle, before a dark object in the shadow of the last palm-tree.

Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. His humble dress and the outline of his haggard face showed that he was probably one of the poor Hebrew exiles who still dwelt in great numbers in the vicinity. His pallid skin, dry and yellow as parchment, bore the mark of the deadly fever

which ravaged the marsh-lands in autumn. The chill of death was in his lean hand, and, as Artaban released it, the arm fell back inertly upon the motionless breast.

He turned away with a thought of pity, consigning the body to that strange burial which the Magians deem most fitting—the funeral of the desert, from which the kites and vultures rise on dark wings, and the beasts of prey slink furtively away, leaving only a heap of white bones in the sand.

But, as he turned, a long, faint, ghostly sigh came from the man's lips. The brown, bony fingers closed convulsively on the hem of the Magian's robe and held him fast.

Artaban's heart leaped to his throat, not with fear, but with a dumb resentment at the importunity of this blind delay. How could he stay here in the darkness to minister to a dying stranger? What claim had this unknown fragment of human life upon his compassion or his service? If he lingered but for an hour he could hardly reach Borsippa at the appointed time. His companions would think he had given up the journey. They would go without him. He would lose his quest.

But if he went on now, the man would surely die. If he stayed, life might be restored. His spirit throbbed and fluttered with the urgency of the crisis. Should he risk the great reward of his divine faith for the sake of a single deed of human love? Should he turn aside, if only for a moment, from the following of the star, to give a cup of cold water to a poor, perishing Hebrew?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which Thou only knowest."

Then he turned back to the sick man. Loosening the grasp of his hand, he carried him to a little mound at the foot of the palm-tree. He unbound the thick folds of the turban and opened the garment above the sunken breast. He brought water from one of the small canals near by, and moistened the sufferer's brow and mouth. He mingled a draught of one of those simple but potent remedies which he carried always in his girdle—for the Magians were physicians as well as astrologers—and poured it slowly between the colourless lips. Hour after hour he labored as only a skilful healer of disease can do; and, at last, the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him.

"Who art thou?" he said, in the rude dialect of the country, "and why hast thou sought me here to bring back my life?"

"I am Artaban the Magian, of the city of Ecbatana, and I am going to Jerusalem in search of one who is to be born King of the Jews, a great Prince and Deliverer for all men. I dare not delay any longer upon my journey, for the caravan that has waited for me may depart without me. But see, here is all that I have left of bread and wine, and here is a potion of healing herbs. When thy strength is restored thou can'st find the dwellings of the Hebrews among the houses of Babylon."

The Jew raised his trembling hands solemnly to heaven.

"Now may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob bless and prosper the journey of the merciful, and bring him in peace to his desired haven. But stay; I have nothing to give thee in return—only this: that I can tell thee where the Messiah must be sought. For our prophets have said that he should be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem of Judah. May the Lord bring thee in safety to that place, because thou hast had pity upon the sick."

It was already long past midnight. Artaban rode in haste, and Vasda, restored by the brief rest, ran eagerly through the silent plain and swam the channels of the river. She put forth the remnant of her strength, and fled over the ground like a gazelle.

But the first beam of the sun sent her shadow before her as she entered upon the final stadium of the journey, and the eyes of Artaban anxiously scanning the great mound of Nimrod and the Temple of the Seven Spheres, could discern no trace of his friends. The many-coloured terraces of black and orange and red and yellow and green and blue and white, shattered by the convulsions of nature, and crumbling under the repeated blows of human violence, still glittered like a ruined rainbow in the morning light. Artaban rode swiftly around the hill. He dismounted and climbed to the highest terrace, looking out towards the west. The huge desolation of the marshes stretched away to the horizon and the border of the desert. Bitterns stood by the stagnant pools and jackals skulked through the low bushes; but there was no sign of the caravan of the wise men, far or near.

At the edge of the terrace he saw a little cairn of broken bricks, and under them a piece of parchment. He caught it up and read: "We have waited past the midnight, and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert." Artaban sat down upon the ground and covered his head in despair.

"How can I cross the desert," said he, "with no food and with a spent horse? I must return to Babylon, sell my sapphire, and buy a train of camels, and provision for the journey. I may never overtake my friends. Only God the merciful knows whether I shall not lose the sight of the King because I tarried to show mercy."

FOR THE SAKE OF A LITTLE CHILD

There was a silence in the Hall of Dreams, where I was listening to the story of the other wise man. And through this silence I saw, but very dimly, his figure passing over the dreary undulations of the desert, high upon the back of his camel, rocking steadily onward like a ship over the waves.

The land of death spread its cruel net around him. The stony wastes bore no fruit but briars and thorns. The dark ledges of rock thrust themselves above the surface here and there, like the bones of perished monsters. Arid and inhospitable mountain ranges rose before him, furrowed with dry channels of ancient torrents, white and ghastly as scars on the face of nature. Shifting hills of treacherous sand were heaped like tombs along the horizon. By day, the fierce heat pressed its intolerable burden on the quivering air; and no living creature moved, on the dumb, swooning earth, but tiny jerboas scuttling through the parched bushes, or lizards vanishing in the clefts of the rock. By night the jackals prowled and barked in the distance, and the lion made the black ravines echo with his hollow roaring, while a bitter, blighting chill followed the fever of the day. Through heat and cold, the Magian moved steadily onward.

Then I saw the gardens and orchards of Damascus, watered by the streams of Abana and Pharpar, with their sloping swards inlaid with bloom, and their thickets of myrrh and roses. I saw also the long, snowy ridge of Hermon, and the dark groves of cedars, and the valley of the Jordan, and the blue waters of the Lake of Galilee, and the fertile plain of Esdraelon, and the hills of Ephraim, and the highlands of Judah. Through all these I followed the figure of Artaban moving steadily onward, until he arrived at Bethlehem. And it was the third day after the three wise men had come to that place and had found Mary and Joseph, with the young child, Jesus, and had laid their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh at his feet.

Then the other wise man drew near, weary, but full of hope, bearing his ruby and his pearl to offer to the

King. "For now at last," he said, "I shall surely find him, though it be alone, and later than my brethren. This is the place of which the Hebrew exile told me that the prophets had spoken, and here I shall behold the rising of the great light. But I must inquire about the visit of my brethren, and to what house the star directed them, and to whom they presented their tribute."

The streets of the village seemed to be deserted, and Artaban wondered whether the men had all gone up to the hill-pastures to bring down their sheep. From the open door of a low stone cottage he heard the sound of a woman's voice singing softly. He entered and found a young mother hushing her baby to rest. She told him of the strangers from the far East who had appeared in the village three days ago, and how they said that a star had guided them to the place where Joseph of Nazareth was lodging with his wife and her new-born child, and how they had paid reverence to the child and given him many rich gifts.

"But the travellers disappeared again," she continued, "as suddenly as they had come. We were afraid at the strangeness of their visit. We could not understand it. The man of Nazareth took the babe and his mother and fled away that same night secretly, and it was whispered that they were going far away to Egypt. Ever since, there has been a spell upon the village; something evil hangs over it. They say that the Roman soldiers are coming from Jerusalem to force a new tax from us, and the men have driven the flocks and herds far back among the hills, and hidden themselves to escape it."

Artaban listened to her gentle, timid speech, and the child in her arms looked up in his face and smiled, stretching out its rosy hands to grasp at the winged circle of gold on his breast. His heart warmed to the touch. It seemed like a greeting of love and trust to one who had journeyed long in loneliness and perplexity, fighting with his own doubts and fears, and following a light that was veiled in clouds.

"Might not this child have been the promised Prince?" he asked within himself, as he touched its soft cheek. "Kings have been born ere now in lowlier houses than this, and the favourite of the stars may rise even from a cottage. But it has not seemed good to the God of wisdom to reward my search so soon and so easily. The one whom I seek has gone before me; and now I must follow the King to Egypt."

The young mother laid the babe in its cradle, and rose to minister to the wants of the strange guest that fate had brought into her house. She set food before

him, the plain fare of peasants, but willingly offered, and therefore full of refreshment for the soul as well as for the body. Artaban accepted it gratefully; and, as he ate, the child fell into a happy slumber, and murmured sweetly in its dreams, and a great peace filled the quiet room.

But suddenly there came the noise of a wild confusion and uproar in the streets of the village, a shrieking and wailing of women's voices, a clangor of brazen trumpets and a clashing of swords, and a desperate cry: "The soldiers! the soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children."

The young mother's face grew white with terror. She clasped her child to her bosom, and crouched motionless in the darkest corner of the room, covering him with the folds of her robe, lest he should wake and cry.

But Artaban went quickly and stood in the doorway of the house. His broad shoulders filled the portal from side to side, and the peak of his white cap all but touched the lintel.

The soldiers came hurrying down the street with bloody hands and dripping swords. At the sight of the stranger in his imposing dress they hesitated with surprise. The captain of the band approached the threshold to thrust him aside. But Artaban did not stir. His face was as calm as though he were watching the stars, and in his eyes there burned that steady radiance before which even the half-tamed hunting leopard shrinks, and the fierce bloodhound pauses in his leap. He held the soldier silently for an instant, and then said in a low voice:

"There is no one in this place but me, and I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

He showed the ruby, glistening in the hollow of his hand like a great drop of blood.

The captain was amazed at the splendour of the gem. The pupils of his eyes expanded with desire, and the hard lines of greed wrinkled around his lips. He stretched out his hand and took the ruby.

"March on!" he cried to his men, "there is no child here. The house is still." The clamour and the clang of arms passed down the street as the headlong fury of the chase sweeps by the secret covert where the trembling deer is hidden. Artaban re-entered the cottage. He turned his face to the east and prayed: "God of truth,

forgive my sin! I have said the thing that is not, to save the life of a child. And two of my gifts are gone. I have spent for man that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?" But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy in the shadow behind him, said very gently:

"Because thou hast saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

IN THE HIDDEN WAY OF SORROW

Then again there was a silence in the Hall of Dreams, deeper and more mysterious than the first interval, and I understood that the years of Artaban were flowing very swiftly under the stillness of that clinging fog, and I caught only a glimpse, here and there, of the river of his life shining through the shadows that concealed its course.

I saw him moving among the throngs of men in populous Egypt, seeking everywhere for traces of the household that had come down from Bethlehem, and finding them under the spreading sycamore-trees of Heliopolis, and beneath the walls of the Roman fortress of New Babylon beside the Nile—traces so faint and dim that they vanished before him continually, as footprints on the hard river-sand glisten for a moment with moisture and then disappear.

I saw him again at the foot of the pyramids, which lifted their sharp points into the intense saffron glow of the sunset sky, changeless monuments of the perishable glory and the imperishable hope of man. He looked up into the vast countenance of the crouching Sphinx and vainly tried to read the meaning of her calm eyes and smiling mouth. Was it, indeed, the mockery of all effort and all aspiration, as Tigranes had said—the cruel jest of a riddle that has no answer, a search that never can succeed? Or was there a touch of pity and encouragement in that inscrutable smile—a promise that even the defeated should attain a victory, and the disappointed should discover a prize, and the ignorant should be made wise, and the blind should see, and the wandering should come into the haven at last?

I saw him again in an obscure house of Alexandria, taking counsel with a Hebrew rabbi. The venerable man, bending over the rolls of parchment on which the

prophecies of Israel were written, read aloud the pathetic words which foretold the sufferings of the promised Messiah—the despised and rejected of men, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.

"And remember, my son," said he, fixing his deep-set eyes upon the face of Artaban, "the King whom you are seeking is not to be found in a palace, nor among the rich and powerful. If the light of the world and the glory of Israel had been appointed to come with the greatness of earthly splendour, it must have appeared long ago. For no son of Abraham will ever again rival the power which Joseph had in the palaces of Egypt, or the magnificence of Solomon throned between the lions in Jerusalem. But the light for which the world is waiting is a new light, the glory that shall rise out of patient and triumphant suffering. And the kingdom which is to be established forever is a new kingdom, the royalty of perfect and unconquerable love. I do not know how this shall come to pass, nor how the turbulent kings and peoples of earth shall be brought to acknowledge the Messiah and pay homage to him. But this I know. Those who seek Him will do well to look among the poor and the lowly, the sorrowful and the oppressed."

So I saw the other wise man again and again, travelling from place to place, and searching among the people of the dispersion, with whom the little family from Bethlehem might, perhaps, have found a refuge. He passed through countries where famine lay heavy upon the land, and the poor were crying for bread. He made his dwelling in plague-stricken cities where the sick were languishing in the bitter companionship of helpless misery. He visited the oppressed and the afflicted in the gloom of subterranean prisons, and the crowded wretchedness of slave-markets, and the weary toil of galley-ships. In all this populous and intricate world of anguish, though he found none to worship, he found many to help. He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the captive; and his years went by more swiftly than the weaver's shuttle that flashes back and forth through the loom while the web grows and the invisible pattern is completed.

It seemed almost as if he had forgotten his quest. But once I saw him for a moment as he stood alone at sunrise, waiting at the gate of a Roman prison. He had taken from a secret resting-place in his bosom the pearl, the last of his jewels. As he looked at it, a mellow lustre, a soft and iridescent light, full of shifting gleams of azure and rose, trembled upon its surface. It seemed to have absorbed some reflection of the colours of the lost sapphire and ruby. So the profound, secret purpose

of a noble life draws into itself the memories of past joy and past sorrow. All that has helped it, all that has hindered it, is transfused by a subtle magic into its very essence. It becomes more luminous and precious the longer it is carried close to the warmth of the beating heart. Then, at last, while I was thinking of this pearl, and of its meaning, I heard the end of the story of the other wise man.

A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Three-and-thirty years of the life of Artaban had passed away, and he was still a pilgrim and a seeker after light. His hair, once darker than the cliffs of Zagros, was now white as the wintry snow that covered them. His eyes, that once flashed like flames of fire, were dull as embers smouldering among the ashes.

Worn and weary and ready to die, but still looking for the King, he had come for the last time to Jerusalem. He had often visited the holy city before, and had searched through all its lanes and crowded hovels and black prisons without finding any trace of the family of Nazarenes who had fled from Bethlehem long ago. But now it seemed as if he must make one more effort, and something whispered in his heart that, at last, he might succeed. It was the season of the Passover. The city was thronged with strangers. The children of Israel, scattered in far lands all over the world, had returned to the Temple for the great feast, and there had been a confusion of tongues in the narrow streets for many days.

But on this day there was a singular agitation visible in the multitude. The sky was veiled with a portentous gloom, and currents of excitement seemed to flash through the crowd like the thrill which shakes the forest on the eve of a storm. A secret tide was sweeping them all one way. The clatter of sandals, and the soft, thick sound of thousands of bare feet shuffling over the stones, flowed unceasingly along the street that leads to the Damascus gate.

Artaban joined company with a group of people from his own country, Parthian Jews who had come up to keep the Passover, and inquired of them the cause of the tumult, and where they were going.

"We are going," they answered, "to the place called Golgotha, outside the city walls, where there is to be an execution. Have you not heard what has happened? Two famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them another, called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they

love him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that he must die, because he gave himself out to be the Son of God. And Pilate has sent him to the cross because he said that he was the 'King of the Jews.'"

How strangely these familiar words fell upon the tired heart of Artaban! They had led him for a lifetime over land and sea. And now they came to him darkly and mysteriously like a message of despair. The King had arisen, but he had been denied and cast out. He was about to perish. Perhaps he was already dying. Could it be the same who had been born in Bethlehem, thirty-three years ago, at whose birth the star had appeared in heaven, and of whose coming the prophets had spoken?

Artaban's heart beat unsteadily with that troubled, doubtful apprehension which is the excitement of old age. But he said within himself, "The ways of God are stranger than the thoughts of men, and it may be that I shall find the King, at last, in the hands of His enemies, and shall come in time to offer my pearl for His ransom before He dies."

So the old man followed the multitude with slow and painful steps towards the Damascus gate of the city. Just beyond the entrance of the guard-house a troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair. As the Magian paused to look at her with compassion, she broke suddenly from the hands of her tormentors, and threw herself at his feet, clasping him around the knees. She had seen his white cap and the winged circle on his breast.

"Have pity on me," she cried, "and save me, for the sake of the God of Purity! I also am a daughter of the true religion which is taught by the Magi. My father was a merchant of Parthia, but he is dead, and I am seized for his debts to be sold as a slave. Save me from worse than death!"

Artaban trembled.

It was the old conflict in his soul, which had come to him in the palm-grove of Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem—the conflict between the expectation of faith and the impulse of love. Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the worship of religion had been drawn from his hand to the service of humanity. This was the third trial, the ultimate probation, the final and irrevocable choice.

Was it his great opportunity, or his last temptation? He could not tell. One thing only was clear in the darkness of his mind—it was inevitable. And does not

the inevitable come from God? One thing only was sure to his divided heart—to rescue this helpless girl would be a true deed of love. And is not love the light of the soul?

He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant, so full of tender, living lustre. He laid it in the hand of the slave. "This is thy ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King." While he spoke the darkness of the sky thickened, and shuddering tremors ran through the earth, heaving convulsively like the breast of one who struggles with mighty grief.

The walls of the houses rocked to and fro. Stones were loosened and crashed into the street. Dust clouds filled the air. The soldiers fled in terror, reeling like drunken men. But Artaban and the girl whom he had ransomed crouched helpless beneath the wall of the Praetorium. What had he to fear? What had he to live for? He had given away the last remnant of his tribute for the King. He had parted with the last hope of finding Him. The quest was over, and it had failed. But, even in that thought, accepted and embraced, there was peace. It was not resignation. It was not submission. It was something more profound and searching. He knew that all was well, because he had done the best that he could, from day to day. He had been true to the light that had been given to him. He had looked for more. And if he had not found it, if a failure was all that came out of his life, doubtless that was the best that was possible. He had not seen the revelation of "life everlasting, incorruptible and immortal." But he knew that even if he could live his earthly life over again, it could not be otherwise than it had been.

One more lingering pulsation of the earthquake quivered through the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale, with his gray head resting on the young girl's shoulder, and the blood trickling from the wound. As she bent over him, fearing that he was dead, there came a voice through the twilight, very small and still, like music sounding from a distance, in which the notes are clear but the words are lost. The girl turned to see if some one had spoken from the window above them, but she saw no one. Then the old man's lips began to move, as if in answer, and she heard him say in the Parthian tongue:

"Not so, my Lord! For when saw I thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? When saw I thee sick or in prison, and

came unto thee? Three-and-thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King."

He ceased, and the sweet voice came again. And again the maid heard it, very faintly and far away. But now it seemed as though she understood the words: "*Verily I say unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me.*" A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the pale face of Artaban like the first ray of dawn on a snowy mountain-peak. One long, last breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips.

His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. The other Wise Man had found the King.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10679/10679-h/10679-h.htm>

Version 3: Zeno's View

The Other Wise Man by

Henry Van Dyke

The other wise man's name was Artaban. He was one of the Magi and he lived in Persia. He was a man of great wealth, great learning, and great faith. With his learned companions he had searched the scriptures as to the time that the Savior should be born. They knew that a new star would appear and it was agreed between them that Artaban would watch from Persia and the others would observe the sky from Babylon.

On the night he believed the sign was to be given, Artaban went out on this roof to watch the night sky. "If the star appears, they will wait for me ten days, then we will all set out for Jerusalem. I have made ready for the journey by selling all of my possessions and have bought three jewels—a sapphire, a ruby, and a pearl. I intend to present them as my tribute to the king." As he watched an azure spark was born out of the darkness, rounding itself with splendor into a crimson sphere. Artaban bowed his head. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming, and I will go to meet him." The swiftest of Artaban's horses had been waiting saddled and bridled in her stall, pawing the ground impatiently. She shared the eagerness of her master's purpose. As Artaban placed himself upon her back, he said, "God bless us both from falling and

our souls from death.” They began their journey. Each day his faithful horse measured off the allotted proportion of the distance, and at nightfall on the tenth day, they approached the outskirts of Babylon. In a little island of desert palm trees, Artaban’s horse scented difficulty and slackened her pace. Then she stood still, quivering in every muscle. Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying in the roadway. His skin bore the mark of a deadly fever. The chill of death was in his lean hand. As Artaban turned to go, a sigh came from the sick man’s lips. Artaban felt sorry that he could not stay to minister to this dying stranger, but this was the hour toward which his entire life and been directed. He could not forfeit the reward of his years of study and faith to do a single deed of human mercy. But then, how could he leave his fellow man alone to die? “God of truth and mercy,” prayed Artaban, “direct me in the path of wisdom which only thou knowest.” Then he knew that he could not go on. The Magi were physicians as well as astronomers. He took off his robe and began his work of healing. Several hours later the patient regained consciousness. Artaban gave him all that was left of his bread and wine. He left a potion of healing herbs and instructions for his care. Though Artaban rode with the greatest haste the rest of the way, it was after dawn that he arrived at the designated meeting place. His friends were nowhere to be seen. Finally his eyes caught a piece of parchment arranged to attract his attention. It said, “We have waited till past midnight, and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert.” Artaban sat down in despair and covered his face with his hands. “How can I cross the desert with no food and with a spent horse? I must return to Babylon, sell my sapphire and buy camels and provisions for the journey. I may never overtake my friends. Only the merciful God knows whether or not I shall lose my purpose because I tarried to show mercy.” Several days later when Artaban arrived at Bethlehem, the streets were deserted. It was rumored that Herod was sending soldiers, presumably to enforce some new tax, and the men of the city had taken their flocks into the hills beyond his reach. The door of one dwelling was open, and Artaban could hear a mother singing a lullaby to her child. He entered and introduced himself. The woman told him that it was now the third day since the three wise men had appeared in Bethlehem. They had found Joseph and Mary and the young child, and had laid their gifts at His feet. Then they had gone as mysteriously as they had come. Joseph had taken his wife and babe that same

night and had secretly fled. It was whispered that they were going far away into Egypt. As Artaban listened, the baby reached up its dimpled hand and touched his cheek and smiled. His heart warmed at the touch. Then suddenly, outside there arose a wild confusion of sounds. Women were shrieking. Then a desperate cry was heard, “The soldiers of Herod are killing the children.” Artaban went to the doorway. A band of soldiers came hurrying down the street. The captain approached the door to thrust Artaban aside, but Artaban did not stir. His face was as calm as though he were still watching the stars. Finally his out-stretched hand revealed the giant ruby. He said, “I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will go on his way and leave this house alone.”

The captain, amazed at the splendor of the gem, took it and said to his men, “March on, there are no children here.” Then Artaban prayed, “Oh, God, forgive me my sin, I have spent for men that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?” But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy in the shadows behind him said softly, “Thou hast saved the life of my little one. May the Lord bless thee and keep thee and give thee peace.” Artaban, still following the King, went on into Egypt seeking everywhere for traces of the little family that had fled before him. For many years we follow Artaban in his search. We see him at the pyramids. We see him in Alexandria taking counsel with a Hebrew rabbi who told him to seek the King not among the rich but among the poor. He passed through countries where famine lay heavy upon the land, and the poor were crying for bread. He made his dwelling in plague-stricken cities. He visited the oppressed and the afflicted in prisons. He searched the crowded slave-markets. Though he found no one to worship, he found many to serve. As the years passed he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, healed the sick and comforted the captive. Thirty-three years had now passed away since Artaban began his search. His hair was white as snow. He knew his life’s end was near, but he was still desperate with hope that he would find the King. He had come for the last time to Jerusalem. It was the season of the Passover and the city was thronged with strangers. Artaban inquired where they were going. One answered, “We are going to the execution on Golgotha outside the city walls. Two robbers are going to be crucified, and with them another called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people. He claims to be the Son of God and the priests and elders have said that he must

die. Pilate sent him to the cross.” How strangely these familiar words fell upon the tired heart of Artaban. They had led him for a lifetime over land and sea. And now they came to him like a message of despair. The King had been denied and cast out. Perhaps he was already dying. Could he be the same one for whom the star had appeared thirty-three long years ago?

Artaban’s heart beat loudly within him. He thought, “It may be that I shall yet find the King and be able to ransom him from death by giving my treasure to his enemies.” But as Artaban started toward Calgary, he saw a troop of soldiers coming down the street, dragging a sobbing young woman. As Artaban paused, she broke away from her tormentors and threw herself at his feet, her arms clasped around his knees. “Have pity on me,” she cried. “And save me. My father was also of the Magi, but he is dead. I am to be sold as a slave to pay his debts.” Artaban trembled as he again felt the conflict arising in his soul. It was the same he had experienced in the palm grove of Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem. Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the King had been drawn from his hand to the service of humanity. Would he now fail again? One thing was clear, he must rescue this helpless child from evil.

He took the pearl and laid it in the hand of the girl and said, “Daughter, this is the ransom. It is the last of my treasures which I had hoped to keep for the King.” While he spoke, the darkness of the sky thickened and the shuddering tremors of an earthquake ran through the ground. The houses rocked. The soldiers fled in terror. Artaban sank beside a protecting wall. What had he to fear? What had he to hope for? He had given away the last of his tribute to the King. The quest was over and he had failed. What else mattered?

The earthquake quivered beneath him. A heavy tile, shaken from a roof, fell and struck him. He lay breathless and pale. Then there came a still small voice through the twilight. It was like distant music. The rescued girl leaned over him and heard him say, “Not so, my Lord; for when saw I thee hungered and fed thee. Or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw I thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? Thirty-three years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered unto thee, my King.”

The sweet voice came again, “Verily I say unto thee, that inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the

least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me.” A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the face of Artaban as one long, last breath exhaled gently from his lips. His journey was ended. His treasure accepted. The Other Wise Man had found the King.

<http://zenoch.org/mormon-stuff/favorite-stories/christmas-stories/the-other-wise-man/>

Version 4 <http://zenoch.org/mormon-stuff/favorite-stories/christmas-stories/the-other-wise-man/>

The Other Wise Man **adapted from a story by Henry Van Dyke**

Kate Thoresen
December 24



[click](#)
[for](#)
[printable](#)
[version](#)

You know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East and how they traveled from far away to offer their gifts at the manger in Bethlehem. But have you ever heard the story of the Other Wise Man, who also saw the star in its rising?

In this story by Henry Van Dyke we'll hear how great was the desire of this fourth pilgrim in to come and worship the newborn king. And yet, like so many of us even today, what we hope will happen often takes unexpected turns.

This is the story of Artaban, the other wise man, who lived in a far off country among the mountains of Persia. Artaban was a very wise man who studied the prophecies and the stars to untangle the threads of the mystery of life. He believed the ancient words, "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel."

He and the other magi who lived in different cities saw this very star rising now over in the small country of Israel. As they contacted one another about this strange sight, they agreed to meet up together in Babylon and go by caravan to follow this star. It would lead them to the new born king.

Realizing that this was the most important event in the world, Artaban sold all of his earthly possessions. He bought three precious jewels - a brilliant blue sapphire, a vibrantly red ruby and a luminescent pearl. These fine gems he would give as tribute to the King.

Now the home where Artaban lived was a long way from Babylon. So Artaban gathered up his jewels, what provisions he'd need for the long trip, and set off on his fastest horse, Vasda. Onward and onward he pressed, until he arrived, at

nightfall many days later beneath the walls of populous Babylon.

Vasda was almost spent, and Artaban would gladly have turned into the city to find rest and refreshment for himself and for her. But he knew he must continue steadily on to meet his waiting comrades. But suddenly Vasda stood still, quivering in every muscle before a dark object. Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. With pity Artaban began to minister to the half dead. He gave him water and moistened the sufferer's brow and mouth. He mingled a remedy which he always carried with him and poured it slowly between the colorless lips. Hour after hour he labored as only a skilful healer of disease can do. At last the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him.

"Who are you?" the man asked.

"I am Artaban, a Magi. I am going in search of the one who is to be born King of the Jews, a great Prince and Deliverer of all. I dare not delay any longer for the caravan that has waited for me may depart without me. But see, here is all I have left of bread and wine and a potion of healing herbs." The Man raised his hand to thank Artaban - and to thank God for this man who saved his life. He asked God to bless Artaban with a safe travel - and that he would find the child in Bethlehem as foretold by the Hebrew prophets.

Artaban and Vasda raced in haste to the Temple of the Seven Spheres. But when they arrived it was close to daybreak. There was no trace of his friends, the other magi. They needed to go without him. Artaban must now follow them across the desert and meet them at the birthplace of the Promised One.

Artaban returned to Babylon, sold his sapphire to buy a train of camels and provision for the onward journey.

On the third day he finally reached his destination - Bethlehem. In great anticipation he began to search for the Holy Child. Yet the streets seemed to be deserted. He could not find his comrades or the child. From the open door of a cottage he heard the sound of a woman's voice singing softly. He knocked on the door. The young mother invited him in as she cradled her baby to rest. She told him of the strangers from the Far East who had appeared in the village three days ago, and how they said that a star had guided them to the place where Joseph of Nazareth was lodging with his wife and new-born child. They paid reverence to the child and given him many rich gifts.

But the travelers disappeared again as suddenly as they had come. Then the man of Nazareth took the child and his mother, and also fled away secretly. The young mother laid the baby in its cradle, and rose to set food before Artaban - the plain fare of peasants, but willingly offered, and therefore full of refreshment for the soul as well as for the body. Artaban accepted it gratefully and felt a great peace stir in this place.

But suddenly there came the noise of a wild confusion in the streets of the village, a shrieking and wailing of women's voices, a clashing of swords, and a desperate cry: "The soldiers! The soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children."

The young mother's face grew white with terror. She clasped her child to her and crouched motionless in the darkest corner of the room. She covered him with the folds of her robe, lest he should wake and cry.

But Artaban went quickly and stood in the doorway of the house. His broad shoulders filled the portal from side to side. The soldiers came down the street clanging swords. At the sight of the stranger in his imposing dress they hesitated with surprise. The captain of the band approached the threshold to thrust him aside. But Artaban did not stir. His face was calm as though he were watching the stars. His steady eyes held the soldier silently for an instant. Artaban said in a low voice, "I am all alone in this place, and I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

He showed the ruby, glistening in the hollow of his hand.

The captain was amazed at the splendor of the gem. The pupils of his eyes expanded and the hard lines of greed wrinkled around his lips. He stretched out his hand and took the ruby.

"March on!" he shouted to his men, "There is no child here. The house is empty."

The clamor and the clang of arms passed down the street. Artaban reentered the cottage. He turned his face to the east and prayed, "God of truth forgive my sin. I have said the thing that is not, to save the life of a child, and now two of my gifts for you are gone. I have spent for man that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?"

But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy in the shadow behind him, said very gently, "Because you have saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

For over thirty years Artaban searched and searched for this King, the promised savior of the world. He passed through countries where famine lay heavy upon the land, and the poor were crying for bread. He found none to worship, but many to help. He fed the hungry. Clothed the naked. Healed the sick, and comforted the captive.

Three and thirty years of the life of Artaban passed quickly. He was still a pilgrim and a seeker after the Light. Worn and weary he came for the last time to Jerusalem. It was the season of Passover. The city thronged with strangers. But on this day a singular agitation was visible in the multitude. "What is the cause of all this tumult he asked?"

"We are going," they answered, "to the place called Golgotha, outside the city walls, where there is to be an execution. Have you not heard what has happened? Two famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them, another, called Jesus of Nazareth. This man has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they love him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that he must die because he gave himself out to be the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah."

"Is this the King that I've been searching for?" Artaban followed the multitude with slow and painful steps toward the outskirts of the city. Just beyond the entrance of the guardhouse a troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and disheveled hair. As the Wise Man paused to look at her with compassion, she broke suddenly from the hands of her tormentors, and threw herself down at his feet.

"Have pity on me," She cried, "and save me, for the sake of the God of Purity. I am a daughter of a Magi. But my father is dead and I am seized to be sold as a slave. Save me from a life worse than death!"

Artaban trembled. It was the old conflict in his soul, which had come to him in the palm grove in Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem, the conflict between the expectation of faith and the impulse of love. Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the Christ child had been drawn to the service of humanity. This was the third trial, the ultimate choice.

Was this his great opportunity, or his last temptation? He could not tell. One thing only was clear in the darkness of his mind. He was the only one who could rescue this helpless girl. He took the pearl that looked so luminous, so radiant. He placed it in the hand of the young woman.

"This is your ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King."

While he spoke, the darkness of the sky deepened, and shuddering tremors ran through the earth. The wall of the houses rocked to and fro. Stones were loosened and crashed into the street. Dust clouds filled the air. The soldiers fled in terror. One more lingering pulsation of the earthquake quivered throughout the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the Wise Man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale, with his gray head resting on the young girl's shoulder. The blood trickled.

As she bent over him, there came a voice through the twilight, very small and still, like music sounding from a distance, in which the notes are clear but the words are lost. The girl turned to see if someone had spoken, but saw no one.

Then the old man's lips began to move, as if in answer, "Not so, my Lord! For when did I see you hungry and fed you? Or thirsty and gave you drink? When did I see you a stranger and took you in? When did I see you sick or in prison and came unto you? For thirty three years I have looked for you,

but I have never seen your face or ministered to you, my good King."

Artaban ceased and the sweet voice came again. And now the maid heard it say, "Truly I say unto you. Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me."

A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the pale face of Artaban like the first ray of dawn on a snowy mountain peak. A long breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips. He knew that his quest was ended. His treasures were accepted after all by the One who came to save the world. The Other Wise Man had found the King.

Amen. ©Kate Thoresen 2009 <http://www.faithcommunity-novi.org/sermon/ser12249.html>
