

which, as he now saw, the shadowy HAND had pointed to a right decision. Sometimes he had spurned its influence, and had fallen. Then the HAND had raised him, and continued its unwearied task. Sometimes its movements were involved in mystery; the mist would gather round, and he could see neither its operations nor its object; but still he knew that the HAND was there.

Ben Amram saw that HAND pouring wealth at his feet, which he might gather at will. It prospered his traffic. It gave him ships, and sped them safely and prosperously over the ocean. It defended him from losses, and assisted him in his schemes. It guided him in the choice of a residence, and directed him to the partner of his life. It gave him the desire of his heart. It raised him to honour and fame.

He saw the HAND beckoning as his brother's messenger drew near; and then the scene was obscured—the mist again filled the apartment.

"Eli Ben Amram," said the visitor, "thou hast seen the sign of the Invisible, upholding the hand of the diligent through the past. Look now upon the future!"

Again he waved the wand, and placed, for an instant, his hand upon the eyes of Ben Amram. The mist once more divided.

He saw his brother worn with poverty and wasted by sickness. He marked the anguish of his spirit as he read the reproachful letter. He saw the shadowy HAND over him also; but again the scene was changed.

A ship sailed upon a distant sea. That HAND raised the waves and winds to a storm, and impelled the vessel to destruction. The owner was impoverished—and he was indebted to Ben Amram for the sum of four thousand pieces of silver.

And now the shiftings of the scene increased in rapidity; yet still the HAND was there. Jorah repaid the three hundred pieces of silver; while Ben Amram's eldest daughter returned, a destitute and mourning widow, to her father's house. The ship in which his son Jotham sailed was attacked, the passengers were robbed and taken captive, and an exorbitant ransom was demanded. Ben Amram paid the sum, and Jotham returned home in nakedness

and want. Fire devoured the possessions of one debtor; blight and mildew destroyed those of another. Famine and pestilence wasted the land; the sources of commerce failed. Ben Amram's boasted sagacity seemed to forsake him: perplexed and bewildered, he felt himself unable to stem the current of adverse circumstances. His younger son Eliab risked his patrimony in a commercial adventure; it failed, and he lost all. His daughter Miriam was sought in marriage by one whose character and prospects appeared promising. The influence of the warning HAND were disregarded; and Ben Amram discovered too late that he had bestowed the darling of his heart on an unprincipled adventurer.

In all these changes that HAND was seen mingling, more shadowy and mysterious, yet still visible. Ben Amram saw himself, notwithstanding all his efforts, reduced to utter poverty; and then, through the mist, he perceived approaching him his brother Jorah. He shrank from him, for he feared to have his own reproaches cast back into his own teeth. But presently they met.

"My brother," said Jorah, "the good Hand of God has been with me, and has given me competence. Come, and share it with me; I have enough for thee and for me."

Then did Eli Ben Amram exclaim, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

At this instant the door of the apartment opened, and with his son Jotham entered the messenger of his brother. Ben Amram looked around him; the stranger was gone, and the mist had vanished. The letter he had written was before him. He consumed it in the flames of a lamp that burned on a hearthstone; and in its stead he penned a kind and sympathising message to his brother.

From that hour was Eli Ben Amram never heard to vaunt himself in his wisdom or his wealth; and if one praised his skill and success ("and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself"), he would reply, "Nay, but it was the good Hand of my God upon me." And when he admonished his children to attend diligently and circumspectly to their affairs, he always added this precept: "Above all things, seek the guidance and protection of the UNSEEN HAND."