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COLUMBUS, O., MONDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 24, 1868.
NO. 160

THE STORY OF JOSEPH.
As Told by "Mark Twain," in his Letters from the Holy Land.
Joseph had eleven brethren and a father, making twelve in all. He is dead now. Joseph was the youngest but one, and the best beloved. So well beloved was he that his father gave him a coat of many colors. They went a good deal on coats of many colors in those days. Joseph was only a thoughtless lad of seventeen, and that coat corralled his sympathies. He used to swell around and put on many frills among his brethren, as much as they reasoned among themselves and said: As Jacob, our father, liveth, there is too much style about this youngster. For, behold, even before these days they were down upon him.

Not satisfied with having a coat of many colors, Joseph proceeded to further atrocities, and began to dream dreams. As he had a fashion of interpreting them in a way that was very comforting to himself—in a way that seemed to foreshadow that he would one day be exalted high above his father Jacob and his other brethren. These things made the wrath of the eleven to increase, and many fold, and in a greater degree than ever they were down upon him.

In the fullness of time Jacob sent his sons away up in the north country to pasture their flocks, and by and by the mails got irregular, and he wondered if anything was the matter, because of his not hearing from them. So he sent Joseph to look into the matter, and, just like a boy, he started off through the vilest, rockiest, dustiest country in Asia, tricked out in his trotting harness—got down regarding the expense—arrayed in the pride of his heart, his beautiful claw-hammer coat of many colors.

When the other boys saw him coming they said: "Lo, here is the dreamer—let us kill him." But Reuben pleaded with tender eloquence for his innocent brother, and said: "O, pity him!" Wherefore they pitied him. And the self same pit that they pitied him in is here in this place, even to this day. And here it will remain until the next detachment of image-breakers and tomb desecrators arrives from the Quaker City extension, and they will infamously dig it up and carry it away with them. For behold in them is no reverence for the solemn monument of the past, and wherever they go they destroy and spare not. Then the brethren sold Joseph to some Ishmaelites, at the ruling rates, ten per cent. off cash, and dabbled his coat in the blood of a kid and sent it to their father, who rent his garments and believed that his boy, the jewel of his heart and the joy of his old age, was gone from him to return no more forever.

The Ishmaelites took Joseph into Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of the King's household, and lost money on him, which served them right. Joseph became foreman of Potiphar's affairs, and prospered greatly. He had the run of the whole establishment, and was trusted to the utmost. He got into trouble with Potiphar's wife at last, and both gave in their versions of the affair, but the lady's was plausible and Joseph's was most outrageously shaky. So they threw him into prison, and he staid there two years. He got to eating too much, and consequently he got to dreaming. The same was the case with the other prisoners. They all wanted their dreams interpreted. This Joseph did strongly suit. The interpretations proved correct. This came to Pharaoh's ears, and while, and, most luckily, just at the time when he had had a couple of curious dreams himself, and had run so short of dreaming material that he dreamt them over again, which astonished him. Joseph enlightened him. He said, "Sire, your dreams signify that there are going to be seven years of extraordinary plenty in Egypt, and they will be followed by a howling famine that will distress the whole world for full seven years."

Then he closed his eyes and looked exceedingly proud and correct. He came to the manner of a man who knoweth that which he is about, and said, "Behold thou and thy servant can gather together divers and sundry shekels out of this thing let us buy the market and buy against the season of famine." And Pharaoh said, "I perceive that thou art none of them that know not to come in when it doth rain; behold, it shall be even as thou sayest."

Wherefore he made Joseph ruler over all the land of Egypt, and gave unto him chariots and horses, and servants to wait upon him; and clothed him in sumptuous garments, whereunto the coat of many colors was so much as a circumstance. Then did Joseph show what manner of man he was. He hearest the market and bought all the corn that was to be raised in Egypt for seven years to come, and stored it away. And when the first year of the famine was approaching he bought again at six months, buyer's option, and surprised the boys very greatly, for when he called his stocks they could not deliver. In that day many a man sold short and Joseph had them on his hip, and their names were posted, and they forfeited their seats in the Board. And during all those years of famine, ships came from far countries that were in distress, and for the corn that Joseph bought at forty cents he sold it unto them at seven dollars and a half. Before a time and a half or two times had passed over their heads, Joseph and Pharaoh owned about two-thirds of Egypt; it is estimated that if Pharaoh could have dreamed one more dream and got Joseph to interpret it, they would have shortly owned the balance.

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The brethren saw Joseph again, and again he knew them, and said no word. They got their corn and went away, but once more they got into trouble. Young Benjamin, with the artless simplicity of youth, nipped a silver cup, and the servant of Joseph found it in his sack. Then there was a weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. They had to go back, though, to the palace, and then came the climax of Joseph's stirring drama. While the sorrowing strangers stood with bowed heads before the mighty Lord of Egypt, he fell upon Benjamin's neck and cried: "Hail the starry berry upon your left arm!—it is I, it is my long lost brother!" [Slow music.]

Forgiven, and the past forgotten, the brethren of Joseph rejoiced with a joy they had never known before. A feast was spread, and surrounded by the grandeur of princely Egypt, they partook of the square meal that had passed their lips since the day that the famine came upon the land. Let us draw the curtain over this sacred family blow-out. It was splendid, and cordial, and never cost the brethren a cent.

One day old Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw a caravan winding its long line over the hills—a caravan like the one that carries that bear princes and their goods. And when it was come nigh, he beheld his sons were there; and they said, "These are for thee; for lo, Joseph, thy son, liveth, and is lord over all the land of Egypt." The joy of Jacob, and the words that he spoke, are they not written in the chronicles of the book that is called Genesis? So Jacob went down into the land of Egypt, and tripped and fell upon Joseph's neck; and Joseph caught him all right, and said, "Go, slow, Governor;" and from that hour the happiness of Jacob was complete. Through Joseph, he and his sons were honored in the land all their days; and they prospered mightily, and never knew sorrow any more.

So ends the story of Joseph—the most touching and beautiful, and also the most dramatic, in the Old Testament. Of all the patriarchs, Joseph was the noblest. In his perfect character, one can find no flaw. From his boyhood onward to the day of his death, he was both great and good. At one time or another of their lives, the other patriarchs did things that were not entirely creditable, but Joseph's record was clear from the beginning even unto the end.

I will go down into this gloomy pit with my brethren cast him into thirty-five hundred years ago, and drink to his honored memory a cup of his waters mingled with certain drops of the curious cordial I have brought hither from the strange lands that are beyond the sea.

MARK TWAIN.
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