

without doubt rent in pieces." The coat was Joseph's, but all that followed was error made up of one false act, and false reasoning from the known to the unknown. The blood was the blood of a kid, not that of his child; there was no evil beast; Joseph was not rent in pieces, but in full life, on his way to the court of Pharaoh, and the house of Potiphar, to act an important part in Jewish and Egyptian history.

The reasoning of the patriarch was quite up to the standard of the common mind. His deductions were founded in the logic so much praised by the eulogists of circumstantial evidence. The blood of the kid looked like the blood of a man. Science had not in his day reached the analysis which detects the difference. He naturally excluded the hypothesis that the children of his own loins would slay their brother; he could not think of the other hypothesis—the simple truth—the sale of his son to the Midianite merchants for twenty pieces of silver; so that, with a conviction not to be shaken, he adopted the only hypothesis which could explain the transaction—an imaginary wild beast and a fictitious death!

Circumstantial evidence lied Joseph into prison when he reached the house of Potiphar. It lied that English girl to the scaffold. In all countries, in every age, among all peoples, it has lied its victims to the block, the stake, the scaffold or the dungeon. Its power is not confined to the tribunals of justice; a physician at the bedside of his patient sees the circumstantial evidence of disease; he sees (as he thinks) the circumstantial indications of a latent inflammation of the brain, he opens a vein, and the patient dies from the blood-letting, his hypothesis excluding all others which might explain the symptoms, is secret inflammation. A post-mortem examination shows there was no inflammation of the brain; but another disease which to bleed copiously is death. The true hypothesis he found afterwards. There is this difference between the physician and this prosecution. He excluded all but one hypothesis to save life—and they exclude all but one hypothesis to take it away. The physician must try to save, but the law does not make it a necessity to kill. It opens to every jury a path of safety.