KAHLIL GIBRAN

THE OTHER LANGUAGE

Three days after I was born, as I lay in my silken cradle, gazing with astonished dismay on the new world round about me, my mother spoke to the wet-nurse, saying, “How does my child?”

And the wet-nurse answered, “He does well, Madame, I have fed him three times; and never before have I seen a babe so young yet so gay.”

And I was indignant; and I cried, “It is not true, mother; for my bed is hard, and the milk I have sucked is bitter to my mouth, and the odour of the breast is foul in my nostrils, and I am most miserable.”

But my mother did not understand, nor did the nurse; for the language I spoke was that of the world from which I came.

And on the twenty-first day of my life, as I was being christened, the priest said to my mother, “You should indeed by happy, Madame, that your son was born a Christian.”

And I was surprised,—and I said to the priest, “Then your mother in Heaven should be unhappy, for you were not born a Christian.”

But the priest too did not understand my language.

And after seven moons, one day a soothsayer looked at me, and he said to my mother, “Your son will be a statesman and a great leader of men.”

But I cried out,—“That is a false prophet; for I shall be a musician, and naught but a musician shall I be.”

But even at that age my language was not understood—and great was my astonishment.

And after three and thirty years, during which my mother, and the nurse, and the priest have all died, (the shadow of God be upon their spirits) the soothsayer still lives. And yesterday I met him near the gates of the temple; and while we were talking together he said, “I have always known you would become a great musician. Even in your infancy I prophesied and foretold your future.”

And I believed him—for now I too have forgotten the language of that other world.