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KING SOLOMON AND THE SHEDD.

The Talmud contains a legend concerning the remarkable stone called the Shamir with which King Solomon tried the stones for the Temple. The Shamir was the magical jewel, or "worm," used by Aaron to cut the stones for the breastplate of the High Priest. Solomon, when ordered to build the Temple without the sound of hammers, could not cut the stones in the ordinary manner, but by laying the Shamir against the side of the rock the stones instantly and noiselessly separated according to any desired pattern. In order to learn the whereabouts of the Shamir, Solomon invoked the elementals, who told him that Ashmedai, the great king of the Shedd, could give him the desired information. Solomon thereupon sent his faithful general, Benaihu, to capture Ashmedai. The general did this by the aid of a chain with the name of God engraved upon its links. From Ashmedai, Solomon learned that the Ruler of the

Sea had entrusted the Shamir to a wild rooster, from which Solomon speedily secured the stone. Ashmedai was held captive by Solomon until the completion of the Temple, when the great elemental effected his liberation in the following crafty manner: Solomon, becoming curious as to the magical powers of Ashmedai, questioned him. The king of the Shedd replied that if Solomon would remove the chains bearing the name of God and lend him the signet ring he wore he would then demonstrate his supernatural powers. Solomon complied with the request, and the Shedd, picking up the King, cast him four hundred miles into a distant country and, after taking upon himself the figure and appearance of King Solomon, ruled Israel in his stead. A sadder but wiser man, Solomon regained his throne after many adventures. Ashmedai, spreading his wings, ascended to his own throne in the elemental world.