

JEWISH TALES

translated from the French of

OF

LEOPOLD VON SACHER MASOCH

by

HARRIET LIEBER COHEN



CHICAGO
A.C. McCLURG AND COMPANY
1894

Rosings Digital Publications



PREFACE

MUCH has been written of the Jews; it is only within the last half century that an unprejudiced interest has been awakened in this people. Their continual wanderings in the dark ages, their prolonged martyrdom since their dispersion, has inspired from scholar and historian partial accounts and one-sided narratives more frequently inimical than sympathetic.

Liberal ideas and that broader humanitarianism which has gained a footing in general thought have almost completely destroyed that barbarous mental obliquity which regarded the Jews as pariahs. Violent prejudice is receding before the march of liberty and civilization, and only within a few provinces of Oriental Europe does it still retain its hold.

Wherever liberty reigns, and in France its banners are freest, the Israelites enjoy unmolested all the privileges of the free man, exercise their rights justly, and at the same time faithfully practice their duties. Without losing aught of their racial vitality, without relinquishing their traditional sentiments, without ceasing to be a solid body, though dispersed over the world, they are sincerely attached to their native land, and serve their country with patriotism.

Placed on an equality with other citizens, all posts of public trust and honor opened to them, they have proved themselves worthy the confidence, and have ably filled positions of the highest political importance. Jewish aptitude in the realm of letters and science has been as marked as in the field of trade and commerce.

Owing to the fact that the Israelite has become a citizen of the nation in which he is born, he has insensibly fallen under its influence, adopted its customs, conformed to its manners, and though some of his racial peculiarities still resist the onslaught of time and circumstance, the old Jewish family life and the curious life of the Ghetto is now nothing more than a poetic remembrance.

To find again the old-time Israelite with his Biblical characteristics, his naïve superstitions, romantic legends, and strong attachment to the ancient patriarchal life, we must seek him in the villages and very small towns of the East, in Alsace, Germany, Austria, Poland, even in England and Spain; in other words, we would seek him in vain in the cities.

In these quiet, out-of-the-way villages has Sacher Masoch, united to the Jew by no tie of creed, found material for his "Jewish Tales" It is here he has discovered the types which inspired these little prose poems. Racy, piquant, spirited, crowded with striking contrasts, replete with dialogue, now bright and comic, now grave and serious, they follow rigorously the lines of truth.

Sacher Masoch excels in warmth and movement. He traces his pictures as though with the point of a needle; and yet sensation crowds upon sensation, there is always room on the canvas for more figures, and the unexpected is forever happening. These tales are marked from first to last with the author's vigorous, brilliant style; they are evidence of his intellectual humor, his poetic penetration, his nervous strength, his personal mode, his striking originality, and his gentle philosophy with its gay, generous qualities, its fleeting shade of pessimism.

The work imposes itself upon us from its moral as well as its literary standpoint, and must unquestionably take high rank as one of the most original and artistic productions of the day.

CONTENTS

- I. The Bookbinder of Hort (*Hungary*)
- II. David and Abigail (*Denmark*)
- III. Good News (*Galicia*)
- IV. Rabbi Abdon (*Russia*)
- V. The Blessing of the New Moon (*Turkey*)
- VI. The Feast of the Elect (*Northern Germany*)
- VII. Schimmel Knoffeles (*Galicia*)
- VIII. Galeb Jekarim (*Jerusalem*)
- IX. How Sloba Married Her Sister (*Belgium*)
- X. Madame Leopard (*Poland*)
- XI. Handsome Caleb (*Bohemia*)
- XII. Praised Be God, Who Hath Given Us Death (*Spain*)
- XIII. Schalem Alechem (*Alsace*)
- XIV. The Sorcerers (*England*)
- XV. The Angel of Death (*Italy*)
- XVI. Haman and Esther (*Poland*)
- XVII. The Redemption (*Hungary*)
- XVIII. The Drama of the Street of Roses (*Holland*)
- XIX. Parsley Puss (*Roumelia*)
- XX. The Counterfeit Coin (*Southern Germany*)
- XXI. Two Doctors (*Austria*)
- XXII. Poultoff's Iliad (*Russia*)
- XXIII. The Legend of the Roman Matron (*Sweden*)
- XXIV. Thou Shalt Not Kill (*Croatia*)
- XXV. Bair and Wolff (*Switzerland*)
- XXVI. Two Nobilities (*France*)

Endnotes

JEWISH TALES

I THE BOOKBINDER OF HORT

HUNGARY

LOOKING abroad from the table-land of Esced over the Hungarian plain that stretches from the foot of Mount Matra to Szolnok, and finally merges into the horizon where the silver thread of the Theiss winds its way, the eye is attracted by a smiling section of country whose vineyards and cornfields gleam brightly in the sun. This fair spot is neither a park nor grove nor pleasant woodland, but the imposing village of Hort, its pretty white houses half concealed by a wealth of trees and shrubbery.

In this village lived a Jewish bookbinder, Simcha Kalimann, a wit and *bel esprit*, the oracle of the entire province, the living chronicle of his times and people.

Reviewing in reverie the procession of events in his own life, Kalimann could see, as in a mirror, the phases through which his co-religionists in Hungary had passed in their efforts toward liberty. He had lived during that dark period when the Jew dared claim no rights among his fellow-countrymen. He had suffered evil, he had endured disgrace, and the storehouse of his memory held many a tragi-comic picture of the days that were no more. But he had also lived in times when the spirit of tolerance took possession of men's minds, and he had been swept along on that tidal movement inaugurated by Count Széchenyi, the greatest of Hungarians, through his celebrated book, "Light."

The revolution of 1848 brought about the new Hungarian Constitution, and put an end to feudal government. Light penetrated into the darksome streets of the Ghetto, and through the windows opened to receive the Messiah, a saviour entered proclaiming liberty and equality to the downtrodden and oppressed.

Crushed and forsaken, as all Israel was, it gratefully responded to this message of universal brotherhood.

The Hungarian Jew had found a country, and from that moment he had thrown aside his native timidity, and found the strength to display his patriotism with an ardor and enthusiasm worthy of the cause. Thousands quitted the Ghettos, and gathered around the tricolored flag. Among the warm-hearted soldiers was Simcha Kalimann. He followed Kossuth as a simple honvéd (volunteer), and fought at Kapolna, Vaitzen, and Temesvar.

High hopes and golden dreams were succeeded by despondency and disillusion; then supervened years of impatient waiting, — a standing with folded arms when so much remained to be done, a time of despair, of restless suffering. But the Jew had acquired his franchise, and gratefully he remembered those to whom he owed this priceless blessing.

When the Austro-Hungarian Convention gave Hungary her king and constitution, the hearts of the people of the Ghetto beat high. This time, however, liberty did not make her entry with clang of arms and beat of drum, — peace and reconciliation were her handmaidens, and progress followed in her footsteps.

It was at this epoch in Hungary's history that Israelites began to speak the language of the country, and to accept Hungarian names. To her credit be it said that no such shameful sale was made as disgraced the time of Joseph II., when surnames were sold, according to their attractiveness or desirability, to the highest bidder.

Consequently, as a high-sounding name cost no more than a simple one, Kalimann chose the most imposing he could find, and, his country's hero in mind, called himself Sandor Hunyadi. This historic title revived, as it were, his latent patriotism, and, digging his gun and cartridge-box from their hiding place in the garden where he had carefully buried them after the capitulation of Vilagos, he proudly hung these trophies of his prowess over his bed, and rejoiced in the memories of his martial exploits.

Liberty and religious peace held equal sway. Reciprocal kindness and toleration spread light where darkness had been, and scattered the shadows of prejudice.

Hunyadi, or Kalimann, was regarded in Hort as a free-thinker. This was scarcely just; he was pious, and strictly discharged his religious observances, emancipating himself at the same time from those distinctions in dress and customs which he deemed neither in accordance with Mosaic law nor with his ideas of progress.

He followed the observance of wearing his hat while at synagogue, but during no other religious ceremony; troubled himself but little regarding the dietary laws; dressed as his Christian neighbor did; and strictly prohibited any superstitious practices in his house. He even permitted his wife to let her hair grow, — a bold innovation.

His appearance was by no means suggestive of the hero. Short, thin, and insignificant looking, with hair that frizzled beyond all thought of disentanglement, a tanned and freckled skin, flaxen mustache, and gray eyes that blinked continuously, Kalimann had truly no cause for vanity. Besides, he was excessively near-sighted, and as his large spectacles were taken from their red case only when he read or worked, it not unfrequently happened that when he took his walk abroad he would mistake a tall post for the chief magistrate of the county, and salute it with his most respectful bow; or, with a composure born of self-complacency, it would be his misfortune to pass by Madame Barkany, his best customer, with a vacant stare, under the impression that the fair apparition was linen hung to bleach in the sun.

*

Kalimann worked alone with a little apprentice named Hersch, whom he had indentured far more from charity than necessity, since the worthy bookbinder felt within him that love for his art which would have enabled him to bind the entire literature of Europe with no greater aid than his good right arm. He was a conscientious, faithful workman, and, as a rule, his entire days were spent in his shop; when necessity demanded he would toil on late into the night by the light of a tallow candle, or an ill-smelling lamp.

His work was his pride; reading his delight. If a single dark spot clouded the surface of this simple honest life, that shadow fell from the portly form of Mrs. Rachel Kalimann, or Rose Hunyadi, as it was that lady's pleasure now to be called. It would be unjust, however, to the handsome woman, whose buxom proportions served as it were to give weight to the establishment, to say that her faults were of a serious nature; she was, at the most, insensible to her husband's intellectual aspirations, which she termed, with more vigor than the occasion demanded, "stuff and nonsense."

Quotations from the Talmud and the Scriptures were equally impotent to quell the torrent of the worthy woman's eloquence when she felt that the occasion demanded her timely interference; in vain Kalimann supported his side of the

question by citing from the book of Job: "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies." ¹

Rose would retort curtly: "What can I buy with your wisdom? Will it give me wherewith to eat and to drink, and to clothe myself? No! Very well then, what is the good of it?"

The learned bookbinder would, as a rule, sigh and silently abandon the argument when it had reached this stage, but at times his composure would break down under the strain imposed on it. Disputes and quarrels would ensue, but in the end Kalimann would capitulate, his conjugal love overcoming his anger and resentment.

Occasionally, however, he would endeavor to escape his wife's vigilance, and take refuge in a remote corner with one of his treasured volumes. On one of these "secret" evenings she surprised him in the poultry-house, at his side a small lantern shedding a doubtful light upon a fine edition of "Hamlet" on his lap. Rose read him a long lecture, and commanded him to retire at once. The good man obeyed, but carried "Hamlet" to bed with him, turning once more to his Shakespeare for refreshment and sweet content. He had scarcely read half a page, when his spouse rose in all her majesty and blew out the candle.

Kalimann was desperate, and yet resistance would have been unwise. Sadly resigned, he turned his head upon the pillow, and soon snored in unison with Hersch. A half hour of profound silence, then the culprit rose, and making sure that his wife was sleeping the sleep of the just, he cautiously took his book and spectacles, glided out of doors, and sitting upon the old moss-grown bench in front of the house, continued the tragedy of the Danish prince by the light of the moon.

Yes, he loved his books with passion and tenderness; but not having means wherewith to buy them, he read every book that was entrusted to him to bind. Not being the collector of the volumes in his work-shop, chance alone being responsible for the heterogeneous display, — today a sentimental love-tale, to-morrow a medical treatise, the next day a theological work, — it followed that the poor little bookbinder's head was filled with as confused a mass of lore, religious and profane, as ever cast in its lot in the sum of human knowledge. The more a book pleased him, the longer did the owner have to wait for it; and it was only after repeated insistence that the coveted volume was placed in the rightful possessor's hands.

Naturally, Kalimann's prices varied according to the work required, or the cost of material; but when it came to the question of ornamental finishing or decorative impressions, his customer's orders were totally ignored, and he it was who decided upon the finishing according to the subject or the value of the work.

When he carried the books back to his customers, he would always tie them up carefully in a large colored handkerchief, and, while unwrapping them, would embrace the opportunity of expressing his views upon their contents; at times, however, he regarded the open assertion of his opinion as dangerous, and could not be induced to pass judgment. On these occasions he never failed to say with a sorrowful shake of the head, "While we are living we may not speak, when we are dead it is too late!"

There lived in Hort at this time a wealthy and pretty widow, Mrs. Zoe Barkany by name, originally Sarah Samuel. From her, Kalimann would get his novels and classical literature; these he bound in pale blues and greens and brilliant scarlets, ornamenting them with a golden lyre, surmounted with an arrow-pierced heart. He worked upon these bindings *con amore*, and, transported by his love of the aesthetic, would occasionally give vent to his enthusiasm, and venture observations

bordering upon the chivalrous. In each and every heroine of the plays and romances he devoured, he could see the captivating face and figure of Mrs. Barkany.

Entering the fair widow's garden one morning, and discovering her seated on a rustic bench, dressed in white, a guitar in her hand, he exclaimed, with a reverential bow: "Ah, *mon Dieu*, there sits Princess Eboli!" (the heroine in "Don Carlos"). Another time seeing her in a morning gown of Turkish stuff, he declared she must be sitting for the picture of Rebecca in "Ivanhoe." In short, Mrs. Barkany very soon learned to anticipate her bookbinder's speeches, and would say, with a pretty smile: "Well, am I Esmeralda today?" or, "I wager that I am reminding you of the Duchess; tell me, am I right or not?"

Binding works on jurisprudence for the notary, he developed his philosophy of law; returning some volumes to the village doctor, he surprised that worthy by launching forth with enthusiasm into a disquisition on medicine; and dropping in one fine day at Professor Gambert's, — the pensioned schoolmaster, — he proved himself no mean adversary in a discussion upon natural history. He invariably approached a subject with a refreshing originality, and, on one occasion, maintained with an obstinacy born of conviction that the reason Moses had prohibited the Jews from eating pork was because he had discovered the trichina.

*

Simcha Kalimann had taken upon himself the office of censor in his village, as may be seen by the following incident. The widow had given him a richly illustrated German edition of "Nana" to bind. At dusk one evening he discovered his apprentice crouched in a corner by the window, evidently intensely amused over the illustrations. He quietly seized the culprit by the hair, shook him as he would a puppy, and then, putting on his spectacles, began inspecting the volume himself. At first he shook his head, then took off his glasses and rubbed them as though they were playing him some prank, and finally closed the book with an expression of profound disgust.

Mrs. Barkany awaited the return of her "Nana" with unruffled patience, finally she despatched her cook Gutel with an order for the book. Kalimann was ready with his excuses, and after a fortnight's delay the widow found her way into the work-shop, and began suing for the book in person.

"I want my copy of Nana," she began.

"Nana?" Kalimann went on with his work.

"You have not bound it yet?"

"No, Madame."

"But when am I to have it?"

"You are not to have that book at all."

"What! You talk absurdly."

"We merit trust, the Count will own;
For nothing's left of flesh or bone,"

quoted Kalimann from Schiller's ballad "The Forge." "As for 'Nana,' I've simply pushed it in the stove."

"Kalimann, this is going too far."

"It is not a book for a Jewish woman to own."

The widow flushed indignantly, but would not yield the victory to her adversary.

“If you have burned my book you must give me an equivalent.”

“With pleasure,” replied the bookbinder, and taking down a picture from the wall, he begged her acceptance of it. It represented a scene from Schiller’s “Song of the Bell,” a fair young woman, surrounded by her children, seated on the balcony of her house. As title to the picture were printed these lines: —

“The house spreadeth out,
And in it presides
The chaste gentle housewife,
The mother of children;
And ruleth metely
The household discreetly.”

*

Our bookbinder had a reverential admiration for all scholars, poets or artists, irrespective of race or creed. Awaiting the widow in her library one day his attention was attracted by an engraving representing Schiller at Carlsbad seated upon an ass. His eyes filled with tears at the sight. “A man like that,” he exclaimed, “riding upon an ass! While ordinary people like Baron Fay or Mr. de Mariassy ride about proudly on horses.”

Later on it occurred to him that Balaam too was mounted on an ass, and he derived a measure of consolation from the thought that Schiller was a prophet as well. Would it be venturesome to say that in Kalimann there was the stuff for poet or prophet?

In addition to his trade, our bookbinder carried on another pursuit which was quite lucrative in its way, and one universally well-established among all Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Kalimann was Cupid’s secretary: in other words, he wrote love-letters for those who could neither read nor write. The opportunity thus vouchsafed his native tendency toward sentiment helped not only to swell the hearts of his clients with gratitude, but also to swell his own slender income. Thus it was that the fire of his poetic genius was enkindled, and thus it was he became the Petrarch of Hort.

One day Gutel Wolfner, Mrs. Barkany’s cook, came to him with the request that he would write a letter for her to a friend at Gyöngös.

“Well, well, little one,” said the scribe, “so Love’s arrow has reached you at last!”

“Heaven preserve me!” cried the girl, “he is not named Love, but Mendel Sucher, and he has never drawn a bow in his life.”

Gutel now gave the bookbinder a general idea of the letter she wished written, and inquired the price.

“That will not depend upon the length of the epistle,” he replied, “but upon its quality.” Thereupon he read aloud to her his tariff.

1st. A friendly letter 10 kreutzers
2d. A kind and well intentioned letter 15
3d. A tender letter20
4th. A touching letter 30
5th. A letter that goes straight to the
heart½ florin

“Very good; a friendly letter will do well enough this time,” said the girl, as she deposited her ten kreutzers on the table.

“I will write a kind and well intentioned letter for you for the same price as a friendly one,” said Kalimann, gallantly.

Mendel Sucher received the missive the following day, and as his scholarship was as limited as Gutel’s, he forthwith sought out Saul Wahl, a lawyer’s clerk at Gyöngös, likewise a member of the same erotic profession as the bookbinder of Hort. Wahl read Kalimann’s letter to the smiling recipient with such pathos that Mendel was completely overcome. Placing twenty kreutzers on the table, the happy swain begged the clerk to write as finely turned a letter to Gutel as the one she had sent him.

Saul, who had at a glance recognized Kalimann’s calligraphy, said to himself: “It will go hard with me but I will show the bookbinder that they know how to write letters at Gyöngös, and can also quote from the classic authors.”

He at once wrote Gutel a missive so thickly interlarded with quotations from the Song of Solomon, from Goethe, Petöfi, Heine, and Chateaubriand that when Kalimann read the billet-doux to the blushing girl her head was quite turned.

The bookbinder himself scratched his head and muttered: “This Saul is a man of letters; his style is vigorous! Who would have thought it?”

The correspondence between Gutel and Mendel, or rather between Kalimann and Saul, flourished for some time. If Kalimann addressed Mendel as “my cherished friend,” my “turtle dove,” Saul on his side would intersperse throughout his letters such expressions as “your gazelle-like eyes,” “your fairy form,” “your crimson lips,” “your voice rivalling the music of the celestial spheres.”

Kalimann’s “friendly” letter was followed by those of the tender and touching variety, and finally Gutel decided upon sacrificing her half florin and sending one that “would go straight to the heart.” To make assurance doubly sure she supplemented her silver piece by a bottle of wine. Her amanuensis poured out a glass, emptied it at a draught, smacked his lips, and began to write. Suddenly, however, he stopped and turning to the girl said: “Do you know, Gutel, that wine of yours was a happy inspiration, but the great poet Hafiz was not alone inspired by the spirit of wine, he placed a great virtue upon the crimson lips of pretty girls.”

Gutel was not slow to understand.

“As I have given you a half florin and a bottle of wine,” she said, in a shamefaced way, wiping her mouth with the corner of her apron the while, “I see no reason why I should not add a touch of my lips as well.” So saying she gave the happy bookbinder a hearty kiss. The consequence of all this was that the pen flew over the paper, and when Kalimann read the letter for Gutel’s approval the tender-hearted girl burst into tears of emotion.

As for Mendel, when Saul read him this letter going “straight to the heart,” he could contain himself no longer; rushing from the house he flew to the factory where he worked, and asked his employer, Mr. Schonberg, to permit him to quit his service.

“What is the matter with you?” cried Schonberg. “Why do you wish to leave? Do you want more wages?”

“No, no, Mr. Schonberg, that is not the reason. But — but I can stay no longer here at Gyöngös, I must go to Hort.”

“To Hort? What is the reason of that?”

For reply the dazed fellow held out the letter for him to read. Schonberg glanced over it, and smiled. “This Kalimann,” he murmured, “is a deuce of a fellow. The world has lost a novelist in him. But let me see how I can arrange matters. Mendel,” he continued, turning to the open-mouthed lover, “you shall stay here, and you shall marry your Gutel. I will give you two or three rooms in the

factory for your house-keeping, and Mrs. Barkany will give the girl her trousseau. How does that strike you?"

Mendel beamed. He would have thrown himself on his employer's neck, but resisted the impulse, and, instead, brushed the back of his hand across his eyes. Schonberg gave him a day's holiday, and the happy fellow lost no time in making his way to Hort, and subsequently into the arms of his inamorata. Mrs. Barkany gave Gutel the trousseau, and the marriage took place at harvest-time.

At one end of the table, in the seat of honor next to the rabbi, sat the bookbinder of Hort. All had been his work, and, truth to tell, this was not the first happy couple he had been the means of bringing together.

When it was his turn to deliver a toast in honor of the bride and groom, he rose, filled his glass, and holding it in his hand declaimed from his favorite poet Schiller, and with an enthusiasm worthy the occasion: —

“Honor to women! round Life they are wreathing
Roses, the fragrance of Heaven sweet-breathing!”

II.

DAVID AND ABIGAIL.

DENMARK.

THE war was over. The postilion advanced through the little town with all the air of a conqueror; his proud bearing was imposing and the cheery good-will with which he blew his horn left none in doubt that he was a messenger of good tidings. Every one wanted to be the first to tell the great news. Men waved their hats in the streets and cried, "There is Peace!" Women called out from their windows and door-ways, "There is Peace!" On all sides sounded "Peace!" But in no part of the town did the tidings bring greater hope and rejoicing than in the narrow, dark street where the Jews lived their separate lives, — among the people and yet not of the people.

Late that afternoon, in a large room of one of the houses in this quarter sat an old woman, her fingers busy with needle and thread, her lips murmuring her evening prayers.²

Who in this neighborhood did not know good Rose Lilienkron? Lovers made her their confidante, married women brought her their troubles, while the unfortunate, needy, and suffering looked upon her as their ministering angel. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, the handle turned gently, and Rose, pushing her spectacles upon her forehead, perceived the head of a pretty young girl whose black eyes glanced brightly into the room.

"Peace has been proclaimed!" cried the girl.

"Peace!" ejaculated the old woman.

The pretty visitor entered, and, seating herself on the wooden stool at Rose's feet, looked up in the kindly face and said timidly: —

"You have received no letter?"

"No!"

The little one sighed.

"Do not worry, Abigail," continued Mother Rose, "because my David has not written. God will protect him. If he were ill or wounded we should know it."

"And —"

The girl could not finish; her head sank, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"If he has been killed one of his comrades would have written to us."

They were both silent. No sound disturbed the stillness but the wind beating against the windows and the purring of the cat, who had crept noiselessly into the room, and, curling herself up in the corner, began licking her paws.

"Mieze is adding some extra touches to her evening toilet," said Abigail Silberstern, or Adele as her parents preferred calling her.

"That means we shall have company," answered Rose.

Once again there was silence; but suddenly the old dog below in the yard began yelping and barking joyously, and presently heavy steps were heard upon the stairs.

"Who can that be, so late?" murmured Mother Rose.

She dared not give utterance to her thoughts, her hopes. Her hands trembled with fear and joy. A knock at the worm-eaten door, the dog pulled at his chain and barked again. The mother's heart gave a wild leap.

"David!" she cried, stretching out her arms.

The door opened slowly; a soldier stood upon the threshold, his cap upon his head, his cloak upon his shoulders.

“David!”

“Mother!”

In an instant the soldier was at his mother’s feet, and old Rose clasped him in her trembling arms, gazed into his face, kissed him, blessed him, and looked at him again as though to prove to herself that it was truly her boy, that this happiness of having him in her arms safe and sound was not all a dream.

The young girl stood by proud and happy, and as David stretched out his hand for hers, she exclaimed: —

“Ah, Mother Rose, life is beautiful after all!”

The soldier rose and, gazing lovingly into the girl’s eyes, clasped her to his breast.

“How sunburnt you are,” she cried, admiring her lover, “and how tall and strong! I am so small by your side.”

“It seems to me I have always heard that a wife should just come up to her husband’s heart,” answered David, with the love-light in his eyes.

“Will you have something to eat,” asked Rose, “or would you rather have a cup of hot tea?”

“Take off your old cloak,” said Abigail, and without waiting for him to obey her command she unfastened the “old cloak” and hung it on the nail by the fire, then turning to the soldier she gave a suppressed cry and stepped back in amazement.

Mother Rose, startled by her cry, rose, noticed her boy’s decoration, and placing her hands upon his shoulders exclaimed: “David, what great deed have you done? You should have written to us. The king, may God in heaven bless him, must have been well pleased with you to give you such a mark of his favor. This is a badge of bravery and honor.”

“Speak! Tell us what you have done!” cried Abigail.

“Nothing wonderful,” replied the young soldier; “nothing but my duty. When the enemy was assaulting the fortification at Düppel, the flag of our regiment was in danger of being taken. We saved it, four others and myself. That is all.”

“Ah, that was noble!” cried the girl.

“All the khille [Jewish community] will be proud of my David,” exclaimed his mother. Cautiously she touched the brilliant cross upon his breast with her wrinkled hand, then quickly withdrew it for fear she had been too bold.

The following day the wine merchant, Silberstern, his wife and daughter, our pretty Abigail, Mother Rose and David, all went together to synagogue. It was the Sabbath, and the entire little Jewish community had congregated in the venerable place of worship.

As David entered, the men lifted their eyes from their prayer-books for an instant, and in the gallery more than one pretty woman’s face was pressed against the railing that she too might catch a glimpse of the handsome soldier.

The synagogue was brilliantly lighted, and in Abigail’s eyes this illumination served the additional purpose of shining with dazzling effect upon her lover’s badge of honor.

The rabbi mounted the small platform; he had chosen his text and given careful preparation to his sermon, but when his glance fell upon the Jewish soldier decorated with the cross by the king himself, his enthusiasm mastered him, and putting aside his sermon he took for his text Solomon’s golden words: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver

and gold." He improvised; he spoke from the fulness of his heart, and never in his life had he spoken so well.

His final words uttered, the chanter began the hymn. He too surpassed himself, his trills were like a lark's, his tremolos like a nightingale's; he waved his arms, he moved his head to and fro, he gesticulated, he beat time like an artist who is conscious of the fact that his audience contains a personage of distinction.

When the time came to read the weekly portion of the Law, the first one of the congregation who was called up to the reading-desk was David.³

He had mounted the steps to receive the large roll of parchment upon which the five books of Moses are inscribed, when suddenly a sharp nasal voice exclaimed,—

"Can a Jew with the cross upon his breast be called to carry the Law?"

The owner of this voice was Dankmar Bernstein, who had at one time placed his aspirations upon winning Abigail, or her dowry more properly speaking, and who felt that the time had now come to avenge himself upon his fortunate rival.

David grew pale. "A good Jew," he said, "always has the right of being called to carry the Law. To be deprived of this right is a punishment and disgrace. Who would have the audacity to dispute the honor of a soldier who has fought for his country and his king?"

Several voices were heard in reply, but that of Bernstein's dominated.

"The Talmud prohibits all Jews who dwell among the Gentiles from adopting their dress and customs."

In the gallery, behind the railing, Mother Rose covered her face with her hands and wept; while Abigail stood proudly defiant as though to defend her betrothed.

Finally the schamos (the seneschal as it were of the synagogue) succeeded in establishing order and quiet, and the rabbi, turning toward Bernstein, and raising his arms, said with gentleness and dignity, —

"What is this that I hear? Can error so blind and mislead us that in our zeal for the service of God we presume to violate his temple!"

A murmur of approbation interrupted the old man.

"What meaning has the cross upon this man's breast to us?" he continued.

"Ah, my friend, this symbol, which formerly separated our ancestors from the Gentiles, and delivered us over to shame and persecution, covers the Jew of to-day with honor. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!"⁴

"Hallelujah!" intoned the chanter.

"Hallelujah!" repeated the congregation.

"Yes, praise ye the Lord, the King of all the earth; the righteous Judge of war and of peace, whose divine hand has exalted us, and who permits us to believe that this cross, this testimony of fidelity and fulfilled duty, may decorate the breast of the Jew as well as the Gentile! Ah, what a change in our destiny! Formerly the yellow badge of shame upon our back, to-day the cross upon our breast. Praise ye the Lord!"

The congregation repeated the solemn words; some raised their arms, others bent their heads and wept.

"It is true, Jews are prohibited from adopting the dress of the Gentile; but the Talmud permits them, if they have dealings with high personages of other religions, to adopt the strangers' mode of dress as well. Consequently this mark of honor should be regarded as an ornament sanctioned by the Talmud; moreover, this Christian symbol is by no means a Gentile one. In "Treatise Bacheroth,"⁵ book i. page 11, we read: 'In these days we can receive the oaths of those who are not Jews, because in these cases, even if the person who takes the oath adds the name of

another beside God, his thoughts are none the less centred upon the Creator of heaven and earth.'

"The Christian emblem is not necessarily heathen, and the Jew can be called to carry the Law with this emblem upon his breast; or rather, the cross upon the Jew's breast, it seems to me, is a distinction which elevates him, a glorification of the name of the Most High. Kiddusch-Haschem!"

Uttering these words, the old rabbi placed the rolls of the Law in the soldier's hands, and David began reading in a firm, clear voice.

When the service was over the old man turned again to Lilienkron, and said, —

"My son, you are an honor to this community and to the people of Israel who are scattered over the face of the globe. Let me bless you."

Raising his hands in benediction, he said: "The Lord bless and preserve thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen."

When David left the synagogue and stepped into the court-yard, his friends, young and old, surrounded him, and offered their congratulations. Zindel, the schachter (butcher), shook hands with him with great good-will, and carried away by his enthusiasm, exclaimed, in stentorian tones: "The king himself put it on his breast, the king himself, with his own hand!"

At the gate stood the schamos, surrounded by the children from the cheder (school), and as David approached, Mother Rose upon his arm, a hundred voices, in their childish treble, sang the air which he and his comrades had flung to the breeze upon the battle-fields of Oeversee and Duppel, — "Der tapfere Landsoldat" (The Brave Foot-soldier).

III.

GOOD NEWS.

GALICIA.

HERZ MACHAL was considered by the Chassidim (zealots) at Sadagoura, a prosteck.⁶ This did not mean that he acted contrary to the prescribed laws, but that he possessed one of those circumscribed minds which cannot grasp the things of this world, and which consequently remain forever in the shade. Nevertheless, the Chassidim⁷ had made him the object of their solicitude from the moment of his birth, and had done all in their power to insure his happiness here and hereafter.

Herz had scarcely been ushered into this world when the zadick,⁸ the wise and miracle-working rabbi of the Chassidim, whom heaven and hell obeys, presented the happy father with a document. The zadick's loulka (pipe) was at once filled with an ardor that was absolutely overwhelming; but there must be some outlet for the emotions of a man who holds in his hands a document destined to protect his newborn infant for the first eight days of its existence.

During this first week it is that Lillith, the beautiful fiend, surrounds the house with her band of four hundred and eighty impure spirits. The piece of parchment, upon which was inscribed the names of the three angels, Senoë, Sansenoë, and Sammangelef, was to be nailed upon the portals of the door, and would protect little Herz against this advance-guard of the infernal army.

Soon other demons arrive in swarms. Again the father hastens to the zadick, and this time returns with a number of small pieces of parchment carefully wrapped up in his red cotton handkerchief. Upon these pieces are written the names of the patriarchs and their wives, the prophets, the great talmudists and zadicks, and also various powerful passages from the holy Scriptures and the Talmud.

The question that now arises is how to place these talismans to the best advantage. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are put at the right of the child; Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel at his left; Moses and the Great Bescht (the founder of the Chassidim) are laid under the pillow; and the other little pieces of parchment are placed as sentinels before the chimney-piece, windows, keyholes, and small crevices of the wall.

Upon the door are inscribed the names of Jehoel, Michael, Sangsa, and the melamed (Moses's instructor), and underneath this passage from the Fifty-fifth Psalm: "And the Lord shall save me."

In spite of all this, it was impossible to convert little Herz into a cabalistic genius. In truth, it was with immense difficulty he learned to read Hebrew in the cheder (Hebrew school). Aleph and Beth⁹ presented themselves to his mind as two demons created for the sole purpose of tormenting him. He constantly confounded the two, and the melamed (teacher) absolutely wasted upon the child his inexhaustible supply of patience. In vain did his teacher place him before the sidour (prayer-book) and point out the Hebrew characters with the deutel (pointing stick); in vain did pretty Rebezin, the melamed's wife, promise the chidriungel (pupil) cakes and fruit; the chickens, strutting up and down in the school and cackling, interested him infinitely more than the hieroglyphics he was obliged to decipher.

One day the melamed said to him: "Listen, Herz; as soon as you have learned Aleph, Beth, an angel will throw you down a groschen from the ceiling."

This the bocher (little boy) understood. From that moment, instead of looking into his book, the boy's eyes were riveted upon the ceiling, his mouth agape, waiting for the expectant groschen. At last the melamed, driven to desperation, resorted to more powerful measures. Dipping his fingers into the large snuff-box on the table, he forced a large pinch up little Herz's nose, and pushed him under the table where were two other culprits undergoing a similar punishment. Each time that a frightful sneezing came up from the depths, the melamed exclaimed: "Your health!" while the whole cheder repeated with him, "Your health!"

There was no disputing the fact that Herz's mind was dull and slow. It took him an immense while to learn the alphabet. Finally, one day, the melamed declared that the bocher did not have a head adapted for study, and dismissed him from the school.

*

Thus it was that Herz entered his father's store, and thus it was that, the zadick withdrawing his powerful hand, he became a prosteck. True prosteck that he was, he took a wife without a marriage portion, had a dozen children, and, in spite of hard work and a head adapted for business, his life was a constant struggle against trouble and misfortune.

It mattered little to him that the Chassidim called him a chamer (ass) and schlemil (an awkward and unfortunate man) since he knew himself incapable of a single chibloul hasthem (offence against God or the laws). Was it his fault if the riech (devil) and the dalles (misery) made his home their meeting-place?

He lived with his family in a small house, fast falling to pieces, the crumbling walls upheld by beams. A large room had been divided in two by a chalk line, as two countries would be marked off upon a map. Upon one side of this line dwelt Herz with his wife Judith, his daughter Riffke, and his other children; upon the other side resided the tailor Sadouel Pietrouschka with his old mother, his son Gideon, and his father-in-law, the talmudist Reb Jascher.

Herz bore everything with patience: frontier skirmishes with Sadouel, the thick smoke circling about the room, the rain dripping through the roof, insufficient food, scanty clothing. Two matters alone disquieted him: one was that he could not find a husband for his bright, pretty Riffke; the other that she always looked so verschmuddelt (untidy). He would have liked nothing better than to have dressed her like a princess, or at least like the wife of a Polish gentleman.

Nothing, however, could affect Riffke's happy disposition. She sang all day long, for she could not work without singing, and naturally she was constantly at work. While she was mending her coarse linen on one side of the line, across the boundary sat Gideon upon his table, his legs crossed like a Pacha's, plying his needle indefatigably. The materials, however, upon which he bestowed his pains were superb silks, velvets, and Turkish fabrics, and with these he created his marvellous chefs-d'oeuvre of the dressmaker's art.

Little by little the young people began to exchange a few words; the words grew into sentences, and finally Gideon became as bright and merry as Riffke. When she would interrupt his song, he would begin telling anecdotes, relating as true all that he had read in the soiled volumes of the circulating library. One day it would be "The Count of Monte Cristo," or the "Captain's Daughter," another time "The Visionary."

Whenever he had finished a superb kazabaika (lady's cloak) or a royal mantle, he would ask Riffke to try on the marvellous piece of work, and then the various

members of the two families would pause from their labor to admire her, while even Reb Jascher himself would forget his Talmud for an instant and rest his eyes upon her pretty face.

*

“Do you know what you must do, Herz?” said Reb Jascher, suddenly, one night when all the others had gone to bed.

“What must I do?”

“You must try your fortune, and see if you cannot get a marriage portion for Riffke.”

“Is it my fault,” exclaimed Herz, “if misfortunes surround me on all sides? If there is a stupidity committed in Sadagoura the fault is invariably placed at my door. If any one does a wrong action, then again it is Herz Machal, that scoundrel, who is guilty. Why is it that I must always be the cock of Capore [scape-goat] for everybody?”

“You are right, Herz,” replied the old man; “and for that reason I am going to give you some good advice. This is the night of ‘Hoschana Raba’ when we can all try our fortunes. Get up; we will look for three numbers in the Talmud.”

Herz rose and lit a candle.

“Give me the book.”

Herz brought it, and Reb Jascher, without quitting his miserable couch, opened it with his eyes closed.

“Look at the page.”

“It is thirty-one.”

“Very well; write down thirty-one.” Again the old man opened the Talmud.

“And now?”

“Seven.”

“Write down seven. And this time?”

“Eighty-five.”

“Write eighty-five. Now you have three numbers, thirty-one, seven, and eighty-five. You must take chances in the lottery to-morrow, on these numbers, *secco terno* (*terne seuf*), and you must deposit ten florins.”

“But where am I to find ten florins?”

“You must borrow them, Herz. Borrowed money brings luck.”

The following day Herz Machal went to the country to deliver certain stuffs that had been ordered by Madame Bistonicka, and begged of her to advance him ten florins. With this sum he went to the Imperial lottery office and placed it upon the three numbers indicated in the Talmud; thence he went to the cemetery and prayed upon his father’s grave.

*

The following Sunday, just as the two families were spreading their respective tables for dinner, Reb Jascher solemnly entered the room, his sable-fur hat upon his head, his bearing as brave as a Cossack’s, his face beaming like a gingerbread sun.

“Bessoura towa [good news]!” he exclaimed. “Bessoura towa!”

“What has happened?” they all asked at once.

“What massel [happiness]! Let any one ever say again that Herz is a schlemil!”

“Come, let us hear. Out with it!”

“I am coming out with it. Well, then — but be seated, Herz, that will prevent you from falling down.”

Herz took a chair.

“Listen, Herz; bessoura towa! You have won the great prize! Herz, you have won 48,000 florins, Herz!”

Herz sat in his chair as though petrified.

“Listen, Herz, 48,000 florins.”

The first word that Herz uttered was “Riffke!” Then, turning toward his daughter, he exclaimed, “Now, my child, now you can have a husband! You have only to choose the one who pleases you.”

Rising, he slowly crossed the room, and turning his face to the wall, began praying and sobbing.

When all had somewhat recovered from their stupefaction, for a great joy is as overwhelming as a great sorrow, Herz said: “Before I can do anything I shall pay my masser [tithe]; after that Riffke can have her husband.”

“If you are going to pay your tithe,” said Reb Jascher; “it will be exactly 4800 florins, according to the law.”

“Very well! I will give 4800 florins to Sadouel Pietrouschka; it is better to help a good man than to give a trifling amount to a number of people without affording them any real assistance.”

Sadouel looked at Herz in dumb surprise; then, his eyes moist with unshed tears, he silently embraced him.

“Do not thank me,” said Herz; “I am doing all this for my own pleasure. And you, Riffke, have you perchance found a young fellow who would please you? Speak, my child; have you?”

“Well, then, I should like to have Gideon, — if he wants me, of course,” she stammered, with a blush.

Gideon smiled in an embarrassed way, and held out his hand.

“Tell me, Riffke,” he murmured in her ear: “all this, — is it a dream, or a sweet reality?”

IV.

RABBI ABDON.

RUSSIA.

THE sun had set. The mists of a gloomy winter's evening gradually enshrouded the roofs and towers of a small town lost, as it were, in the heart of central Russia, and surrounded by its marshes, steppes, and impenetrable forests.

A recent hurricane had heaped enormous drifts of snow in all directions, and imprisoned the people in their small wooden houses; but to those within doors the frost-flowers upon the narrow windows seemed to blossom into color in the last rays of the sun, and to recall the first blush of spring.

The soft, doubtful evening light finally faded away in its turn, and the gray dusk of twilight filled the large room in which sat Rabbi Abdon plunged in strange thoughts and memories of the thickly crowded past.

An old servant entered noiselessly, lit the lamps, and disappeared without intruding, as it were, upon the stillness of the room. The old rabbi did not stir. The flickering light seemed to transfigure all the sacred objects by which he was surrounded: the rolls of the Law, volumes of the Talmud bound in leather, the Sohar (book of light), and the Ilan (tree of life) hanging upon the wall. All these, however, the old man did not see. His dry, shrivelled body seemed dormant, lifeless; his wrinkled, parchment-like face had all the immobility of death. The eyes alone revealed the indwelling soul.

The question of life perplexed him. He asked himself why he still lived. His past had been pious and blameless; he had penetrated all the secrets of the Cabala.¹⁰ The beatitude of the just, that reward promised to those who consecrate themselves to that science revealed by God himself to Adam, awaited him. But here, on this earth, of what avail to him were his piety, his profound knowledge? He was alone, lost in a world which did not understand him, which he no longer understood, abandoned, with no loving hand to grasp, among people who approached him only with a sort of veneration and respectful fear.

Of what use to him, now that he was nearing the grave, were the doctrines — Gematria and Notarikon¹¹ — which had enabled him to decipher the secret meaning that God had hidden in the Holy Scriptures?

Of what use to him was it that, during the still watches of the night, he could faintly discern the source of light, of mind, and of life, — the most secret of all secret things?

Of what use to him was it that in man he could contemplate the microcosm as though he were gazing into a magic mirror; that he knew the ten sephirot,¹² and the four worlds? Of what use to him that the angels flitted to and fro under his roof, and that he had full power over spirits and demons?

He could exorcise Samaël and Ashmedai;¹³ he could command obedience from Lillith, the beautiful devil,¹⁴ — but he was powerless to combat these shades that now rose and encompassed him, he could not silence the voices that broke upon the silence of this gloomy winter's night.

Yes, he was alone, alone with his buried treasures; and yet it had not been always thus. He had had a wife — pure, beautiful, modest, fondly loved — and a son. Where was this son? Was he still numbered among the living, or had he joined his mother in the realms above?

A sweet, charming creature was this little woman who used to glide into his room when he was buried in his folios. She was as graceful and as timid as a young roe; and yet it was seldom that her husband was conscious of the smile she had for him, seldom even that he noticed her presence. Her grace, her low voice, her musical laugh, were unnoticed, unheard, in the gloomy room where this little human mind was bent only upon wresting open the secrets of paradise and hell.

Yet he had loved her well, this gentle wife whom he had left alone with her poor, yearning heart. She faded and drooped like a flower shut out from light and air, and at last the day came when, a smile for him still resting upon her cold lips, she slept the sleep that knows no waking.

He had lost her forever.

Now he would have given all he possessed to kiss once more the velvet slipper upon her slender foot, to hear again her light step across the cheerless, empty room.

And his son? Perhaps he was still living, but if so he was very far away, very far.

In this son his pride had been centred; the old rabbi had not only intended that the boy should inherit his name and his worldly goods, but had determined that he should possess a far more precious legacy, a sacred one, — his wisdom, his science, and all the mysteries which the magic of the Cabala had unveiled to him. This ungrateful son had rejected all for a simple girl, some green trees, and a field of golden corn.

*

It was decided that little Simon should become a rabbi, but he could not endure the confinement of the house. When the first ray of the sun fell upon the large calf-skin volume before which he was seated, it seemed to him that a thread of gold, woven by fairy fingers, was luring him out of doors; and when his feet had touched this black earth which our Russian peasant loves with such tenderness, the little Jewish boy, like the “moujik,” felt Nature’s soft caress upon his cheeks, and his heart rejoiced in this faithful, constant friend who alone, of all our friends, returns our cares and services a hundred-fold. In the whispering blades of grass, and in the rustling leaves, he heard the voice of the eternal Mother.

“I know a book much more beautiful than this,” he said one day to his father, as he pointed to the Talmud. “The book that I mean is written by God himself; in it you can see the green forest, the sun, moon, and stars.”

When the peasants were at work he would follow their ploughs at a distance; and when at harvest-time he heard the sound of the scythes, he would hide behind the sheaves of wheat to watch the mowers.

Rabbi Abdon had betrothed him, when a mere child, to the daughter of Johnathan Ben Levis of Amsterdam, a wealthy merchant whose family was as distinguished as his own, and whose ships traversed the seas from one quarter of the globe to the other; but when Simon had reached man’s estate his heart belonged to another.

Darka Barilef was the name of the poor girl who had stolen his heart. Her parents possessed nothing but a miserable inn on the outskirts of the town and a small piece of land adjoining it.

Here it was that Simon had first met Darka, a robust, pretty girl with the figure of a Judith and the winning face of a Ruth.

It happened that he had wandered into the fields with his “Schne Luchot-Haberith”¹⁵ that he might unravel the mysteries of the Cabala undisturbed by the

sights and sounds of the town. Glancing up from the volume he suddenly noticed the girl ploughing behind a sorry-looking horse. He threw the precious book aside, and seizing the plough, guided it with a firm though unpractised hand. The work over, the young people sat down at one end of the field and began talking in a quiet matter-of-fact fashion, plucking wayside flowers the while, and shaping them into a wreath. Between them there blossomed, invisibly, a tender mysterious flower, — the flower of love.

The old rabbi was thinking of the day when the unfortunate interview had taken place between himself and his son. Once more he saw the boy standing before him, his eyes flashing, his cheeks aflame, and each of the hard, bitter words that fell from his lips in the heat of his anger had engraved itself indelibly upon the old man's memory. Now, in this hour of his oppression and solitude, he could hear again his son's final words, spoken calmly and respectfully, and yet with the courage and enthusiasm of a prophet: "The Jew," exclaimed the young man, "is not responsible for the unhappy condition of affairs which circumscribes his race to-day in the countries of the East. Restricted by his persecutors to the dark, narrow streets of the Ghetto, excluded from all other occupations, he has been forced to devote himself exclusively to commerce; but he is responsible if he prolongs this second Babylonian captivity. The chains have broken, barriers have fallen away. Those who desire the welfare of their race, who wish to assert the superiority of their faith, must flee these dismal corners where the light of a capricious and sterile science glimmers, where the fitful spirit of commerce holds sway. To-day the field of intellectual work is open to us, and all other avenues of industry invite our attention. At Odessa, some enlightened Jews have put themselves at the head of a movement whose aim is to promote agriculture among their people, to help them lead that healthful life which of old, in the Promised Land, made their happiness and prosperity. I do not wish to pass my life poring over musty volumes. I do not wish to traffic and barter in some stifling little shop; I have need of air, I have need of light, and, like Boaz, I will cultivate my field myself."

The father remained deaf to his entreaties, to his arguments; and when Simon persisted in his decision a curse rose to the old man's lips, which, thanks be to God, remained unuttered.

That same night Simon left the town, taking Darka with him.

From that day, and ten years had passed since then, nothing had ever been heard of him.

*

The fog thickened; the lamps burned less brightly; the rabbi's eyes seemed closed. He buried his face in his hands, and burning tears coursed down his hollow cheeks. At that moment the door opened softly, a step was heard, a light and timid step which reminded him of his wife's, and he felt himself pulled by the sleeve. The touch was a diffident one at first, but finally it grew bolder and more resolute. The rabbi let his hands fall and lifted his head. Was he still seeing visions, or was this a joyous reality? Before him stood a handsome boy. Was it Simon? No, it must be his son; and yet it was Simon as he was but a few years ago when the old man had had so much trouble to interest him in the Talmud and the Cabala.

Slowly, fearful that this lovely image would vanish like the fog, like the phantoms that had thronged the chamber, Rabbi Abdon raised his hand and touched the lad. No! It was not a "schemen" (spirit). The boy lived. Drawing him to his heart, and raising his arms in benediction, the old man solemnly pronounced

the name of Jehovah, the God of Abraham and Jacob. Then tears came to his relief.

And now Simon entered through the opened door and threw himself at his father's feet. Silently, with a rapturous expression, the rabbi pressed the prodigal son to his breast, and, looking up, beheld Darka in the doorway, holding one little girl by the hand, clasping another in her arm.

When Simon rose his father looked at him in astonishment. Was this his son, this tall, sturdy young fellow in high boots, red shirt, and long gray coat? And his wife! How pretty she was in her embroidered sheep's-skin and Russian peasant head-dress!

"These are your children?" were the first words that fell from the rabbi's lips.

"Yes, father; Simon, here, is the eldest; he is old enough now to help me in the field, and he leads the horses when I plough, but he knows, too, how to read the Law and the Talmud."

"You have bought land? With what, pray?" exclaimed the rabbi.

"With the fruit of our labor," replied Simon. "We have ploughed, sown, harvested, and saved, and to-day we are well-to-do peasants."

"And it is not hard work for you to till the fields yourself; can you endure this rough labor?"

"Father, I have been a soldier!" cried Simon, proudly. "I have fought against the Turks in Asia, and, simple grenadier as I was, I was present when we Russians made our glorious assault upon the fortress of Kars."

"We have come to take you home with us," said Darka, with a happy smile.

"Yes, grandfather," said the boy, who was standing between the old man's knees, "I have built a little arbor for you in front of the house, and we can read there the hagadoths [stories] together. Will you come?"

"Of course I will come," cried the old man, — "of course I will come, my little Simon."

*

Rabbi Abdon lives now with his son, and his grandchildren are the joy of his old age.

The rolls of the Law, the Talmud, the Sohar, and the Ilan have travelled with him; his favorite nook is the arbor which little Simon had built for him in the front of the house; but at harvest-time the boy makes a hut for his grandfather with sheaves of wheat, and here it is that the old man sits, the blue sky overhead, grasses and flowers swaying in the breeze about him, and listens to the sound of the scythes and the singing of the reapers.

Like a true patriarch, with his Talmud on his lap, he sits in the midst of God's gifts and blesses him for his abundant kindness.

THE BLESSING OF THE NEW MOON.

TURKEY.

AT one corner of a dark, narrow street in the old quarter of Belgrade, a section of the city which is at one and the same time a bazaar, a Mohammedan Paradise, and a resort of criminals, there is a small cafe kept by an Italian, — Madame Peregrini.

In this dubious establishment a young man was seated one evening, reading a Vienna paper and paying no regard to the various other occupants of the room, all of whom were engaged with their own affairs. Some gypsies at the further end of the cafe were playing wild, plaintive melodies on their violins, while their black-eyed women beat time upon tambourines and danced with melancholy grace.

Suddenly Madame Peregrini placed a hand upon the young man's shoulder, and bending her head to his ear, said softly: —

“You are unhappy, Mr. Bukarest. What is the matter?”

“I am going to leave Belgrade,” he replied.

“Because you cannot marry the fine lady with whom you are in love?”

Naome Bukarest shrugged his shoulders. “I have an uncle in Constantinople; he is a merchant there. I am going to see him. Can you tell me the cheapest way of getting there?”

“You have hit upon a lucky time,” answered the woman. “There is a lady here who has noticed you on several occasions; she is deeply interested in you. Her father is a captain, and no doubt will take you on his vessel. Come with me.”

The hostess led the handsome young Israelite into a small adjoining room, whose sole piece of furniture consisted of a Turkish divan. Upon this divan was stretched a pretty young woman in an odd costume, partly Oriental, partly Hungarian. She received the stranger with a coquettish smile, and listened attentively to Madame Peregrini's narration of the matter at hand. Then mine hostess left the room, and Varvasa — for this was the name of the pretty creature — invited Naome to take a seat beside her. The conversation soon grew bright and animated, and the young man fell a willing victim to the charm of the girl's presence. It seemed as though he were under the influence of opium, and that all sorts of graceful and fantastic spirits hovered around him.

It was soon arranged that he should leave with Varvasa and her father, Captain Trifoniades, for the “Golden Horn.” The girl accepted Naome's escort upon leaving the cafe, and at the corner of the house turned abruptly into a dark side-street; there, in the heavy shadow of the houses, she threw her arms about the young man's neck and clasped him in a close embrace.

*

The following evening the captain met Naome by appointment at the cafe, and came to terms with him regarding the expense of the voyage. The price was moderate, so moderate that Naome felt he would still have a comfortable little sum left after his passage had been paid. The captain's daughter was present as well; but this time she had with her three pretty young girls, — one a Servian, the other two Hungarians, — whom she had promised to place in good situations at Constantinople: one was to enter a dressmaker's establishment, the other to be cashier in a cafe, the third lady's maid to an Austrian countess.

“You see, my friend,” said Varvasa, turning to Naome, “you are going to travel in pleasant company. I am almost afraid you will be unfaithful to me.”

The color flew to Naome’s face, and Varvasa gave him a light tap upon the shoulder, as though to say: “I am quite sure that I can count upon your absolute devotion.”

Two days later the little company boarded Captain Trifoniades’ vessel, and began their voyage down the Danube. Varvasa devoted much of her time to Naome; she permitted him a thousand little familiarities which gave unmistakable signs of her favor, and completed his inthralment by the dark witchery of her eyes, and the soft, warm pressure of her little hand.

The evening had closed in upon them by the time they had cleared the mouth of the river. At midnight another vessel approached, the captains exchanged signals, and soon the two boats were touching one another. The Greek ordered Naome and the three girls to step over to the other vessel.

“And why, pray?” asked Naome, in surprise. “What does all this mean?”

“Come, we have not time for explanations,” said Varvasa, in a tone of authority.

She herself crossed first on the improvised bridge, and the others followed.

The Greek sailed on, and a strange feeling of uneasiness oppressed Naome. Varvasa beckoned him to follow her into the cabin, though truly the apartment seemed less like a cabin than a harem, with its Turkish divans, Persian rugs, and panther skins.

Throwing herself upon the gold-embroidered cushions, and looking at her captive with an ironical smile, the girl said quietly, “Now you are mine.”

At that moment the portière was drawn aside, and a handsome, powerful Armenian entered. Placing his hands upon his hips he laughed softly, and then gave a low whistle, whereupon two negroes stepped into the cabin, seized Naome, threw him to the ground, and bound him.

“You have done well,” said the Armenian, turning to Varvasa. “The girls are young and pretty, and will ornament the richest harems. But what are you going to do with this fellow?” he added, pointing to Naome.

“We will sell him in Asia Minor. White slaves are a rarity; we can easily find a purchaser for him.”

The negroes picked up the poor captive as they would a bale, and carrying him outside, threw him in a dark corner among piles of ropes and various casks.

“Where am I?” asked Naome of one of the sailors passing by, “and to whom does this cursed ship belong?”

“Our master’s name is Sahag; he sells Armenian slaves.”

“And Varvasa?”

“Is his wife. She is as wily as a serpent; it would be hard to find her equal for catching the game. You are not the first whom she has handed over to her husband; she knows how to deal with human merchandise, I tell you, and it would take the Devil himself to outwit her in the trade.”

Naome asked no more questions; with a sigh of despair he pressed his burning forehead against the damp rigging of the boat.

*

Sahag ran his vessel into one of the small harbors on the Asia Minor coast. The four victims were gagged, thrown into bags, placed with other merchandise upon a wagon, and driven off at a rapid pace. Upon reaching the high-walled courtyard of

the Armenian's house, the prisoners were released from the bags and led into the presence of Sahag and his wife.

"My dear little friends," said Varvasa to the girls, who stood in fear and trembling before her, "a great happiness awaits you. You will soon be surrounded by luxury and riches, but you cannot accept this good fortune until you have passed through a novitiate. I will take the trouble of teaching you the art of pleasing your future master, and of being able to keep his affections.

"And you," she continued in an ironical tone, turning to Naome, "the first things that you must learn will be obedience and submission, so let me give you some good advice. Resign yourself to your fate. You will find an excellent master in Sahag; but if you are refractory —"

"Ah, in that case," added the Armenian, who had just entered, "I know of certain means which have proved efficacious on other occasions."

So saying, he seized a large whip and made it whistle through the air with such force that his pretty wife broke out into a loud, brutal laugh.

The prisoner made no reply, lowered his head, and yielded himself to their mercy.

Sahag employed him at various work in the house and gardens, Naome proving himself capable and willing. In a month's time the Armenian was sufficiently well satisfied with his docility to offer him for sale to a rich widow who was desirous of purchasing a slave.

Naome cast a timid glance upon his possible owner; she was a graceful, slender woman of medium height, enveloped in a blue cloak embroidered in gold, and he noticed, in spite of her thick veil, that the dark eyes examined him attentively. "I am offering you a perfect jewel," said Sahag, touching Naome upon the shoulder; "young, strong, intelligent, good-tempered, and of excellent family. You will find him perfection, Zamira Ben Oporto, and I warrant you would much prefer having such a face as this before you than that of a repulsive negro."

Zamira made no reply, contenting herself by making a careful examination of the merchandise offered. She inspected his teeth, his muscles, his arms, very much as she would have examined a young horse in whom she did not propose being deceived, and finally giving him two vigorous blows upon the chest she nodded acquiescently and began bargaining with Sahag. The discussion consumed considerable time, but at last the price was agreed upon, the widow paid for the new slave, and an hour later he was in her house.

Zamira was the widow of a wealthy merchant. She carried on an extensive business with the Indies, dealing in Eastern stuffs, slippers, jewels, pipes, and arms, and her three merchant ships plying the Black and Mediterranean Seas brought her in a large income.

At first she was annoyed that Naome understood so little Arabian. She had wished to employ him as a salesman, and was obliged instead to place him among the porters who unloaded the goods and carried them into the warehouses. Soon, however, another feeling awoke in the pretty widow's breast; she discovered that she was interested in her new slave, that he pleased her more day by day, that he intruded upon her thoughts in spite of herself, and feeling that these emotions were unworthy of her she grew angry and exasperated against this unconscious enemy of her peace.

And Naome? Once only had the ample veil floated back and revealed the noble, spiritual face, once only had the heavy Turkish cloak been laid aside and his eyes had rested for a brief moment upon her graceful, supple figure, but from that moment he was hers by that divine right which knows neither command nor

obedience. Her presence filled his soul by day, and by night the thought of her controlled and possessed him.

*

One day Zamira summoned him and announced that henceforth he should be one of her personal slaves. He gazed upon the lovely creature as she rested luxuriously against the silken cushions. Truly she was fair to look upon. Her long Persian cloak, studded in silver, and lined with ermine, revealed the graceful outlines of her figure, and her unhappy servant felt his whole body thrill as with an electric shock as he listened in respectful silence to her command.

Letting her dark, piercing eyes linger upon him for an instant, Zamira ordered him to put on her slippers, and then bade him bring her coffee.

Naome obeyed, but in his trepidation he stumbled upon the rug and upset the precious mocha.

“Stupid!” cried Zamira, in a rage. “I shall have to give you a lesson!”

She rose, seized the whip which was always near at hand for such emergencies, and despite Naome’s falling on his knees before her, and crossing his arms in submission, she let the lash whistle through the air and gave him several cuts across the back, then throwing her instrument of torture behind her, she ordered the culprit to quit the room.

When he had gone she threw herself upon the divan, bit her nails in the wild heat of her anger, and finally, yielding to the feeling of shame that overwhelmed her, reproached herself bitterly and burst into a flood of tears.

*

But Naome was kissing the stripe upon his arm where his mistress’s lash had fallen.

That same evening the new moon hung like a glorious jewel in the sky, and Zamira, attracted by the beauty of the night, had thrown her veil about her and wandered in the garden unattended. The soft, consoling light of the moon shone for our poor captive as well, and, unconsciously almost, he found himself seated under a large olive-tree near the house. The greensward about him was decked with flowers, a grove of orange and lemon trees stretched down toward the sea, whose waves were silvered in the moonlight, and the sweet breath of the night, laden with heavy fragrance, soothed and comforted him.

Suddenly one of the myths of the Talmud recurred to him: —

“When God had created the two celestial lights and assigned them their place in the heavens, the moon approached him and said: —

“‘O Lord, it is not well that two of thy servants should be of the same rank; make me I pray thee larger and more brilliant than the sun.’

“And the Lord was angered and said: ‘Thou art right; but because thou hast desired to be raised above thy companion, therefore shalt thou be set beneath him, and from this time forth shalt thou be smaller than he, and thy light less powerful.’

“The moon grew pale, and sorrowfully departed from the presence of the Creator.

“Then God pitied her, and gave her the stars for companions.”

The blessing of the new moon is a religious observance which the pious Jew never neglects, and here, far from his home and kindred, a captive and stranger in a

strange land, Naome felt more imperatively than ever the need of performing this ceremony.

Crossing the garden, Zamira was struck with amazement at seeing her slave standing a few paces before her, his face turned toward the moon. She stepped back noiselessly, and, standing in the shadow of some cypress-trees, listened to him as he pronounced a benediction which fell upon her ears with sweet and tender association:

“Blessed be thou, O God, who renewest the moon!”

Extending his arms three times toward the heavenly orb, he exclaimed: —

“As I stretch out my arms toward thee without being able to touch thee, so may my enemies remain far from me!”

Then waving the ends of his caftan, he added:

“As I shake the dust from off me, so may I scatter all evil spirits and those who hate me!”

Zamira stepped suddenly from out the shadows.

With a cry of dismay Naome threw himself at her feet.

“You are an Israelite!” exclaimed his mistress, and, as he ventured no reply, she continued: “Why did you not tell me this? I, too, am a Jewess; but, living among Mohammedans and Armenians, I have been forced to conceal my religion. Pardon what I have done to you. My reparation will be to give you your liberty. You shall return to your country by the first vessel that sails.”

“No, my mistress, that punishment would be more cruel than the lash. Let me remain here. I ask nothing more than to be your slave. Place your foot upon my neck, and let me kiss it each time that it touches me.”

Zamira gazed at him in amazement: “You do not detest me?” she asked in strange embarrassment.

“Why should I detest you?”

A glad light came into her eyes, and with a proud movement of her head, she said: “You may remain here, but not as my servant. That is impossible.”

“Your will is mine,” he replied, “all I ask of you is that you will not send me away.”

The pretty widow laughed softly: “Can you imagine why I struck you?” she asked with a mischievous glance. “Because I was angry at myself. I was ashamed of loving my slave, a man who was not of my faith, to whom I could never give my hand.”

“Zamira! Is it possible!” murmured Naome.

For all reply she threw her arms around his neck and pressed her lips to his.

VI.

THE FEAST OF THE ELECT.

NORTHERN GERMANY.

ADOLPHE TIGERSON was the possen-reisser (the official buffoon) of the Jewish community of Lindenberg. He was celebrated in Israel, that is as celebrated as it was possible to be in a small town perched on the water's edge in an obscure corner of Germany.

Tigerson was a born comedian. Everything about him was comic: his lean body, his long bandy-legs, his sallow face with india-rubber adaptabilities, his large crooked nose, piercing black eyes, gait, movements, manner of speech. And yet the underlying traits of his character were more serious than those possessed by such as affect the splenetic. Perhaps he was one of those philosophers in disguise who from their Olympian height see but the pitiful absurdities of mankind. At all events he combined certain characteristics of Shakespeare's fools and Cervantes' squire.

His talents were multifold. He was at one and the same time juggler, singer, actor, acrobat, musician, draughtsman, and poet. Let him but begin to personate one of the bystanders, draw a caricature, improvise a satire or a song, and the merriment would have no bounds. He was a general favorite, and the young people adored him. But to see Tigerson in all his glory one had to be present at a marriage feast in Lindenberg. All his other efforts were feeble compared to those he displayed on these convivial occasions; for does not the Talmud say: "He who rejoices the heart of the groom and the bride does as much as though he had rebuilt one of the ruins of Jerusalem"?

His own marriage was brought about in a way which did credit to his native astuteness.

There was a bright, pretty, young girl in the town, named Fischele Lionhead. She would have been a very paragon of beauty were it not for her thinness, which was absolutely alarming. It chanced that one day this good soul made the remark that a man as ridiculous as Adolphe Tigerson would never be able to find a wife.

"Who said that?" asked the possenreisser, when this cruel speech was repeated to him.

"Fischele Lionhead."

"Very well. She will be my wife."

A short time after this the festival of Purim (Jewish carnival) was celebrated. Fischele was one of the guests at her uncle's, the wealthy merchant Marderhead, and when the young folk began to grow merry, Tigerson appeared upon the scene; for what would Purim be without the possenreisser?

He was disguised as a Turk, and had supplemented his natural beauty by an enormous false nose, large spectacles, and red wig. A pike, prepared by Mrs. Marderhead, after the fashion of the leviathan to be eaten by the elect in Paradise,¹⁶ offered our buffoon the opportunity of improvising some doggerel, — a pastime to which he was especially addicted. After having dealt his jests and epigrams promiscuously and individually, he turned to Fischele, and making one of his comic faces, he recited a quatrain wherein he made a most cruel allusion to the poor girl's cadaverous appearance. Blushing with shame and confusion, she ran from the room, while the merry-makers burst into noisy laughter.

Tigerson was avenged; but when he left the house, and discovered Fischele weeping in a dark corner of the passage, he was filled with remorse, and wished his unlucky quatrain at the bottom of the sea.

*

The possenreisser allowed several weeks to pass before he presented himself at Lionhead's door. Catching a glimpse of a light dress behind the gooseberry bushes, he stepped cautiously into the garden, and found Fischele in the arbor, a book in her lap, her knitting in hand.

She gave him a furious look, fastening her eyes upon him like a cat who is ready to spring, then went on quietly with her knitting.

"Ah, well; this is a promising beginning," said he. "So you do not make fun of me any longer?"

"Begone!" cried Fischele. "You are a hateful man. If I cannot get a husband, you are the only one to blame."

"You will get one," replied Tigerson. "But, as you have remarked just now with a great deal of truth, no one will marry you in this district — except me."

"You have the audacity to tell me such a thing to my face?"

"Assuredly. But I, Fischele, I will marry you."

The girl looked at him for a moment, speechless; then, the absurdity of the situation overcoming her, she burst into a hearty laugh.

"You wish to marry me? No! Truly, this is too funny!"

Tigerson, with perfect sangfroid, took a seat near her on the bench, and tried to seize her hand, which she withdrew and hid in her lap.

"Listen," he said softly, "we neither of us now have any just cause to reproach the other. I have been made ridiculous, you have been made ridiculous, the harmony is complete. A tiger and a lion, what more perfect union could be attempted? Who would think of harnessing a peacock and a goose together? — but two ferocious animals like ourselves, ah, there is a magnificent team for you!"

The girl turned her back upon him, and put her handkerchief to her face to hide her laughter.

"You are still angry at me?"

She made no reply; but he finally succeeded in capturing her little hand, and pressing a tender kiss upon it.

"But if I were your wife you would be making me laugh all the time!"

"Well, that would be far better than making you cry."

"And —"

"And what? My darling Fischele, my treasure, my pearl!"

"You do not like thin women."

"Ah, that is the least of my troubles. Master Cupid will soon cure you of that shortcoming."

"And you truly want me, in spite of everything?"

"In spite of everything."

"Well, then, I will have you."

The possenreisser clapped his hands at the conquest, and, drawing the girl's head toward him, kissed her.

The following autumn the marriage took place.

Every one wished them joy and happiness, but the unspoken thought was: "What is going to become of this couple? He a fool, and she a simpleton! For no one but a fool would have married Tigerson."

What became of the couple? They were the happiest in all Lindenberg, — within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. One fine day a little possenreisser made his appearance upon the scene, endowed with a vigorous pair of lungs, and the capability of out-rivalling his father in facial expression. From that time Fischele's thinness disappeared as by a magic wand; she became fairly radiant with the bloom of health, and her plump figure and pretty face made more than one envy "that ridiculous Tigerson."

They lived like two turtle-doves. If there were any quarrels in the little town, they did not take place in the possenreisser's family; and as for curtain lectures, — the inevitable concomitants of all well regulated households, — they were surely an unknown quantity in the sum of the Tigersons' happiness.

"How is it," said Moritz Weintraub, one evening, "that this fool's wife never scolds him? He always stays at the tavern longer than we do, and yet you never hear of a quarrel at their house!"

The cause of it was this: One night — the honey-moon was over — the possenreisser returned from the tavern at a late hour.

The young wife had gone to bed. Tigerson hurried in quite out of breath, crying: "Quick, quick, Fischele, get up, hurry!"

"What is the matter?" she asked while her husband put on her little slippers for her; "is there a fire?"

"No, no, but make haste!"

She hurriedly slipped into her blue dressing-gown, which her husband held ready for her.

"Good!" said he. "Now put on that little cap that is so becoming."

She smiled and twisted about her head the pretty cap with red ribbons.

"Ah, you are pretty enough to eat!" cried the possenreisser. "What fellow in this town has a wife to compare to you? Adolphe Tigerson, you are a lucky dog! Well, now, the representation begins."

He got down on his knees before her, and, clasping his hands, said in a contrite voice: "Fischele, give me a slap in the face."

"Why?"

"Because I have committed an unpardonable stupidity."

"What have you done?"

"Have I not stayed too long at the tavern? And when a fellow has a wife as lovely as you at home, can he make a greater fool of himself than by staying away?" Fischele began to laugh. How could she possibly be angry at him?

"Come, I insist upon it."

She gave him a slap, laughing as she did so.

"Very good; and now another."

She gave him the second.

"But this is no punishment at all," he cried. "Your plump little hand gives me a caress not a blow. I asked you to dress in your prettiest, my love, so as to lessen the pain; but I see it was a superfluous precaution. Whatever such a woman as you may do, she cannot help adding to her husband's happiness."

He kissed her little hand, and she, in her joy at his admiration, quite forgot the reproaches she had prepared for him.

And thus it was that every time Tigerson had a burden on his conscience, he would say to his wife, —

“Please, Fischele, give me a slap in the face.”

She would give him the slap, laugh, and think no more of his offence, even when she had just cause to be angry.

*

Yes, theirs was a happy, fun-loving household. The possenreisser played the buffoon before his wife with as great gusto as though he had all the wits of the town for audience. She it was who enjoyed the first fruits of his improvisations and witticisms.

One evening the good wife had prepared nothing for supper but beans. Of this delicacy Tigerson was not particularly fond, and by way of compensation he fortified himself with a small glass of brandy. Drawing up his chair before the smoking dish, he begged Fischele to set the bottle of brandy on the table, and, pouring out a glass, said: “Now, Adolphe, if you eat these beans you can have a large glass of brandy.” When he had consumed the larger half he stimulated his flagging appetite with: “My dear Adolphe, if you eat some more of these beans you can have a small glass of brandy.” He continued the attack, and when his plate was nearly emptied, encouraged himself with: “Finish these beans, Adolphe, and you shall have a thimble-full of brandy.”

One last supreme effort and the beans had disappeared.

“Idiot!” he cried, rubbing his stomach, “now you have not the least chance of getting any more brandy. Imbecile! How could you have been so stupid as to eat all the beans?”

On another occasion Fischele had for her Friday evening supper a kugel (a Sabbath dish) which she had carried to the baker’s to have roasted. Small as was the modest kugel when she had taken it to the baker’s, when she returned with it, it was much larger and emitted a delicious odor.

“Our kugel has been changed,” said the husband, as he drew up to the table.

“What difference does that make?” responded Fischele. “I met that rich Moritz Weintraub’s cook at the baker’s. It won’t hurt him to eat our little kugel for once.”

“You are right,” said the possenreisser, with a sigh.

At that moment there was a knock at the door. A schnorrer (beggar) entered and asked for something to eat and drink. “Here, my friend,” said Tigerson, “come, draw up a chair and eat with us.” As he spoke, the hospitable host helped the astonished guest to the first piece of the kugel.

Scarcely had the beggar thanked them, and taken his departure, when Fischele said dryly: “You have not asked for your slap in the face to-day.”

“And why, pray?”

“For having served the beggar before any one else.”

“Oh, that was done with premeditation. When Weintraub sees our little kugel on his well-spread table, there is no doubt about it he will get red in the face with anger, and cry at the top of his lungs: ‘May he who first tastes of my kugel choke with it.’ So, my dear, that is the reason why I helped the schnorrer before you.”

Fischele was satisfied with the explanation, and laughed as she put away the remains of the delicacy.

Tigerson consumed so much time in dressing and undressing that his wife’s patience was sorely tried, and she made the suggestion to him one morning, that if he would arrange his clothes in order at night he would not have so much trouble in finding them in the morning.

“A happy thought,” responded the possenreisser.

That night when retiring he took pen, ink, and paper, and set down in its order each article of clothing as he laid it aside.

1st. Hat upon the head; 2d. Great-coat in the closet; 3d. Coat also in the closet; 4th. Waistcoat on the chair; 5th. Trousers on the nail on the door; 6th. Boots under the bed; 7th. Stockings under the pillow; 8th. Shirt at the foot of the bedstead; 9th. Cravat on picture over the bed; 10th. Adolphe Tigerson in the bed.

When Fischele summoned her lazy lord from the realm of dreams next morning, he said: "Now, my love, now you will see how smoothly things will go." Consulting his memorandum he began with number one, first putting on his hat, then his great-coat, then his coat, vest, shirt, until coming to number ten he exclaimed: "Where is number ten, where is Adolphe Tigerson? Here I have put down 'in the bed;' where can Adolphe Tigerson be?" and he looked about in corners and cupboards to the great delight of his good wife, who laughed till the tears ran down her pretty cheeks.

*

One evening when the worthies of the town were assembled around the tavern stove, the possenreisser announced that he would have on exhibition the following day a horse with as many eyes as there were days in the year.

It goes without saying that Lindenberg arrived *en masse* at Tigerson's door the next morning to see this wonder of wonders, and that the ten pfennigs admittance fee was paid with alacrity. Finally, the possenreisser entered the yard leading his horse with a solemnity worthy the occasion.

"This beast has two eyes like any other," cried Weintraub.

"I said as many eyes as there were days in the year," replied Tigerson, with dignity. "Is not today the second of January?"

One cold, foggy, autumn morning, our jester was obliged to go to the neighboring town, and Fischele, with wifely solicitude, insisted upon his wrapping himself up in his heavy fur coat. He had gone but a short distance when the sun pierced the fog and shone with such ardor that poor Tigerson panted and perspired under the weight of his coat. Stopping at a tavern he fell in with Nathan Formstecher, the grocer, who was journeying the same road as himself. They walked on together for some little time, when suddenly the possenreisser said: "Nathan, could you lend me five thalers?"

"I only lend when I can get security," answered Nathan.

"Of course, of course," replied Tigerson, who had counted on this proviso; "here is my overcoat; take this for security until I return your five thalers."

"That is satisfactory," said his companion, who carefully extracted the silver pieces from his pocket, counted them out to Tigerson, and received the coat in exchange. Now, it was Nathan's turn to sweat and groan, while the possenreisser walked beside his unsuspecting friend as gay and fresh as a lark. Upon reaching the town, he stopped and said: "Nathan, hold up a bit; on thinking the matter over, I have changed my mind. The weather will grow much colder between now and this evening, and I will have need of my coat. Give it back to me. Here is your five thalers."

Nathan took his money; Tigerson his coat. The ready fellow had accomplished his end, for stupid Nathan had saved him the trouble of carrying his great-coat on his long, hot journey to town.

A Christian neighbor, whose great delight was to annoy the possenreisser, offered him one day a piece of ham. "You know very well," said the Jew, "that my God prohibits my eating swine's flesh."

"True, I had forgotten. Any one can see that your God is a God without any intelligence," replied his tormentor.

"What else could you expect; "returned Tigerson. "He never had any father to instruct him, while your God had parents to give him a good education."

A young officer who vastly enjoyed measuring his wit against the possenreisser's, pretended on one occasion to be offended at one of his practical jokes, and challenged him to a duel.

Tigerson accepted with delightful sangfroid.

"Very well," said the officer, "we will use pistols."

"Pistols let it be! The place and hour?"

"To-morrow morning at six; in the woods at the outskirts of the town."

"Good," said the possenreisser; "but if I should happen to be a little late, don't incommode yourself; pray begin at once."

*

But the merry philosopher of Lindenberg was not to be exempt from the trials and tribulations that fall to the lot of mankind, wise and simple alike, and the installation of a new rabbi marked a sad epoch in his history. In the old rabbi he had lost a friend and protector. The new shepherd of the Jewish flock was a man of the modern school, reform and progress his watchwords; and one of his first acts of authority was to banish the possenreisser, who, in his eyes, kept alive, as it were, one of the ancient Israelitish customs "more honored in the breach than in the observance."

Tigerson was in despair. No more marriage feasts for him! Purim to be celebrated without the possenreisser? It was not to be borne. Fischele's eyes were red from weeping, and the disconsolate husband swore vengeance against this disciple of the progressive school.

Shortly after this a wedding was being celebrated in Lindenberg. In the midst of the banquet a servant announced that Tigerson was at the door, and begged permission to present himself, as he wished to propound a religious question of the utmost importance.

The rabbi was about to turn the poor fellow away; but the guests, foreseeing some sport from the merry-andrew, interceded for him, and, behold the king of the revellers at the feast once more!

Tigerson entered solemnly, bowed with profound respect, and began: "I am grateful for the privilege of being permitted to profit by the wisdom of so high and intellectual a luminary as the rabbi. I have a difficult question for him to solve."

The rabbi motioned him to continue.

"It is written," he proceeded, "'The archangel — blessed be his name — will prepare in Paradise a feast for the elect which will transcend all that the imagination of an earthly mortal can conceive.' There will be roasts of wild oxen, and these beasts will have been fattened upon the pastures of forty hills producing nought but savory herbs. A ragout of the leviathan will be served in an ambrosial sauce, — a dish surpassing anything that this fruitful earth can afford. Many other most palatable dainties will be set before the elect; but among all these delicacies there will not be found any poultry.

"And why?"

“For a wise reason, the interpretation of which I will leave to our sagacious and learned rabbi to unfold.”

The rabbi shrugged his shoulders, and smiled. “I am quite sure you have the explanation ready at hand. Come, let us have it,” he said.

“You will not be angry if I speak as I think?” asked the possenreisser, with a deprecatory gesture, and then continued: “I think that the matter is simple enough. We all know that there is no difficulty in finding out whether our meats are ‘kosher’¹⁷ or not, but there is a decided difficulty in ascertaining it about our poultry; there have indeed been complicated cases where the necessity of consulting a rabbi has been resorted to, no less an authority being able to decide the matter. Now, as a rabbi has never entered Paradise, and never will, they were obliged to send the poultry to hell, and there it was kept and eaten by the rascals. And that is why I believe the Lord, in his wisdom, prohibited poultry at the feast of the elect.”

The rabbi laughed heartily, and the guests were not slow to follow his example.

Then, turning to Tigerson, he said: “I see, my friend, that you are not one of those ordinary buffoons who make fun for the sake of fun-making. A pleasantry is acceptable, even on a serious occasion, when it is the outgrowth of a good thought, and contains a morsel of wisdom. I shall no longer prevent you from pursuing your singular vocation, since with the amusement you offer there is a seasoning of instruction and friendly warning that bespeaks a wiser head than that for which I gave you credit.”

The possenreisser bowed respectfully, while from all sides was heard: “Take a seat, Tigerson, and give us a taste of your wit.”

Tigerson drank to the rabbi’s long life and prosperity, and, feeling himself *en verve*, he improvised a new quatrain, wherein the wisdom of the rabbi shone forth with an effulgence that darkened the noonday sun.

VII.

SCHIMMEL KNOFFELES.

GALICIA.

SCHIMMEL KNOFFELES reached his home late one afternoon. The evening star was plainly visible overhead, and through the windows of his little wooden house, the lighted candles sent forth their friendly rays into the gathering darkness. His wife, Zobadia, had begun to fear that her pious, God-fearing husband would break the Sabbath. In her anxiety, she could see him plodding along through the dust on the Imperial high-road, his bundle on his back, while here at home all Israel was making ready for the feast of the Sabbath; but, God be praised, that was his hand upon the door, and here he stood before her, his face beaming with goodwill and happiness. Zobadia had put the dining-room in perfect order, laid the table, dressed the children, and now greeted her husband in a dark-red silk gown, her lovely face brought out in strong relief by the customary head-band encircling her forehead. The rich coloring of her gown, and the flashing of the false jewels in her head-band, heightened her Oriental beauty; while her charming figure, clear complexion, full red lips, and black eyes recalled one of Hafiz's dreams. Her wealth of brown hair had fallen, on her marriage day, under the barbarous scissors.

Schimmel's face still wore its happy smile; he was well content to be at home again, to see his loved wife at his side, and besides he was pleased at the treasures he had collected in his travels.

These he now displayed to the admiring audience. First, he produced an enormous cage, the whilom residence of a vulture, but which he had bought at the price of old iron; then came his *pièce de résistance*, a superb kazabaika¹⁸ perfectly new, which he had purchased for a mere song from a Polish countess; she had parted with it because its red velvet had not harmonized with the pale yellows of her furniture, and Schimmel, profiting by the occasion, was thus enabled to make his wife a princely present.

The thin, yellow little Jew, whose crooked nose seemed the sport of one of Nature's waggish moods, whose bent back seemed formed for the express purpose of carrying heavy burdens, trudged week after week from one town to another, from one manor-house to the next, insensible alike to snow, rain, and extreme heat, intent only upon selling his wares. If he worked thus untiringly, it was not simply to fill the hungry mouths at home, but also to help toward his son's education, to afford his daughters music lessons, and to give his dear Zobadia a certain amount of comfort, a certain amount of luxury, if possible. And now that he had returned home on this Sabbath evening, footsore and weary, and sat at his table surrounded by his dear ones, he felt amply rewarded for all his hardships and privations.

How his eyes brightened as he watched his wife examine, admire, and finally slip into the fur-lined cloak! With what delight did he look at his children as they gathered around the great cage, and made plans as to its vast possibilities for the future!

After Schimmel had washed and changed his dusty clothes for the silk talar (long gown), the little family assembled around the large table, upon which burned the Sabbath lamp, and the father began the Friday evening prayers. At first, his voice was heavy and thick as though his throat were still rasped from all the dust he had swallowed during the week; but, finally, it cleared, and fell pleasantly upon the ear.

The round-shouldered little man, raising his arms to heaven, and invoking the blessing of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, assumed gradually an imposing appearance, and the sunburnt face became transfigured from the light that shone within. In the poor little peddler there was the priest, the prince, the patriarch.

The prayer finished, he broke the bread and pronounced a blessing, then Zobadia rose, went into the kitchen, brought in the fish with raisin sauce; the meal began, and Schimmel, glancing about him, as proud as a king, felt that the lamp shone only upon happy, contented faces, and that the Sabbath evening was a feast indeed.

*

On Monday morning, the peddler would set off on his rounds again, the children would leave for school, and Zobadia, alone in the shop with its heterogeneous collection of wares, would yield to the strange thoughts and fancies that flitted through her restless little head.

Oftentimes, during the long, lonely days, a feeling of sadness would oppress her, and, at the thought of her husband wandering to and fro over the dreary Galician plain, she would ask herself Whether she was truly happy in the companionship of a man whose life was such a painful struggle, and who in reality resembled those ludicrous Jewish caricatures which she saw occasionally in the comic Viennese papers.

Some such thought as this was weaving its meshes through her mind as she sat idly in her shop one evening. So completely was she buried in her reverie that she had forgotten to light the lamp, and only when a stranger entered and asked for cigars was she aware that darkness had fallen about her. Quickly striking a match, she lit the lamp, and the red light fell full upon her sweet face, still pensive with the memory of her dreams. With a pleasant smile she held out a box of cigars toward the handsome customer, and he in turn looked at her with undisguised admiration. She recognized him now. He was a certain Count Gorewski, proprietor of a neighboring manor-house. He had frequently stopped at the little shop, but on this occasion it seemed to him that he noticed the woman for the first time; and now he found it a difficult matter to determine what brand he would have, making Zobadia open box after box simply to prolong the pleasure of gazing into her brilliant, sparkling eyes.

When the Count had gone, she stood staring for a moment at the door that had closed upon him, and then resumed her seat. She recognized at once that she had made an agreeable impression upon the man, and on her side she was conscious that she was not absolutely indifferent to his attractions. One is not a woman for nothing. For a long while she remained buried in her musing, her hands folded in the large sleeves of her kazabaika; then, rising, she tossed her head lightly as though she were chasing away an importunate fly, or an intruding thought.

From that evening the Count was a frequent customer at the little shop. The young woman received him with a certain cordiality, was charming and gracious, for she reasoned, most wisely, that perhaps he would not be so liberal in his purchases were she to frown upon his gallantry; moreover, was it not part of her business to be as obliging as possible, to smile upon her customers, and to light their cigars with her own fair hands, fairer than ever now that the dark fur of her kazabaika revealed their whiteness? But then, why did she not smile upon the peasants when they bought their bad tobacco from her, and light their pipes with her pretty fingers?

She was playing a dangerous game, and yet she was thoroughly self-confident; for the more ardent grew her admirer, the cooler and more subtle was she. One evening, however, he forced her to expose her cards; for, taking her by the hand and looking into her eyes, he said: —

“What a shame it is that your charms should fade in this wretched dark corner, like some exquisite rose withering in a dungeon!”

“This corner is very far from being a dungeon,” she answered, with a slight attempt at raillery, and yet not perfectly at her ease, “and you should not compare me to a rose.”

“Ah, you are so beautiful, Zobadia! You do not know how beautiful you are!”

“I beg of you — Count.”

“What makes you act in this way, all of a sudden?”

“I am a respectable woman.”

“Do I doubt it?”

“Well, then, do not speak to me in this way.”

“What unkind spirit has taken possession of you so suddenly?”

“A good spirit, Count; the spirit of duty and family affection.”

Gorewski shrugged his shoulders.

“Do you wish to tell me you are happy with that bandy-legged animal?”

“Nevertheless —”

“You! The prettiest woman in the district, married to that walking scarecrow! It’s sacrilegious!”

“I do not know whether I am pretty,” replied Zobadia, with a quiet dignity, “but I am quite sure my husband is not as ugly as you say; at all events, he is handsome in my eyes, and I love him. His face and figure may be unprepossessing, but his soul is beautiful. He has the heart of an angel, the character of a hero, and a mind! — he could teach the rabbis, I tell you!”

“But all these qualifications of your good husband would not prevent you from receiving a few attentions, little woman, eh?”

“A few, yes; but you are not the man to be satisfied with a few.”

“Ah, to such a woman as you a few is even more than I could have hoped to offer;” so saying he kissed her hand passionately, and, paying her a high-flown compliment, left the shop.

She gazed after him and sighed.

*

The autumn frosts had come early; the trees were clad in brilliant reds and yellows; the migratory birds had flown southward, and in their place titmice sang and whistled blithely. A sharp wind blew across the meadows.

The day preceding the feast of Tabernacles, the sky cleared, the sun emerged from clouds and vapor, and Nature smiled benignly upon this the most beautiful of all the Jewish festivals.

Schimmel Knoffeles had built a booth of laths and fir branches in one corner of his garden; his wife had made birds from egg-shells and colored paper; while the children busied themselves in twisting garlands from golden tissue paper. When the booth was finished, the birds and wreaths were suspended from the branches, and to these were added the lulaf (a strange Eastern fruit) and holy palm, symbols of the Promised Land and the wandering in the wilderness.

The decorations arranged to their satisfaction, a bench and small table placed in the enclosure, the little family party sat down and admired their handiwork.

Each member of the household, in turn, passed a few hours of the day or night in the tabernacle, as their forefathers had done in their journeying through the wilderness.

Here it was that Schimmel recited the prayers, and read from the Talmud. Here it was that the children played, and the mother worked at her embroidery.

It happened on one occasion that, detained all day either in the shop or kitchen, Zobadia had been prevented from fulfilling her religious obligation, and had entered the booth late one evening after her husband and children had gone to bed.

The pretty Jewess, in her soft furs, sat down in the aromatic tent, leaned her weary head against the trellis, and wandered in the shadow-land of dreams.

It was a night for reverie. The moon behind the tall poplars bathed the house, garden, and distant fields in a flood of silvered light; the waters of the fountain murmured restlessly, and tossed their diamonds through the lustrous mist; the dusky branches waved gently in the breeze, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of the pines.

Suddenly, a step sounded on the gravel-walk. Zobadia's heart beat loudly, and not without cause, for a moment later and the Count stood before her.

"I implore you," she said in an undertone; "what do you want here at this hour? Ah, if any one should see you!"

"It is you whom I want, pretty Zobadia," replied the Count, in a low voice. "I want your gazellelike eyes, your snowy arms, bride of the Song of Songs."

"Do not distress me," she murmured, pale with affright; "leave me!"

The Count laughed. "By no means, pretty one. Do not think you are going to get rid of me quite so easily as that. I give you your choice: yield to my prayers and save your reputation, or remain a Venus of ice and be disgraced in the eyes of your husband and family. I love you, and I will have you."

Gorewski threw himself at her feet, and clasped her waist tenderly. She did not repulse him, on the contrary a smile hovered upon her lips, for a merry thought had crossed her mind, a fantastic idea, one worthy of Boccaccio, or Brantôme, in his "Chronique Galante."

"Ah, well," said she, watching him narrowly; "I will yield to your love, but on one condition: you must promise me to carry out all the precautions I tell you, and you must give me your word of honor not to compromise me under any condition."

Charmed with his easy conquest, the Count hastened to assure her that he should follow her injunctions in every particular.

"As soon as I have gone to bed," she continued, "my husband always makes his round of the house, and then he locks the front door. You must come in the house now with me; I will hide you in the dining-room, and you must wait there until you hear my signal."

"Most willingly," replied Gorewski.

Zobadia placed her finger upon her lips, and signed to him to follow. She led him stealthily into the house, and then into the dining-room, where darkness reigned supreme. The Count heard a door grate on its hinges, and the fair Jewess whispered for him to come on. He could not go on for the simple reason that he could not see where he was going, and his guide, bending his head with one hand, pushed him before her with the other. Then she closed the door upon him, turned the key, and, withdrawing it, put it in the pocket of her kazabaika.

The Count stood perfectly still for a little while; he listened impatiently for Schimmel to begin his rounds; but very soon he heard snoring in the next room,

and Zobadia failed to give the signal. Slowly he began to grope about him, and, in the briefest time imaginable, discovered that he was a prisoner, surrounded by iron bars. His first thought was to call out for help, but the ridiculousness of his situation forced him to be silent and resign himself to his fate.

This cruel little piece of virtue had caught him in a trap. He was completely at her mercy. Evidently he was to be a prisoner for the night at least; he threw himself on the ground, tried in vain to stretch out his limbs, and, finally succeeding in curling himself up in a thoroughly uncomfortable position, fell into a restless sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when he awoke and found himself a prisoner in a large iron cage. His situation was simply frightful, but upon sober reflection he concluded that there was nothing to be done save to await patiently the end of this unfortunate adventure. Perhaps this modern Delilah had some more cruel punishment in store for him. She did not keep him long in suspense, however, for she soon tripped into the room as bright and fresh as the morning, a soft, white head-band about her head, the kazabaika upon her pretty shoulders. Calling her husband and children, she showed them the exotic bird.

“What have you done!” cried Schimmel; “you have locked up the Count!”

“I have not done him the least harm in the world,” replied his wife. “He wanted to catch me, and I was a little too sharp for him, that is all. Will you step out, Count?” she added, unlocking the door.

Gorewski stepped awkwardly out of the cage, stretched his stiffened limbs, and left the room without a word; while his charming hostess followed him to the door, stood with her hands on her hips, and laughed aloud till the tears rolled down her face.

VIII.

GALEB JEKARIM.

JERUSALEM.

TWO lights vied with each other in a little attic, — the light of a half consumed candle, and that of the morning sun, the latter penetrating feebly through a shabby green curtain. One resembled the last sigh of the dying, the other the breath of a newborn child; one a spirit about to take its flight, the other a soul awakening from sleep. The fulvous, trembling light of the candle fell upon the time-stained leaves of a large book lying open on the table, while the rosy light of dawn caressed the pale forehead of a young man who had sunk back in a moth-eaten arm-chair and was so deeply buried in reverie that for him time was not.

His emaciated frame was enveloped in a threadbare caftan; from beneath a small black velvet cap a mass of brown, tangled, curly hair fell loosely over a face that had evidently never known the joys of a happy springtime, a face the lines of which spoke of suffering, resignation, and tireless study. His great eyes shone with a glory of their own, — sombre eyes that gazed heavenward, eyes that had detached themselves from earth, and were turned toward another world, — a world where the sight was not dimmed by brilliant colors, where there was no sound, no consciousness of space; a world where mind, freed from matter, reigned solitary and sublime.

Sick and poor was Galeb Jekarim, this Jewish student who had sat through the watches of the night poring over his books, and yet he was happy. He had no mother, his lips had never touched the perfumed lips of a woman, and yet he had found a mistress more beautiful than any mortal creature, more richly adorned than all the queens of the East.

He was so wretchedly poor that he had absolutely nothing he could call his own; even the Talmud before him, the well-spring of all his delights, did not belong to him; but when he had lost himself in its yellow, well-thumbed leaves, the heaviness and oppression of this earth would fall away, and, yielding to the ecstasy that possessed him, he would be borne aloft toward radiant heights ever upward, upward into the realms of light and splendor.

The smoke and traffic of cities; narrow, darksome valleys; broad, fertile plains; the limitless expanse of waters, — all, all would sink from view, would be lost in the luminous immensity in which his spirit floated.

He would forget everything, — his misery, his solitude, his yearning for love, the visions of bliss that fluttered to him from the wings of night. He would forget his sorrows and the slow fever that consumed him. One thing alone he could not forget.

When the rays of the sun glided in through the green curtain, and gilded the dilapidated wall, it was as though an invisible hand was writing in letters of fire these words of the Spanish Jewish poet, Judah Ben Halevy: “Never will I forget thee, O Jerusalem!”

When the moon flooded the small chamber with its gentle light, a silvered brush painted the same inspiring words upon the blackened beams.

When day was dying, and the poor student sat, deep-musing, in the cemetery, a soft wind would stir the cypress, and from their topmost boughs mysterious voices sang the sweet refrain: “Never will I forget thee, O Jerusalem!”

He suffered from nostalgia, a wasting nostalgia. He longed to set foot in the home of his fathers, — a home that he had never seen; a home that he knew of only from the sacred writings. His longing to rest in the shadow of its walls was greater than his love of country or of kin, was greater than his poverty and destitution.

He was entirely dependent upon his sister for the means of subsistence. She it was who paid for the bare chamber he occupied, the scanty food that supplied his needs. There was not a single being in the world from whom he could have borrowed the money for such a journey; and yet when day broke after this night of prayer and reverie his resolution had been taken, his plans formed.

The sun rose higher in the heavens, filling the silent plain with its warmth and light. Galeb rose, put on his hat, took his stick, and went forth into the unknown, — into the great world where envy and hatred are rife, into the great illusive world; for in that way only could he reach the land of his longing, the promised land, Jerusalem!

Stealthily he crossed the garden, opened the little gate, and struck into the narrow path that ran through fields and waving meadows. At the edge of a woods he paused before a thatched hut occupied by some Jewish laborers.

The men were at work in the fields, and Midotia, the daughter of the owner of the wretched farm, was pasturing the cows in the brush-wood. Seeing Galeb, she cracked her whip, and the black eyes that met his were filled with an expression of mingled compassion and mockery.

“I am glad to see that you have ventured out of your shell,” she said with a light attempt at banter. “You are studying too hard, Galeb, you are killing yourself with your books.”

The young man shook his head, but remained where he was. He knew that the girl was fond of him, and at sight of the bright, pretty creature he was conscious that his heart beat more loudly, that the blood flowed more quickly in his veins.

“You do not understand me, Midotia, I am impelled by a sacred duty.”

“Oh, I know very well what you want. You want a wife, such a wife as I would make. If you would let me I would very soon teach you some common-sense.”

For reply, Galeb gave a melancholy smile, shook his head, and pursued his path through the woods. When he had emerged from their shadow the sun had pierced the clouds and spilled his glory on the waves of mist that floated slowly earthward. It was a sublime spectacle. The solemn silence of Morning held sway over Nature. “The Lord is here!” exclaimed Galeb, in a voice trembling with emotion; then, raising his arms, and turning his pale face toward the sun, he lifted his voice in prayer and thanksgiving to the Universal Father.

*

The pilgrim travelled afoot. The grand idea that dominated him inspired courage and endurance such as his weak frame had never known. The sun was his guide. He knew that the sea lay beyond him, and beyond the sea, Jerusalem. He crossed Galicia, Bukowina, and entered Moldavia. Scorching sun-rays burned fiercely on his head, rain and hail lashed his weary back, the lightning played madly about him, uncharitableness and ill-nature met his timid approaches; he was insensible to all, his goal lay before him, he plodded onward, ever onward.

At nightfall, if he were happy enough to discover a house whose door-post was inscribed with a verse from the Talmud, he would beg a night's lodging and a morsel of food, and on such occasions the wanderer found open doors and open hearts. Fortune, however, was not always ready to serve him, and at times the

greenwood would be his couch, the sky his canopy, while again he would have to sleep in the open field, lying close to a sheaf for warmth and protection.

In one of the narrow valleys of the Carpathians, he fell into the hands of brigands. It did not occur to him to protect himself; he simply said: "I am a pilgrim on my way to Jerusalem!"

The holy calm of the pale face touched the hearts of the robbers.

"To Jerusalem!" repeated the captain.

Curiosity and veneration were depicted on the faces of the lawless band.

The chief motioned Galeb to follow, and they soon stood in front of a great cavern, before which a fire crackled boisterously. The brigands offered their prisoner food and shelter, and in the morning, putting him on the right path, the chief said:

"When you reach Jerusalem, pray for me; there is but one God above us all."

The Danube was reached at last. A little farther journeying and then — the sea! The sea! That vast watery plain with its silver foam, its fair, glistening sails, and its shadowy coasts fading into the horizon.

Here our wanderer embarked on a Turkish vessel, paying his way by doing what work he could on board; but on the second night of the passage, a storm arose, the boat was wrecked and fell into the hands of a Tripolitan corsair. The pirate thanked Allah for capturing such a prize as our pious pilgrim, and took him straightway to the slave market in one of the small towns of Asia Minor. There he was purchased by a rich Mohammedan who made him his gardener. A gardener! Poor Galeb Jekarim, the only flowers he had seen grow were those that blossomed in the verses of the Bible or in the legends of the Talmud.

*

A wild overgrown garden was it that Galeb was set to cultivate: flowers grew in rank profusion, spreading cypress cast their gloomy shade, narcotic plants filled the air with their heavy perfume, the tireless waves of the sea beat against its banks.

The pilgrim worked faithfully at his task, and yet how often would he gaze upon the silvery sea with all the passion of longing, and as his eyes rested upon the distant, white-winged boats, his lips would murmur with a sigh: "Never will I forget thee, O Jerusalem!" How often would burning tears course down his hollow cheeks as he watched the moon rise in solemn splendor and float majestically over the vast expanse!

Frequently, at set of sun, a veiled woman enveloped in a thick burnouse would take her evening walk in the garden, and on these occasions her glances fell with a more than kindly sympathy upon the slave who bowed profoundly before his mistress. One cloudless moonlight night, the unhappy captive was standing on the beach, his eyes gazing heavenward, his lips moving in silent prayer. Suddenly a warm, soft hand was laid upon his shoulder, and turning around, he saw the Turkish woman at his side.

"Silence!" she murmured. "Answer my questions quickly. You are unhappy. Have you left behind you a wife or sweetheart?"

Galeb shook his head.

"Why do you weep, then?"

"I was making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem when I was taken prisoner by a pirate. I feel that the angel of Death is approaching, and I may not die until I have kissed the Holy Land."

The woman looked at him in blank amazement. Slowly she threw back her veil and let her burnouse fall from her shoulders.

“Am I not beautiful?” she asked.

“Yes, you are as beautiful as a dream.”

“Then give me your heart, for you have won mine.”

She clasped her jewelled arms about his neck, and gazed lovingly into his eyes. Galeb shuddered at her touch.

“Ask my life,” he said in a stifled voice, “but not my heart. My whole soul has gone out to the Temple whose spires reach heavenward and invoke Jehovah’s blessing upon his People. My heart belongs to Jerusalem, I cannot love you.”

The woman bent her head, and a tear stole down her pretty cheek; then, suddenly standing erect, she gathered her veil about her, and moving on, signed the pilgrim to follow. At a turn in the brushwood she pointed to a boat swinging on its chain, and said under her breath: “Take the oars; save yourself.”

Galeb threw himself on his knees, kissed her feet, and then jumping into the boat pushed out into the stream. For a long time he saw his fair deliverer on the shore, waving her veil, then shadows supervened, a light fog shrouded the moonlight, and soon the figure of the woman, the waving cypress, the turrets of the house, all faded into nothingness. He was alone on the sea, the studded arch overhead, the friendliness of the night about him, hope singing her song in his breast.

*

An English vessel took the fugitive on board and landed him at Jaffa. Once more he continued his journey afoot, along stony, sun-beaten paths, through cactus thickets, across arid wastes of sand. Occasionally, he would see some straggling village in the distance, and from time to time he chanced upon a well where he might slake his thirst.

A slow fever consumed him, his strength was failing him, but his enthusiasm never slackened; he journeyed on. He dared not rest for any length of time for fear of falling into the sleep that knows no waking. His indomitable courage defied heat, hunger, thirst, exhaustion.

At night, his fever would summon spectres to his side; but these spectres were arrayed in white, and they hovered above him with their angel wings, and pointed out the way to the Promised Land.

Awaking one morning from a restless sleep, he descried in the distance the walls of the sacred City.

Jerusalem!

Galeb Jekarim threw himself upon the ground, kissed the holy soil, then rising in all reverence he hastily resumed his journey. He was no longer conscious of fatigue, thirst, or hunger. The morning sun cast a wondrous light upon the gilded domes. The olive and cactus woods, the luxuriant flowers, the waving grasses all seemed to bow and do him homage as he passed. The fields were alive with beauty and color. The soft breath of heaven whispered sweetly in his ear, the air, freighted with the perfume of roses and myrrh, gently caressed his burning face.

Jerusalem!

He looked neither to the right nor to the left. He pressed onward. Another hundred paces. At last! The holy wall, the last remains of the mighty pile that has crumbled beneath man’s shortsightedness and Time’s ruthless march. The pilgrim sank exhausted at its foot, but with a supreme effort he lifted himself and grasped

the stones for support. A prayer escaped his lips. Was it not rather a cry of joy from the depths of his soul?

Once more he sank to earth, this time to rise no more. Before him stood the guardian angel who had led him onward; an invisible choir sang in unison with his soul; light was everywhere. Again he pressed the holy wall, and with a sigh of rapturous content his lips parted and breathed forth, "Jerusalem!"

IX.

HOW SLOBA MARRIED HER SISTER.

BELGIUM.

IN the large square opposite the old German town-hall stood the Ohrenstein family mansion and dry goods shop. This emporium contained a large and varied assortment. From headdress to footgear, there was nothing lacking in its list of commodities, and, in addition to the ordinary inducements offered to purchasers, its attractiveness was enhanced by the presence of Ohrenstein's two pretty daughters. Lady customers bought more willingly after seeing the gowns and bonnets tried on by slender, graceful, dark-eyed Sloba or by Bella, the blonde, with her well rounded figure, and, needless to say, gentlemen spent their money lavishly in a shop where they could be waited on by two such beauties.

Sloba, the younger of the sisters, was devoted to reading, and her special places of resort were Louis Jadassohn's book-shop and reading-room, where she might nibble at her "nectar'd sweets" and select her reading at her leisure. The proprietor of the shop, be it understood, was a handsome, well-informed young fellow, possessed of a rather dashing air, and by no means lacking in wit and repartee. Little Sloba had a captivating way about her of employing three languages at the same time. The vehicle for the first, which was reasonable to the verge of frigidity, was her mouth; for the second, which was playful and alluring, was her black eyes; for the third, which was the most winning of all, though dumb, was her graceful hands seductively fluttering through the leaves of the volumes handed her by the young bookseller. It is not to be wondered at that the employment of these three languages produced a telling effect.

Sloba surprised herself, nevertheless, by the increasing frequency of her visits to young Jadassohn, or, more accurately speaking, to his shop,— and the scrupulous minuteness with which she made her choice of reading matter proved that she was a young lady to whom stratagem was no unpleasing mode of achieving progress.

"Lived romances are much prettier than printed ones," whispered the bookseller, one evening as he escorted her to the door.

"True," said Sloba the diplomatist, "but I always like those best where the lovers end by marrying."

The following day, Jadassohn presented himself, in black frock coat and white cravat, at Mr. Ohrenstein's, and formally demanded his sweetheart's hand. Sloba was called. "Do you wish to accept Mr. Jadassohn's proposal?" said the father, with an encouraging smile.

The girl modestly inclined her head.

"Very well, be it so," said Ohrenstein, giving the young man's hand a cordial grasp; "but there is to be no thought of marrying until Bella's head is in a cap."¹⁹

The condition was a hard one, but Ohrenstein was obdurate to the lovers' supplications, and proved himself the stern, relentless parent.

Bella's hand had been sought in marriage several times, but her evil genius had led her, a year or two before this, to a small town at the foot of the Argonnes; here it was that a young artist had been attracted by her charms, and had begged permission to paint her as Esther,— Esther in queenly robes reclining right royally on cushions of purple velvet. This incident proved too much for her pride. Henceforth, she was Lady Disdain to all pretenders to her hand; and thus it had

come to pass that her twentieth year had been reached, and her hand was still unadorned by the wedding-ring.

The evening of their engagement the lovers held a council of war at the book-shop.

“We must marry Bella,” said Sloba, with the decision of a strategic general; “I will take charge of my sister, you must procure the fiancé.”

“That will not be so easy,” answered Jadassohn, with a sigh. That evening, however, after having given his sweetheart the very last good-night kiss, he most seriously and dispassionately went over his list of friends and acquaintances, and finally, with a sigh of despair, declared that there was not one of them whom he would dare to present matrimonially to his intended sister-in-law. Fortune, however, came to his aid; for scarcely had a week elapsed when his landlady’s son returned from Geneva, where he had been employed in a watch factory. Widow Schnick was rich, and was determined upon establishing her son in business in his native town. Simon Schnick was thirty-two, had seen the world, and was the very man to attract a young girl. The victim was found, the train laid; operations might begin.

On the following Sabbath, during the usual promenade, Jadassohn pointed Bella out to the watchmaker. Schnick declared that she was one of the handsomest women he had ever seen. Sloba, on the other side of the way, whispered to her sister: “Who can Louis’s handsome friend be?”

“A stranger; that goes without saying,” said Bella; “none of the young men in our town have that distinguished air about them.”

The next day at dinner, the bookseller said jocosely to the young watchmaker: “You are in luck with the ladies, Mr. Schnick. Do you remember that fine-looking girl I pointed out to you yesterday?”

“Bella Ohrenstein?”

“The same. Do you know you have made a conquest?”

At about the same time, the fellow-plotter drew her sister aside and whispered confidently: “Bella, you have chained another slave to your triumphal chariot.”

“Whom do you mean, you silly little thing?”

“That elegant-looking young man whom you mistook for a stranger. It is Simon Schnick, and they say he does nothing but talk of you.”

“If you really intend to establish yourself here in town,” said Jadassohn to his victim, an air of kindly interest on his face, “you must marry; there is no doubt about that. Of course you’ll want a rich woman, and one that is pretty as well, to attract customers. By the way, you could not find a better girl in a thousand than Bella Ohrenstein.”

“They say she is as proud as Lucifer,” returned Schnick. “She would never have me.”

“But suppose I tell you she is madly in love with you?”

The following day, the bookseller introduced his friend to the young lady who had bewitched him. Sloba had, in the mean while, prepared a telling little scene which should captivate their victim at first sight. Mrs. Porges, the wife of a wealthy money-changer, entered the shop in the afternoon, and having been taken into Sloba’s confidence, played her part in the little comedy by asking to see a handsome new costume just imported from Paris. The arch-conspirator induced her sister to show it to advantage by trying it on; and just as Bella stood in the middle of the store, transformed into an elegant young Parisian, and beaming with the consciousness of her beauty, the two young men entered the door.

Schnick’s doubts and misgivings disappeared as by an enchanter’s wand; the girl’s bewilderment and blushing confusion added fuel to the flame of his desire,

and he at once began making love to his divinity with an impetuosity which carried him further than he knew. Bella, on the other hand, gave the plotters a delightful surprise by her amiability and ready inclination to accept her wooer's advances.

The bookseller was counting upon an assured victory, when his path was beset by a new difficulty. Young Schnick came to him one morning in despair, and told him that his mother had selected Clara Ben Schoren, the daughter of a rich furrier in Ghent, for his future wife.

"What!" cried Jadassohn, indignantly; "it is beyond the bounds of credibility that such a girl as that should be proposed to a man like you!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"First of all, she squints in one eye; then, she has a club-foot, not taking into consideration all the moths she would carry away with her from the shop."

"You are right," said the watch-maker, with a look of relief; "I'll not marry her."

On the afternoon of this same day, Simon Schnick asked Bella's hand in marriage, was accepted, and received the paternal benediction. The news soon spread abroad that there were two happy couples in the little town, and but a short time passed before preparations for the marriage feast began.

Friends and relatives arrived in crowds on the wedding day. The neighboring towns of Brussels, Antwerp, and Amsterdam were not only variously represented, but London, Paris, Genoa, Frankfort, Warsaw, and Prague sent their delegates as well. There were all sorts and conditions of types, from the autocrat of the Bourse to the humblest peddler, from the elegant woman of fashion to the simple peasant woman who sold geese. There were gentlemen whose frock coats were covered with decorations; there were old men in black caftans, who stroked their long beards and never uncovered their heads. Bejewelled dames in costly brocade jostled old aunties in faded, done-over silks and bonnets that were new fifty years before. Every one, elegant or ridiculous, influential or inconsiderable, rich or poor, was received with an equal courtesy, an equal welcome.

Grandfather Ohrenstein and Grandfather Jadassohn, still clinging to extreme orthodoxy, many of the ancient marriage customs were observed which had in course of time fallen into disuse. For this reason an evening ceremony was not permitted, and the wedding took place in the afternoon.

Mother and cousins assisted in the dressing of the brides; and when the last pin had been put in place, the two sisters, in sweeping white satin gowns, myrtle wreaths on their heads, and caps in their hands, entered the large drawing-room. Here their young female relatives and friends surrounded them, and bade them farewell to the accompaniment of tears and kisses. The adieux accomplished, Bella took off her wreath and gave it to the youngest of the group, Sorel Van Ruben, and Sloba handed hers to Catalina Meerboom. Then the sisters proceeded to the next room, where sat the elders of the relatives; here they knelt before their father and mother, asked their forgiveness, and received the parental benediction.

The prayer from the tchina²⁰ was read, and this concluded, the young girls entered the room and led the two sisters to a platform where were placed the brides' chairs. Here Bella and Sloba took their seats in state.

The door opened, and the rabbi entered.

Throwing a large silk kerchief embroidered in gold over the elder sister's head, he recited impressively the following prayer: —

"Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God! King of the universe; who hast formed man after thy image, and prepared unto him from himself an everlasting fabric. May the pessoula [virgin] be consecrated to the marriage state. Thou shalt be as a

fruitful vine in thy house, and thy children shall surround thee like young olive plants. May God keep and bless thee! May God grant thee peace! Amen.”

The same ceremony was repeated for Sloba; the maids of honor took the kerchiefs and arranged them as turbans for the brides; relatives and friends gathered about them, and in the midst of the pleasant confusion, the buffoon entered and began his song.

This song consisted of a sort of chronicle of the three participating families, and at the same time a hymn of praise in honor of the parents. Then the buffoon went on into a laudatory description of the two brides, proclaiming their grace, beauty, and virtue, — comparing Bella to the beautiful Shulamite with golden curls who “looketh forth as the morning,” and Sloba to Queen Esther at whose feet the most powerful sovereign of the earth fell prostrate as a slave. He sang of marriage, its joys and duties, and glorified woman, interspersing rhymes from the Talmudic proverbs: —

“The heart and soul for three things thirst, —
A handsome woman is the first.

“He who without a wife can happy live,
To him the name of man we will not give.

“Mind that thy wife does happy keep;
She’s aided thee to sow and reap.

“Our women’s worth, beyond compare,
The yoke of bondage helped us bear.

“If Fate has blessed thee with a wife most true,
Thy weal is great, thy wants are few.”

When the merrymaker had finished his song, the schamos (beadle of the synagogue) appeared with the announcement that everything was in readiness at the synagogue. The brides entered their carriages, and were driven off, and the rest of the company made their way in carriages and on foot to the house of worship.

The temple was magnificently illuminated for the occasion, and the rabbi looked imposing in his robes. After the ketouba (marriage act) had been read, Bella was led under the chuppa (canopy) to her chassan (bridegroom). The rabbi gave Simon the ring, and the groom put it on the bride’s finger with the words: “Behold, thou art wedded to me to all eternity; thou art wedded to me in virtue and justice, in truth and fidelity, according to the law of God.” Then receiving a small glass from the rabbi, he dashed it to the ground, saying: “As this glass can never become whole again, so may this marriage never be broken.”

The rabbi finished his blessing of the couple with these words: “O Lord! cause these loving friends to rejoice, as thou once didst send joy unto thy creatures, whom thou hadst formed, in the Garden of Eden of old! Blessed art thou, O Lord, who causeth the bridegroom and bride to rejoice! Lead them far from all sorrow and trouble, and let there be heard the voice of joy and the voice of gladness.”

So was Bella married to Simon Schnick, and so, immediately after, was pretty black-eyed Sloba wedded to Louis Jadassohn.

The newly married couples were at once surrounded by the invited guests; and if repeated wishes of prosperity and happiness could bring prosperity and happiness, surely it would have been theirs in no small measure. Those who cared to, took a piece of the broken glass as a souvenir, and the solemnity was concluded

by a sermon in which morsels of wisdom were as plentiful as brilliant metaphors and Oriental imagery.

The religious ceremony over, the feast began. The wedding party and guests returned to the Ohrenstein mansion, a sumptuous banquet was spread, and while at table the buffoon added not a little to the general mirth; immediately after the meal, the synagogue chanters appeared and intoned the ancient and exquisite marriage hymns.

The feast wound up with a ball. Grandfather Ohrenstein and Grandfather Jadassohn abandoned themselves to the infectious mirth, and as in their time Jewish men danced only with men, and Jewish women only with women, the two old gentlemen waltzed together to the vast amusement and hearty applause of the jovial throng.

“How everything is changed in these days!” exclaimed Grandfather Jadassohn; “here are two marriages in one day, and everything arranged without a ‘schadchen’ [marriage broker]!”

“Not at all, not at all!” cried Bella, with a happy, ringing laugh, “the ‘schadchen’ was Sloba.”

X.

MADAME LEOPARD.

POLAND.

THE inhabitants of the little town of Zamosto, on the banks of the Vistula, are, for the most part, Jews, and the few Christians within its limits live on terms of perfect harmony with their Israelitish neighbors. One of this small band of Gentiles, however, a certain town clerk by the name of Agenor Koscieloski, was noted for his implacable enmity of the Jews, — hence, known among that dominant class as a rosher (Jew-hater). Never an occasion lost he to harry and annoy his Hebrew neighbors; in return, he was indebted to them for a larger share of their fear and hatred than one poor Christian mortal was “e’er blessed withal.”

Were he to see a young exquisite in black satin caftan, proudly conscious of his glistening locks, he would accost him, and, with the most serious air imaginable, inquire if he had cork-screws for sale.

If he passed a “boutka” — one of the long awning-covered wagons in which the Polish Jews pack themselves like so many herring — he at once began counting the travellers, indicating each one in turn with his forefinger. The wretched crew, seeing themselves already bound and delivered over into the hands of the angel of Death, vainly uttered their cries of distress,²¹ vainly hurled their epithets at him, vainly cast direful maledictions upon him and his descendants, he quietly continued his devilish task until each victim had been counted in turn.

If he chanced to meet a peddler, a schnorrer (beggar), or a carter trudging beside his team, he invariably addressed him pleasantly with: “What’s going on in Pintschew?” The Jew, spitting in his rage, would nevertheless answer conscientiously:

“S’tougte!”²² Koscieloski’s jokes were harmless; his acts, however, could scarcely be criticised as such.

*

The rosher was loved by none; but the one who detested him more whole-souledly than any of the rest of her faith was, without exception, Madame Leopard, a pretty young widow who had remained a sincere and orthodox Jewess despite the fact that she had received a superior education and was “advanced” in her ideas. Each and every indignity offered her race she regarded as a personal affront, and, having sworn vengeance against the common enemy, she was but biding her time to carry her threats into execution.

A handsome young merchant, David Zadokin, had been long and patiently courting the pretty widow. She had, it is true, given him the preference among her admirers, but as yet had hesitated about pronouncing the decisive word. To win his lady, David determined to challenge the rosher to a duel; but the fair dame, learning of this high resolve, peremptorily forbade its execution with the words: “I intend to punish him myself, and in such a way as to render him powerless for all future time.”

Oser Weinstock, a Jewish tailor, was Koscieloski’s landlord, and at the same time boasted the privilege of being Madame Leopard’s dressmaker. Hitherto, the tailor had always come to the pretty widow for her orders; but from the time that vengeance sent forth a flame in her breast his patron went to his shop on every

occasion that she had a new suggestion to make, or a new gown to try on. She counted, and her calculations were based upon experience, on the effect of her charms upon the Jew-hater. On the first occasion of his meeting her upon the staircase, he gazed in mute amazement; on the second, he escorted her to the door and bowed profoundly. When next she alighted at her dressmaker's, it was to be fitted for a gown.

"I'd wager that Mr. Koscieloski is looking through the keyhole," whispered the little man, winking knowingly, "he told me yesterday that you were the prettiest woman in Zamosto."

"So much the better," said his customer. She hastily took off her jacket and waist, stood with bare neck and arms before the artist, and tried on the new gown; then, while the little man was busied with chalk and pins, making his alterations, her eyes turned involuntarily toward the door. Sure enough, behind it stood the eager admirer. A wicked smile played upon Madame Leopard's lips.

When she had gone the rosher seized his hat, and, escaping through the streets that seemed to oppress him, sought refuge in the country. Waving meadows and leafy shade cooled his fevered blood; but on his return to the town he found himself moving toward the widow's house. Having gained this objective point, he merely stood opposite it in an obscure corner, and was rewarded by catching sight of the fair lady's fingers as they glided over the piano, and seeing her shadow cast twice against the soft, white curtains.

For a time, he struggled against his passion; but finally yielding to fate, he gave up the unequal contest, admitting to himself that he was madly in love with this daughter of a race which he absolutely hated, and that he had but to choose between lodging a bullet in his brain, or bending his knee before this lovely temptress.

Koscieloski preferred the latter alternative.

Madame Leopard kept a small jewelry-store. One evening, Koscieloski, seeing her alone in the shop, entered boldly and asked her to be good enough to show him some rings. Then suddenly seizing her hand, he exclaimed: "What a hand! A masterpiece in ivory!"

"The hand of a Jewess, Mr. Koscieloski," said the widow, craftily. But the masterpiece still rested within his more clumsy work of art.

"Woman remains beautiful in all climes, under all circumstances. You might have been born a countess, a sultana," replied the rosher.

"How gallant you are becoming all of a sudden!"

"I see, my dear lady, you are trying to punish me in thus alluding to my antipathy to the Jews. I admit the antipathy, but does it not make your conquest all the more brilliant?"

"You are rushing on wildly, my friend. Are you aware that you have made me a declaration of love?"

"Why should I wish to hide what you must have discovered from my first glance. Ah, Madame, I am passionately in love with you!"

"And now?"

"May I be so bold as to ask your hand?"

"A Jewess'?"

"What difference does that make, if you will but be mine!"

"We will see," she answered with a demure smile. "But first, I must know you better."

"Grant me but the favor of letting me see you often."

Koscieloski kissed the fair intriguer's hand with devotion, and bowed his adieux. The following morning, he made his first visit, and thenceforth he might be found each evening in the shop or little drawing-room, pressing his suit with all the constancy of an ardent lover.

*

And each evening as regularly as he presented himself, as regularly did an animated discussion ensue. His lady love would reproach him for his animosity against her race, and he would defend himself as best he could; but in the end he was always driven to laying down his arms before his antagonist, whose gifts of mind and brilliancy of repartee made her more than a match for him.

As a last card he assumed the rôle of Shylock. This was too much for the widow. Her pretty lips rippled over with laughter.

"You evidently do not know," she said, "what the Italian historian Leti tells us in his 'Life of Sixtus V.' It appears that in the sixteenth century there was a celebrated wager in Rome between a Christian named Secchi and a Jew, Samson Ceneda. The Christian bet a hundred scudis, but asked that the Jew should pay his wager in a pound of flesh. The Christian won, and declared that he would cut the flesh from the Jew's body. The Pope, called upon to judge the question, decided against the Christian, and banished both Jew and Christian from Rome. So you see, Monsieur, a Shylock really existed; but he happened to be a Christian, and his name was Paolo-Marini Secchi."

Koscieloski, completely vanquished, surrendered at discretion. The artful widow granted him pardon, finally, promising to be baptized and marry him. He, on his part, only too happy to pledge his word of honor that the affair should be conducted with the greatest secrecy, that Madame Leopard's family might not defeat their purpose.

In the intoxication of his love the happy mortal fell at the widow's feet, and was made supremely blest by the first kiss from her sweet lips. His transport was of brief duration, however, for his lady bade him leave her at once, and scarcely had the door closed upon him when she shook her little fist at his departing form, muttering: "Fool! I have you in my toils now. You shall be recompensed as you deserve."

*

A rather curious accident helped the pretty schemer in her plans of vengeance. It happened that Oser Weinstock, the tailor, had completely exhausted his credit, and that his compatriots had equally exhausted their patience as far as his debts were concerned. The Polish Jew, it is well known, dislikes to summon his fellow-believer before the law-courts of the Gentiles; hence, Weinstock's creditors carried their complaints before the rabbi, and he in turn cited the little tailor to appear before the *beschdin*²³

On the appointed day, the *schamos* (officer of the synagogue) had his hands full trying to keep back the angry crowd of complainants at the door of the hall. And when at last the rabbis — Levenson, Reb Baruch, and Reb Krakier — had taken their respective places at the large centre-table, — whose green baize presented as uncompromising an appearance as possible, — the creditors, headed by the burly form of Haima Mojsewitsch the butcher, and Lidde Feibisch the flour trades-woman, burst into the hall with a force that knew no resistance.

Finally, the poor tailor was ushered in. He was visibly embarrassed, but the ghost of a smile fluttered about his withered lips. When cries, menaces, gesticulations, lamentations, had become partly exhausted, the rabbis' voices and the schamos' fists produced sufficient order to enable each complainant to be heard in turn.

Hersch Gluckskind, the merchant, swore that Weinstock had been buying from him, for a space of years, silks, velvets, and various materials to the amount of eight hundred and sixty-one roubles, and that all he had received on account was eleven roubles. Eisig Iserles, the furrier, demanded eleven hundred and fifty roubles; Jost Fassel, the haberdasher, had trusted the scoundrel to the sum of two hundred and thirty roubles, and had been paid but one hundred and forty. Haima, the butcher, put in a claim for sixty-two roubles; Fantès, the baker, for thirty-four; Chave Kreudel, the old woman who sold geese, for seventeen; and stout little Lidde swore he owed her twelve roubles for flour.

This last creditor was the loudest in her cries, possibly because she had the least for which to hope, and by way of accentuation she marked each of her sentences by shaking her fist at the little man's nose.

The debtor declared, with a pitiful expression, that not having a copeck in the world he could not pay.

"But you have always been making money," interposed the rabbi.

"Only enough to prevent me from dying of hunger."

"Well, then, why have you gone on buying ribbons, stuffs, buttons, and whalebones?"

"God, who created heaven and earth from nothing," replied Weinstock, "had need of skins to make clothing for Adam and Eve when he banished them from Paradise. How, then, can I make clothing from nothing? I cannot manufacture a gown from fig-leaves, nor a cloak from cobwebs."

"Pay each creditor a part of his claim," proposed Reb Baruch.

"I could as well pay the whole as a part, Rabbi," said the tailor.

The beschedin felt itself powerless against this timid, meek little fellow who could be reached neither through imprecations, reproaches, nor propositions. All that the rabbis could do was to condemn Weinstock, and declare that the debts were valid. When the tailor had unostentatiously made his exit through a back door, Rabbi Levenson addressed the crowd as follows: —

"Not one of you will get a single copeck; and since you would not have the heart to carry a complaint against a Jew before the justice, have his business seized, and see him completely ruined —"

"No, no!" they shouted unanimously.

"Well, then, the only advice I can give you is, to give him a good lashing. That will be the best thing to do; but manage the business so that the police do not interfere."

"Good, very good!" cried the chorus of creditors.

The body of claimants then moved as one man toward Strohsack's tavern, where they drank a prodigious quantity of mead, and held a weighty council of war.

Henceforth, as regularly as night fell, seven shadows might be seen at the corner of the street, lying in wait for their victim. But valiant Lidde brandished her weapon in vain, Oser Weinstock was as cunning as a fox, and his creditors were finally forced to abandon the hope of breaking their cudgels over his back.

Madame Leopard, hearing of this strategic warfare, at once conceived a plan by which her thirst for vengeance might be satisfied beyond expectation. Her lover, David Zadokin, was made a coadjutor in the conspiracy, and between them a clever plan was concocted by which the unsuspecting rosher should be made a warning to all roshers henceforth and forever. No time was lost. The widow repaired to her tailor's and ordered a new kazabaika. When it was finished she wrote to Koscieloski, and begged him to meet her that evening behind the Catholic church, at eight o'clock, — an hour when, in Zamosto, even the prowling cat is an unknown intruder upon the silent streets.

It was a frosty February evening. The Pole arrived precisely on the stroke of eight, and a few minutes later appeared the fair strategist, enveloped in a fur cloak and thick veil.

"I can only be here a few moments," she said. "Our acquaintanceship has been discovered and we are watched. There is nothing left for us to do than to make our escape. My life is in peril now that it is known I am going to be baptized."

"You make me the happiest of mortals," he made answer, as he covered her hands with kisses.

"But before we elope, we must have a talk together and agree upon a plan of action."

"Of course."

"Very well. Come to my house this evening at nine o'clock, in Weinstock's clothes, with a false beard and peisses [curls], and bring me the kazabaika he has ready for me."

"Charming! I fly to obey your commands, my divinity!"

With hurried adieux they parted, each going in opposite directions.

Five roubles succeeded in bringing about the most perfect willingness on Weinstock's part to be of service to his tenant, and as the town clock struck nine, Koscieloski — the kazabaika over his arm — appeared at his innamorata's door. He was dressed in a Jewish caftan, his head ornamented with a jarmourka (small velvet cap), and his face thoroughly disguised by a long beard and falling ringlets.

In the meanwhile, Zadokin, as carefully disguised, had whispered in the creditors' ears that the tailor would be at Madame Leopard's house at nine.

The wily plotter had taken the precaution to invite two of her acquaintances, Madame Salon and Madame Abrahamowitsch, to spend the evening with her. Their presence would necessitate the luckless lover playing his part to the bitter end. When the two ladies had admired the superb kazabaika to their hearts' content, its owner tried it on, asking her tailor's assistance in the serious undertaking.

The short purple velvet cloak, lined and trimmed with ermine, lent a thousand charms to the widow's figure, and added a suppleness of its own to the graceful form. While she was looking at herself in the glass, her adorer was so absorbed in watching her pretty neck with the soft curls playing about it, and in admiring the shapely hips defined by the shining fur, that he was in utter ignorance of what was passing in the rear of the room.

Zadokin had noiselessly opened the door, and the creditors had tiptoed into the room. With a sudden bound Haima seized the rosher by the collar, and valiant Lidde went lustily to work with her cudgel.

There was a unanimous cry of: —

"Ah, we have got hold of you at last, you cursed tailor!" While Lidde closed the refrain with: "Since you won't pay us, we'll mark our acquittance on your back!"

A shower of blows rained from all sides. Zadokin's horsewhip fell remorselessly. Lidde's cudgel was aimed unerringly; old Chave's red umbrella proved useful as well as ornamental. And while the victim squirmed and struggled, Madame Leopard leaned quietly against the stove, her hands hidden in the sleeves of her jacket, her lips wreathed with a smile of cruel satisfaction, and encouraged the crowd from time to time with cries of, "Don't spare him! On with your work! No pity, no mercy!"

When arms were weary, the poor wretch was pushed down the stairway into the street, and the last sound that floated to him, from the din and uproar above, was the triumphant laughter of the fascinating widow.

*

The moment Koscieloski had been seized, he at once understood that the wily Jewess had entrapped him; but he felt that an avowal of his identity would but make matters worse, and that he must play the tailor to the end if he did not wish to make himself the laughing-stock of the town, and run the risk of losing his situation. Consequently, he let himself be beaten and thrown downstairs without offering more than a feeble resistance.

He kept his bed for a day, and then returned to his office with the air of one to whom absolutely nothing has happened.

Each and every one of the participants in this cruel joke subserved his own best interests by not speaking of it, all the more that the rosher appeared completely cured of his antipathy to the house of Israel, contenting himself by avoiding the Jews, and especially the Jewesses.

Madame Leopard was well content, and another sweet morsel of vengeance was rolled under her cajoling tongue, on the occasion of her sending Koscieloski a perfumed note bidding him welcome to her nuptials with David Zamokin.

XI.

HANDSOME CALEB.

BOHEMIA.

THE family residence of the Schmelkes was a well-known feature of the little street in the sombre Jewish town which pressed closely about the famous Alt-Nai-Schule.²⁴ The family itself was a recognized one in all the length and breadth of Bohemia, and held in high esteem by the entire Israelitish community of the ancient royal town of Prague.

The former head of the house — his body had long since been laid to rest in the family plot — had been an exchange broker; his widow, Mrs. Eugenie Schmelkes, held the reins of government and brought up her sons to the best of her ability, in other words, neither well nor ill. In fact, the mother's gentle dominance was an absolutely good factor in the education of her eldest son, — a sober, serious-minded young man, who had grown up exactly as he should have done, had made an excellent match, and finally taken charge of the business, and conducted it with zeal and discretion. The younger son, Caleb, on the contrary, had been so coddled and spoiled by the mother and half-a-dozen aunts that, to use a Jewish expression, he had become a thoroughly useless man.

To say that he was a bad fellow would be unjust and untrue. He had but one fault, personal vanity, and though that was extreme, the young fellow was not altogether to blame for its marked development. When he was a little lad, they had dressed him like a girl; when he was older, like a young prince. He had been continually told that he was handsome. There was never rose of the Ghetto worthy to touch his beautiful hand; and hence it was he had developed into what he was, — “handsome Caleb,” as the Israelites of his class scornfully termed him; the “pourez” (coxcomb), as those of his sect who wore shabby caftans despitefully called him.

“Handsomeness” had learned absolutely nothing, consequently he practised no profession, and his only occupation consisted in promenading up and down the fashionable streets of the city, awaiting the beautiful fiancée who should fall at his feet like a ripe fruit from heaven, where, according to talmudic wisdom, marriages are made.

Years had come and gone, and yet neither position, fortune, nor wife had fallen at his feet.

Freitel, the most celebrated schadchen (marriage broker) of his time, paid our young man a visit on one occasion, and proffered his services. Caleb not alone refused to listen to him, but accompanied his rejection with such a disdainful and arrogant look of surprise that little Freitel was stung to the quick. He had never been subjected to such an affront. He rose to his full height, on tiptoe if it must be confessed, and, with a menacing gesture of his forefinger, exclaimed: “Young man, you will never get a wife without the schadchen's aid, as sure as my name is Freitel. The good God above knows me, and knows how I can be relied upon, otherwise He never would have intrusted me with this task here on earth. But if you will persist in trying to get a wife without Freitel, let me give you a word of advice, — try to hide your bandy-legs.”

Freitel turned on his heels, left the chamber, and Caleb sat as though turned to stone in his chair. Had he really bandy-legs? It could not be. He rose, stepped toward his cheval glass, scrutinized his figure from head to foot, and then fell, utterly crushed and humiliated, into a chair.

It was true! His legs were crooked. He, the Adonis of the Jewish quarter of Prague! He who believed himself extraordinarily handsome and absolutely irresistible! He who looked contemptuously at the most refined and charming Jewish girls, and audaciously raised his eyes to young countesses and Bohemian princesses! He, with bandy-legs! It was horrible!

He posed again before the mirror, examined himself minutely, and reflected. Did he not know of women, as vain as himself, who by the use of certain cosmetics had made their first wrinkles disappear as by enchantment? The thought was a happy one. He had discovered the remedy for his defect. He, "handsome Caleb," whose high opinion of his physical charms had brought him the happiest moments of his life, had hit upon a means of concealing his bandy-legs.

He at once paid a visit to his tailor, bestowed serious attention upon the latest plates, finally gave an important order, entering minutely into detail, and then returned home, his brow once more placid and serene. For a few days, he was not visible to his friends. When he reappeared to the world, he wore a very long frock coat that fell to his ankles, a black broadcloth cloak of ample proportions, and a large wide-brimmed hat completed the transformation, and gave him the appearance of an artist of distinction. In summer, he would envelop himself in an immense Arabian burnouse, its dazzling whiteness not its most inconspicuous feature; in winter, he would take his large fur cloak, which served him as dressing-gown, and wrap it about him *à la* Doctor Faust, — and these novel costumes would elicit unanimous cries of admiration from mother, aunts, and cousins, who found him handsomer and more fascinating than ever.

*

Thus metamorphosed, his faith in his star returned. Once again he was firmly persuaded that every woman he met was dying all for love of him, that all the young girls were weeping their pretty eyes out because he would not look at them, that every mother with marriageable daughters had singled him out as the son-in-law.

In every circumstance connected with his life, he saw the interposition of fate; in the most trivial incident, he discovered mysterious indications which he believed pointed significantly to the woman whom he admired for the moment. Owing to this hallucination, his life consisted of a series of romances which existed only in his imagination. He was happy, he struggled against fate, he suffered, he wept, and reality entered not at all into the various causes of his emotion.

Every Sunday, after Mass, he would station himself at the door of the Catholic cathedral to watch the nobles' daughters pass by, as well as to grant them the privilege of seeing him. Once, and once only, General Rothfeld's daughter glanced at him, — Caleb had unquestionably a fine head, and the maiden was not proof against beauty; this single glance, however, was enough for the poor youth. He was firmly persuaded that the girl was madly in love with him, and forthwith set himself in pursuit of her, never daring a close approach. When he met the father of his lady-love on the street, he bowed respectfully, though with unavoidable affectation. The acquaintanceship would probably have never passed this immature state had not chance befriended him. On one occasion, it happened that the general, wanting to light his cigar in the street, turned to Caleb, who was near by, and asked for fire; the young man, profiting by the occasion, accompanied his acquaintance without an invitation, and at once entered into a dissertation upon the stage, politics, literature, etc. The monologue threatened to become interminable, — the general could not conceal his impatience, and Caleb, finally perceiving the situation, had the good

sense to bow himself off. Relating the incident later, to his mother, he painted it in such flattering colors that he even turned to advantage the general's impatience to be rid of him. "You see," he concluded with a sigh, "everything is lost. The general is offended because I did not declare myself."

A few days after this occurrence, he learned, through the "Bohemia," that this the latest lady of his choice was engaged to a certain colonel. "I knew it," he murmured. "Ah, what I have made her suffer. Irresolution, irresolution, you have been my curse!"

A few weeks later, our young Adonis was attracted, at the theatre, by the presence of a remarkably pretty girl, Count Waldstein's daughter. The girl was in a box opposite. It chanced that Caleb's neighbor, an officer of dragoons, had arrested the girl's notice, for her lorgnette was frequently directed toward him. Caleb doubted not for a moment that it was he who was the object of her glances, and from that evening he became her shadow. At concerts, balls, at church, skating on the Moldau, wherever the young Countess was, there also was "handsome Caleb." Seeing her father one day, — the Count was on his way home from the hunt, and had decked his cap with a bit of spruce, — the young visionary nudged his companion, and, pointing to the green twig, whispered confidently: "Do you see; that branch signifies I can hope." Another cruel announcement in the "Bohemia," however, again cut the thread of his vain illusions. Miss Waldstein was engaged.

"Handsome Caleb" and his friends sat in the corner of a cafe smoking good cigars and gossiping leisurely. Finally, their attention was called to the fact that they were getting some news, for one of the habitués had been roused from his lethargy, and was entering into a rather animated description of how Miss Waldstein had given her heart to a poor baron of whom the family disapproved, and that if she married her present intended, she would be forced to the altar. Caleb could contain himself no longer; rising proudly, his eyes sparkling with suppressed excitement, he exclaimed: "Gentlemen, behold in me the poor baron!"

An unfortunate pastime to which Caleb was addicted was that of answering personal advertisements in the papers in the belief that he was the object of the mysterious correspondence. Needless to say this provoked endless confusion, and drew upon him the malediction of his victims. A visit from a veiled lady who threatened him with a lashing finally induced him to abandon this dangerous intrusion into other folks' affairs, and his resolution was more firmly seated by an intimation from an officer of hussars that if he did not mind his own business, he would have his nose pulled. Baroness Diviz had broken irrevocably with her most ardent admirer, Captain Legnedv, owing to Caleb's pushing his way into the correspondence, and the threatened lashing was decidedly a moderate way for the indignant lady to give vent to her outraged feelings.

The need of money was, owing to Prince Charming's apt faculty for doing nothing, a very frequent one, and his mother, aunts, and brother were laid under repeated contribution. To his brother's protestations and sage advice, the invariable response was: "Never fear, Nathan, I will pay you every gulden with interest when I make my rich marriage."

This rich marriage had become a fixed idea with him, and when the people of the Ghetto would see him pass they would wisely shake their heads and mutter: "Poor fellow, he's meschugga [crazy]."

*

Creditors could not be put off forever with this promise of a wealthy alliance, and Caleb's lavish expenditures had drained his mother's ever-open purse. To add to his misfortunes, his brother had become inflexible, and firmly declared that not another florin should the spendthrift have from him. At this crisis in his fate, Freitel, the schadchen, appeared upon the scene; and this is how it happened: —

There lived in Jewish Prague at this time an old bookseller by the name of Pesach Wolf. He was wealthy, respected, and the rigor of his orthodoxy inspired a wholesome fear among his brethren. A widower and childless, his entire affection and pride had centred upon his niece Jenta, who had been a member of his household since she had been a child. He wished to see her married, as any loving guardian would have done; but despite the enormous marriage portion offered with the prize, as yet the prospective husband was not within reach.

Having lost all hope of seeing his protégé settled in matrimony, and being a profound believer in mysticism and inscrutable intervention, the old gentleman found himself one evening in the shadow of the Alt-Nai-Schule, making inquiry for a certain Polish talmudist whose wondrous learning and Oriental cabalism invited his confidence.

Here he stumbled across Freitel, and locking his arm in the schadchen's, for fear he would escape him, he whispered confidentially: "They say that the renowned Rabbi Loeb's gaulem²⁵ is kept up in the attic of the Alt-Nai-Schule."

"Yes, so I have heard."

"I wonder if any one could get it?"

"And why, pray? Are you not aware that no one is allowed to go, nowadays, up in the attic? It is possible that in olden times the rabbis circulated all sorts of curious and frightful stories about the Alt-Nai-Schule, so as to intimidate the Christians; it is even possible that treasures are hidden under its rafters, and that it spreads its dark wings over many a mystery. Possible? Nay, it is probable."

"Well, then, Freitel," said Pesach Wolf, and his hand trembled on the other's arm with excitement; "do you know of any talmudist as learned as the late Rabbi Loeb, who would be capable of making a gaulem, and animating it by breathing into it the names of the holy men?"

Freitel shook with laughter. "Fairy tales, Mr. Wolf, fairy tales! Doubtless Rabbi Loeb had an automaton which gave rise to this fable. But what do you want with a gaulem?"

"I should like to have one for my poor Jenta," answered the old man, with a sigh. "Since I cannot give her a husband, I might at least give her a handsome gaulem to amuse her."

Freitel pressed his forefinger to his forehead and exclaimed: "A handsome gaulem! She shall have it!"

The schadchen took an unceremonious leave of his friend, and in a few minutes was knocking at Caleb's door. This time he was accorded a more gracious reception, and mention of a rich heiress produced a charming affability on his host's part.

"The affair is not as easily arranged as you would imagine," said Freitel, as he rose from his chair. "As handsome a fellow as you are, you must act with extreme prudence, and conform unquestioningly to the course I shall dictate."

Caleb promised blind obedience. His first step was to install himself in lodgings that the schadchen had engaged for him, immediately opposite Pesach Wolf's house. "Show yourself at the window," said Freitel as he welcomed his client to the new abode, "so that you can see the young lady across the street. Dress yourself in

whatever style you see fit; if my taste was asked, I should say, disguise yourself as a Turk. But the main thing is not to let your legs be seen until I give you permission.”

*

Opera-glass in hand, “handsome Caleb” seated himself in the window, and awaited developments. Presently, he noticed a young lady at the opposite window; he opened his, and by the aid of his glass made as close a survey as possible of the fair unknown.

“A fine looking man,” said Jenta to herself, as she noticed the vision of masculine loveliness in his Turkish dressing-gown and with a fez upon his head that converted him for the moment into an ideal pacha.

While effecting Caleb’s change of residence, Freitel had not been idle at his friends’, the Wolfs, taking steps there of a different character, but serving toward the same end. He had brought Jenta a box of cosmetics, and skilfully taught her how to metamorphose her sallow little face into a semblance of loveliness; a burnt cork had to do duty for an eyebrow pencil, but even that produced wondrous results, and, this transformation accomplished, he induced the old gentleman to buy his niece a red satin tea-gown, which, at a distance, gave Jenta the appearance of a perfect beauty. Caleb was enamoured, declared himself anxious to ask her hand at once; while as for the girl, she could scarcely restrain her impatience for a nearer sight of her Adonis-like lover.

The time had now arrived for Freitel to paint Jenta to Caleb such as she really was. “Oh, she is pretty beyond a doubt,” began the wily diplomatist, “but — she squints slightly; of course that adds a certain charm to her beauty. She has a very slender figure, perhaps she is a trifle too tall; but her height gives her a more majestic appearance. And —”

“Well, well, what more?” interposed Caleb, a shade of disquiet crossing his face.

“Oh, I was just about to say that I hoped you would not be discouraged in the face of these little difficulties. You must not look too closely at a young girl whose portion is two hundred thousand florins. It is true she has a few false teeth; but that is all. And what teeth! Actual pearls, I assure you.”

“You are absolutely sure she will have two hundred thousand florins?”

“Absolutely sure.”

Caleb asked no more questions. He was ready for the interview, and the following day accompanied the schadchen to Pesach Wolfs, where he formally demanded Jenta’s hand, and where, after all agreements had been settled, he was formally presented to the heiress.

At first sight he was rather dismayed to find that his intended wife was at least half a head taller than he, and that she had no more superfluous flesh about her than a well-bred greyhound. He had taken the irrevocable step, however, he could not retire gracefully, and beside the thought of the two hundred thousand florins proved a staunch support. Upon further acquaintance he discovered that his prospective bride was bright and well informed, and the dreaded squint, strange to say, instead of being a defect added piquancy to the animated face.

Both were well content. “Handsome Caleb” had succeeded at last in getting the rich wife he had been expecting for the last fifteen years, and Jenta had unexpectedly received the handsome gaulem she had so long coveted. In truth, her happiness overflowed. She not alone admired her husband, she adored him. She would make him change his clothes half-a-dozen times a day to see in which suit

she liked him best. She waited upon him as a slave, and was proud that she might serve him. From a mother who had petted and spoiled him, Caleb had fallen into the hands of a wife who spoiled and petted him; and, desiring nothing better, he yielded, a willing victim, to the agreeable situation.

There was but one black speck in the clear, bright heaven of his bliss, and that was none other than his wife's height, — a small black speck, it is true, but it stood between him and perfect happiness. But the man who had so ingeniously disguised the malformation of his limbs was equal to this perplexing question of his wife's predominance of stature. Asserting his marital supremacy, he gave express orders that his Jenta should wear heelless shoes and perfectly flat bonnets. His own hats he wore as high as fashion would permit, his boots were decidedly French as far as the heels were concerned, and his chairs he had padded with extra cushions. True, he walked as though upon stilts, and sat like a child with his feet above the floor; but uniformity of height was maintained, and Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Schmelkes were happy.

Rabbi Loeb's gaulem still rests undisturbed under the rafters of the solemn Alt-Nai-Schule; and in the ancient Jewish cemetery of Prague, over the tomb of the great cabalist who was the friend of Tycho Brahe and of Rudolph the Wise, the weeping willows bend their heads and listen to the dead and gone ages as they transmit their precious legends of olden times when crime and darkness still dealt murderously with Israel's scattered people.

XII.

PRAISED BE GOD, WHO HATH GIVEN US DEATH!

SPAIN.

IN a little valley shut in between two hills lay “the dwelling of life,” as the Jews call their cemetery. Its numerous trees were centuries old. With a protective grace, they spread their branches over crumbling tombstones and vaults overrun by grass and wild flower.

Here it was that the Jews had tenderly laid their dead to rest since the time of their flight from Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. The Roman Empire had passed away; Gothic dominion had been extinguished; sombre ruins attested Moorish splendor long since vanished; the Spanish monarchy, embracing the world in its grasp, a kingdom upon which the sun never set, had become extinct, — but the Israelites, the exiles without a country, had survived despite butchery and the Inquisition. Above, on the plain where brooded the little Spanish town, below in the bustling harbor, resounded the noise of traffic, the clamor and clatter of life in all its outward manifestations; here calm and peace reigned supreme.

Dusky shadows fell thick upon the scene, not a sound intruded upon the silence; occasionally, a fitful sunbeam would glide across the dense foliage, and cast a ray of light upon some half-effaced epitaph; at times, too, a bird would fling a note into the stillness, while, above the hush, as it were, the bees hummed drowsily over brilliant flowers heavily laden with fragrance.

In a corner of the cemetery two cypresses stood guard over a little mound upon which sat a man who had long since entered into the deepening shadows of life. He was always there, — day and night, summer and winter. In his long white shroud, his silvered hair, his beard falling upon his breast like a mass of snow, he seemed more like some ghostly monument than aught of flesh and blood. He sat silently. The world about him was as though it had no existence.

Everybody knew Father Menachem. He had reached his hundredth year, and, with head erect and a mind still vigorous, was passing his remaining days among a new generation.

While the old man was dreaming, a magnificent butterfly alighted on an opening rose before him, and, while swaying on its petals, seemed an easy prey to a tall, fine-looking boy who was eagerly chasing it.

Menachem raised his head, and, looking at the boy, whose fine, handsome, mobile face, golden curls, and great, blue, smiling eyes recalled him to this earth, murmured: “Ghiron!”

“No, Father Menachem,” said the little fellow; “my name is Schamai, and my mother’s name is Kive Castallio.”

“But your figure, your expression, your features, are precisely those of my little son whom I lost when he was but ten years old. Ah, it is a long while since then, — half a century. My God, how quickly time passes — and yet how slowly withal!”

“Is that his tomb?” asked Schamai.

The old man bent his head in assent, pushed back the hair from his brow, and smiled: “What are you doing here, little one? This place is not for you. You cannot yet understand why this peaceful spot is called ‘the dwelling of life.’ Remain outside of it, Schamai, — outside of it, where the sun shines, where the eternal refrain of the waves may be heard, where the plough digs deep into the earth, where white sails

fly over seas and bring treasures from land to land. See, my child, one day you will return here, and you will understand; you will find here that peace and happiness you have sought in vain in the vortex of time."

"Father Menachem," said the lad, as he sat close to the old man, and leaned confidently against him, "they say that you know all the hagadoths; tell me a story."

"A story?" Menachem lowered his head and said, as though to himself: "Yes, a story — a dream! What is it other than that?" Then, passing his hand over his forehead, he began: "Once upon a time there was a man who was neither wiser nor better nor more upright than his neighbors. He adored God, and loved his fellow-men. He sought truth, and he fell into error; he tried to act for the best, and he blundered into mistakes; he studied, he pursued wisdom, and at last he discovered that he was acting the part of a fool, — that one man was worth as much as another, and that the destiny of all human beings was the same. He entertained hopes, desires, dreams that were never realized; he tried to penetrate into the mysteries of things which he never learned to apprehend. At last, he contented himself with providing for his own and his family's needs, and he lived on from day to day like all the others. He took to himself a wife, as beautiful as a full-blown rose; he loved her, and she gave him all her heart. He had children whom he cherished. Neither rich nor poor, he was able to supply his own with the necessities of life, and that contented him.

"But the years passed, and with them the generations. One by one fell men, like autumn leaves, and they returned not again. Others took their place; these in turn were succeeded by others, and, at last, the man found himself alone. He had buried all, — sisters, brothers, wife, children, relatives, and friends, — all, all!

"The angel of death passed and repassed before him and touched him not. One year succeeded another, and he was ever alone, solitary, abandoned in a world to which he had become a stranger, among those who understood him not, and whom he did not understand.

"He had lived. He had met happiness, misfortune, felt joy and anguish. The world had nothing new to offer him; no surprise, no delight, awaited him; the future held for him neither a new sorrow nor an unknown care.

"And the man began to desire this Death of which every one is afraid; and when he prayed to God he exclaimed, 'Lord, lead me away from this valley of shadows, and let me see thy everlasting light!'"

For a few moments the boy was silent, then he said softly, —

"Father Menachem, that man — is yourself?"

"Yes, that man is myself."

"And you wish to die?"

"Yes, child; death is for me what life is for you."

The old man rose and took the boy by the hand: "Come, for you the golden doors of the terrestrial paradise are yet to be opened. Youth smiles at you, and at her side are happiness, beauty, honor, glory. Come!"

Together they crossed the rows of tombs, left the cemetery, and slowly mounted the hill. When they had reached the gateway of the town, Menachem pointed significantly to the Moorish cupolas, burnished in the rays of the setting sun, and to the blue, sea glistening with a splendor all its own; then he led the child to the little house near by where beautiful Kive stood, her infant at her breast, and with a holy compassionate smile he left them.

*

Three days later, and little Schamai ran through the Jewish quarter of the town, bent on a pressing errand. He had come from the cemetery, Father Menachem having sent him in all haste to summon ten men of the "Chebura Kdischa."²⁶ The hour so patiently awaited, so ardently desired, had come at last. Slowly and painfully the old man climbed the hill, cast a lingering glance at sea and plain, then passed through one of the narrow gateways into the town. He was pausing for breath at the threshold of his house when Schamai and the ten men appeared.

"What do you want, Father Menachem?" asked the elder.

"To die," responded the old man.

He stepped inside the house, entered the large room on the ground floor, and, pressing close to the wall for support, reached his bed, and sank heavily upon it, the white shroud falling closely about the helpless form.

"Will you have a doctor?"

"I wish to die," repeated Menachem. His head was thrown back, his eyes were glazed, his hands clasped upon his breast. The breathing grew more and more oppressed and difficult.

The quorum formed in a semicircle about Menachem, and the dying man pronounced the Schemang (prayer for the expiring) and the thirteen articles of faith.

When he had finished, they recited a psalm.

Suddenly the old man sat up in bed. His face was transfigured. Raising his hands, he murmured: "Praised be God, who hath given us death!"

The body fell back, rigid, motionless, a smile upon the lips.

A quarter of an hour passed. Two of the men lifted the corpse and laid it on the floor in the middle of the chamber, the arms were pressed close to the body, the closed hand formed a Hebrew sch.²⁷ When they had wrapped the body in its winding-sheet, and lighted the little lamp at its head, the window was opened, and the soul took wing toward Paradise.

Profound silence reigned within doors, and without, the evening star rose with a light from heaven upon a scene of rest and peace.

*

The day of the burial all shops were closed, and every one in the town followed the funeral train.

Upon the narrow boards, the body wrapped in shroud and talith (praying shawl), the head bound in white, lay the patient wayfarer who had looked so long for Death's friendly grasp.

Each in turn approached the corpse, touched the great toe, and humbly asked forgiveness.

The men intoned the Joschef Bessesser (the chant accompanying Jews to their final resting-place); the weeping women were sent away that their cries might not disturb the repose of the dead, then slowly and tenderly was the simple coffin lifted, those bearing the feet leading the way, and the mourners moved toward "the dwelling of life."

At the cemetery a circle was formed about the grave, dug close beside the mound where the little son had been buried so many years before.

Those distantly related to the deceased stepped forward and repeated: "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Then they tore their cloaks on the left side.

Finally, the rabbi stood at the head of the grave, and said impressively: "O God, we submit unto thy keeping the deceased Menachem Ben Joseph, and we pray for the salvation of his soul. Receive it, let it enter into eternal repose, into eternal joy, into eternal beatitude. Let it partake of the blessings thou hast promised to the pious and just in recompense for all terrestrial sufferings, for their cares, their struggles, their torments. May the Most Merciful pardon this soul!

"Menachen, thou hast reached up into the light, and we are still groping in the darkness; thou hast comprehended truth, and we are wandering in error; thou hast entered into peace, and we are struggling through the maze of desolation.

"Grant, O Lord, that we, too, may escape from the valley of the shadow, and be received into the peace of thy kingdom.

"Blessed be the memory of the just. Amen!"

The corpse was lowered into the grave, the head turned to the East, the body seated.

Heavily fell the clods of earth; slowly and silently the funeral train left the place of the dead, and each in turn, before passing the gate, plucked a blade of grass and cast it behind him with the words: "Forget not that thou art dust."

All had left the sombre spot, — all save the grave-digger and the child. When the last shovelful had been thrown on the mound, the boy knelt down and tenderly laid upon it a great bunch of flowers he had gathered in the cemetery.

"Sleep well, Father Menachem," he said, and then turning sadly, he left the dead and passed out of the shadows into the light, — into the light where the grain waved on its slender stalk, and where the waves broke heavily against the sands of the shore.

XIII.

SCHALEM ALECHEM.

ALSACE.

WE cannot all be held accountable for our pursuing fate. Upright and hard working people there are many who make a brave resistance when misfortune assails them and who are stricken down at every effort. In their homes have the dalles (spirits of ill-luck) taken up their abode, and these dalles are misery personified; for the heavier press care and harassment, the more thoroughly at home do they feel; and the leaner grow the mortal inmates of the abode they have chosen, the fatter grow they.

Surely one of the dalles had found a resting place at Mother Jette Goldenblum's. An honest, industrious woman was Jette. Not a soul in the Alsatian market-town but had a good word for the worthy creature, and time was when her shop had proved a comfortable means of subsistence. But within the past few years ill-luck had overtaken her, and her little home was burdened with debts. Her father, Beer Taubes, a man whose generosity was his fault, had gradually dissipated his small fortune in helping needy friends and relatives out of their troubles; and now that the world had turned a cold shoulder upon him, he gratefully accepted an arm-chair at his daughter's fireside, and a seat at her board.

Jette's only son, Fritz, was as intelligent and hard-working a young fellow as was to be found in the community, but the household dalles had doubtless cast its baleful spell over him as well; for no sooner would he get a situation than his employer would fail, or quite as frequently the daughter would fall in love with him, and so rather than compromise his pretty little sweetheart, Sarah Meyer, he would have to begin his search for work afresh.

With no hope of employment, with not a pfenning in his pocket, Fritz sat one evening in his mother's cottage, blankly staring into the future, and seeing naught but gloom and pressing want. Suddenly, he started to his feet, went over to his mother, lifted her tear-stained face to the light, and said tenderly: "Mother, German Kougel believes that I can make a success of my life in the New World; he has promised to lend me what money I need if I wish to cross the ocean and try my luck. Shall I go?" Jette's heart gave a leap as though it would hold back the son she loved so well, but a smile touched her lips as she said: "Go, my boy, and may God be with you."

That same evening, Fritz sat, holding his sweetheart's hand, on the hearth-bench. Their words were few, but their eyes were eloquent, and they understood one another.

"I will wait for you," said Sarah, as he rose to leave; "if you do not return — I will never marry another. I promise you."

Fritz left the following day. His grandfather gave him his blessing, his mother and sweetheart bade him farewell at the railway station, and home seemed to have lost its meaning to the two sorrowing women.

In less than a month the first transatlantic letter arrived, and in it money. Fritz had found a lucrative situation in Milwaukee. He wrote that each week his letters should contain all of his wages that necessity did not force him to spend. He kept his word. The youth who had quitted home and kindred, and was finding hope and encouragement in the new life before him, forgot not that holiest of commands: "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land."

Fritz prospered. Five years had rolled around: five years of patient waiting on Sarah's part; five years of longing and anticipation on the mother's; and regularly came the weekly letters with the same remittances bringing peace and comfort into the home whence misery had long since fled. The towns-people knew of the letters, of the brave fellow's devotion, and when Jette appeared in the streets they bowed respectfully before her; but the salutation was as much to Fritz as to the mother, and thus unconsciously they rendered homage to the son who had made himself his mother's shield and protector.

*

Passover was at hand. A voluminous letter had arrived from Milwaukee: the remittance had been larger than usual; happiness was flooding the little home with its sunshine. Sarah had helped Mother Jette to wash the pots, pans, and dishes that had already been purified by fire, and had lent her services at the house-cleaning which, from attic to cellar, had left no spot unhallowed by soap and water.

The feast of Passover is commemorative of the flight from Egypt. According to Exodus: "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day shall ye put away leaven out of your houses. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses."

Formerly, everything that could possibly be considered leaven was sold; but nowadays this sale is merely a form,— everything leaven being given to a Christian friend who pays for it, and then returns it after Passover in consideration of his money. Mother Jette had conformed to this custom, had played the little comedy, and now all was in order. Everything shone in the little dining-room; the well-scrubbed floor had been sprinkled with red and yellow sand, and curtains stiff with the consciousness of soap and starch ornamented the highly polished windows. At the head of the long table was the lahne (arm-chair) intended for the head of the family, and the room was filled with the odor of violets that Sarah had gathered in the neighboring woods. The matzos (unleavened bread) had long since been prepared, and now Jette was busy packing together her presents and alms, — an offering of love imposed upon the Israelite on this solemn occasion, and one cheerfully fulfilled, for the charity of the pious Jew is one of his chief virtues, — while Sarah stood ready to set off on her rounds with the basket of matzos and wine. She would return only after rabbi, chanter, schamos, teacher, poor talmudists, and other destitute Jews and Christians had been made happy by her gracious smile and the widow's gifts.

The shadows were lengthening, and Passover eve had come. Grandfather Taubes was seated before the door awaiting the rising of the evening star, which should announce the beginning of the fourteenth day of Nisan and the feast of the Passover. The shulklopfers were hurrying through the streets, knocking three times at all Israelitish doors, and thus making known that it was time for prayer.

Suddenly, cries of joy were heard in the distance, and children came running up the street, their little faces a-light with the prospect of pleasant excitement. Then followed a man, his knapsack over his back; and the youngsters, no longer able to control their delight, burst out into loud hurrahs.

"Schalem Alechem!" (Peace be with you!) exclaimed the stranger.

"Alechem Schalem!" (Peace also be with you!) responded the bystanders.

Just at this moment Mother Jette threw open the window, and the white curtain framed her head with Sarah's leaning behind it.

“What! Mrs. Goldenblum, don’t you know your Fritz?” cried the boys in a breath.

Yes; it was Fritz, the young American in high Russian-leather boots, a long beard almost disguising him beyond recognition. For a while, joy was unconfined, every one wishing to be the first to greet the new-comer, and bid him welcome to his native land; but at last quiet was restored, the peace of evening fell upon the street, and the little family, silent in their joy, repaired to the synagogue. On their return from the house of prayer, Fritz began to recount his adventures, mother and sweetheart listening as though they could not drink in greedily enough what they had taught themselves so long to do without.

Fritz had made a fortune in America. His savings had enabled him to buy a small business, which he shortly after sold advantageously, and then, with thirty thousand francs in his knapsack, had taken passage for home.

*

While this wonderful history was being told, the stars had come out, and, feeling that their private concerns had made them unmindful of their religious observances, the Goldenblum family hastened home, and at once began the ceremonies appointed for this first evening of the Passover.

Grandfather Taubes took his seat in the armchair at the head of the table, upon which burned the seven-branched candlestick; on his right sat his daughter, on his left Sarah, opposite him his grandson. Before them on the white tablecloth were the haggada (Hebrew prayer-books containing the songs and prayers for the Passover evening service). The two men sat with covered heads. In the middle of the table were three large thick matzos on top of one another, under each a white napkin, and around these were placed the various symbols of the feast. These consisted of a sweetmeat made of apples and cinnamon, denoting the lime and clay with which the Israelites made bricks in Egypt; some vinegar, a hard-boiled egg, and a stalk of horse-radish, commemorative of misery and bondage; a small bone with but little meat on it, figuring the paschal lamb; and, finally, a glass of red wine, indicative of the blood in which the Pharaohs were bathed. The old man pronounced the benedictory prayer; Fritz rose and, taking a ewer, poured some water on his grandfather’s hands; then all of the family, rising from their seats and touching the plate of matzos in the middle of the table, recited in unison: “Behold the bread of misery which our parents ate in Egypt. Let him who is hungry eat with us, let him who is needy make the Passover with us.”

At this moment, there was a knock at the door, and a Polish schnorrer (beggar) entered. He bowed to those present, was greeted by them in turn, and took his seat at the table.

Fritz, looking at the book before him, recited in Hebrew: “Why is it that we have all this ceremony?” And the old man responded: “Because we were slaves in Egypt, and the Eternal, our God, brought us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.” Then, continuing, he recited the history of the sufferings of the Israelites in bondage, and their flight from Egypt; and the ceremony was concluded by those present tasting the symbolic viands, and by the old man filling the large glass before him for the prophet Elijah, the patron saint of the Hebrews.

Then supper began. Fritz told of things strange and wonderful in America, and the schnorrer entertained the company with all sorts of anecdotes probable and improbable. Beer broke the bread as a symbol of the crossing of the Red Sea, and,

giving each one a piece of the matzos, he recited grace. This prayer concluded, he turned to his grandson and said: —

“Fritz, open the door.”

The young man rose, opened wide the door, and stood to one side, profound silence reigning in the room. During this silence, Elijah is supposed to enter, invisible. When Fritz had closed the door, and the prophet had, as was supposed, touched his lips to the glass poured out for him, the one hundred and fifteenth psalm was intoned, and then other sacred songs followed.

It was late when the family had retired, the inmates of the little house omitting their nightly prayers, for on Passover night God himself keeps watch over Israel as he did centuries before in the land of Egypt.

*

On the morrow, while they were still lingering over their midday meal, guests knocked at the door, and soon the little sitting-room was filled with a crowd of visitors, including rabbi, schamos, chanter, teacher, cousins, male and female, all talking at once, and yet all ready to listen as soon as the young stranger should take the floor. When Fritz had begun the tale of his adventures and experiences, his audience let not a word escape them, and the naive curiosity depicted on their faces was delightful to behold. They would, indeed, have remained regardless of all thought of intrusion, had not the hour for the minhag (afternoon prayer) recalled them to their religious devotions, and so with many a hearty handshake the gratified visitors left the Goldenblums for the house of prayer.

That afternoon, Fritz and Sarah walked away from the bustling little town, and chose the green fields for the scene of their confidences. There was not a trace of winter in the air: spring flowers were topping the grass in saucy pride; the black earth was bursting open, showing long lines of tender green; pink buds were swelling on the trees; the sky was serenely blue; and the air was filled with twitter of birds too intent on their nest-building to notice the lovers.

They walked hand in hand, and were silent; for their hearts were speaking for them, and swelling with gratitude for undeserved mercy from the Creator of heaven and earth.

“Sarah,” said Fritz, at last, “we will build a little home, and our marriage shall take place soon. Tell me, darling, which would you prefer, — a farm here in the country with horses and cows and chickens, or a small shop in town?”

“Whatever you want, Fritz,” said the girl, with a smile that made her lover’s heart leap for joy. “Whatever pleases you pleases me, for your sorrow is my sorrow, and your happiness mine.”

“Well, then, sweetheart, I will buy Frank Schmeggan’s property; I can get it at a reasonable figure. It will be better, too, for the dear old mother; living in the country will prolong her life.”

“Ah, my Fritz, how good you are! And how happy we shall be!”

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land.”

XIV.

THE SORCERERS.

ENGLAND.

SCHALOM RAPHAEL was one of the wealthiest of England's wealthy merchants. As a young man he had begun life by selling matches in a small way; and now that his hair was turning to silver he was the owner of two large shops in Bath, lived in a palace, — Italian style, — and his vessels carried his merchandise to America, the Indies, and distant Japan. His eldest son was virtually at the head of the business.

Schalom was beginning to take thought to his creature comforts. The suburban villa was well adapted to the various tastes of its various occupants. It afforded the master of the house opportunity for experiments in the cultivation of his flowers and fruit-trees; it encouraged his wife's passion for horses and racing; it was the spot *par excellence* where his daughter Naomi could educate her pigeons; and it offered leisure to his youngest son, Judah, in the prosecution of his philological studies.

Judah it was whom the father idolized; Judah it was who filled the father's soul with disquietude.

To begin with, he showed not the least inclination in the world for business, and passed the greater part of his time buried in his Hebrew, Latin, and Greek folios; but what oppressed the fond parent more heavily than this unaccountable proclivity, was his son's distinct disapproval of all marriageable young ladies proposed for his consideration, and his express determination never to wed.

Schalom Raphael was forced to the conclusion that his son was bewitched.

Despite the fact that as a merchant and shipowner he was daring and adventurous, timidity and superstition possessed him in all other relationships of life. A visit to a neighbor's whose house was unprovided with a lightning-rod was apt to be of the shortest possible duration, and with a haste born of fear of unmerited death would his horses be driven homeward. Were he forced to spend a night away from the safe shelter of his own roof, his first care was to see whether all the windows were provided with bars. The sight of a dog with innocently hanging tongue lent youthful vigor to his limbs, and bounding over the nearest hedge was a fact accomplished as soon as conceived. Petroleum was an evil which excited his liveliest fears, and under no consideration might a drop of it be brought into his house. With untiring zeal would he cut out all newspaper accounts of accidents occasioned by this inflammable stuff, and triumphantly wave these clippings before such of his friends as were foolhardy enough to use this frightful means of illumination.

The Passover week brought to a successful close, a season of perpetual anxiety filled Schalom's life with a new interest. He believed implicitly in the traditions of the Ghetto; and the time between Passover and Shevuos (Easter and Pentecost) which is called Omer (measure), from the measure of barley sacrificed at Jerusalem, he regarded as one of danger and misfortune. During Omer evil spirits and demons (scheïdim and masikim) fill the air with their malignant presence and exert their most powerful influence; during Omer, the mascheves (sorcerers) hold high carnival, hence, the necessity for ceaseless precaution, — in this particular, needless to say, Schalom Raphael was not wanting.

The evening that inaugurated this fateful period, he would hang upon his doorpost the psalm beginning: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

He would take the greatest care to see that all nails or hair cut in the household should be burned, not thrown away. He permitted no whistling, no throwing of stones, no drawing of fire-arms, no riding, no driving. He gave peremptory orders that the servants should not go out in their shirtsleeves, and issued express injunctions against venturing in boats, or looking into the night through a mirror.

Schalom being a lovable old fellow, his wife's humble slave, his daughter's willing servitor, his son's trusty comrade, it naturally followed that his orders were respected, though a spirit of constraint and silent rebellion gave unmistakable signs of existence.

Mrs. Raphael gave up her riding with a sigh of despair; Naomi wept bitter tears each time a hawk would carry off one of her pigeons; and Judah devoted himself more assiduously and seriously than ever to his books, since the boat might not be unloosed from its moorings.

*

It chanced one day that Schalom was called to town on business. He had scarce left the house ere the spirit of depression floated off from the villa, as some noxious vapor dissipated by a strong breath of sunny air. Mrs. Raphael ordered her black mare saddled; Naomi lost no time in loading her gun; Judah let his boat swing at anchor, but in the afternoon he threw himself astride his horse and started off at a gallop.

When the head of the family made his appearance in the evening, the household had resumed its wonted air of doing nothing. Edith, the wife, was seated complacently in the drawing-room; Naomi was wandering up and down the library; but Judah, the culprit, was conspicuous by his absence. Schalom's first thought was to see whether the boat was safe at anchor. The little vessel lay innocently drifting to and fro. The stable was next inspected, and the horses counted. The unhappy man's face was white by the time he had returned to the library, and he began pacing the room in a nervous state of excitement.

"Where is Judah?" he asked at last.

"He cannot have gone any distance," answered Naomi; "we expect him every instant."

"You expect him; but suppose he does not come?"

"Judah is no child," interposed the wife; "I am perfectly unconcerned about him. There is no need for you to be anxious."

"No need! But suppose I am anxious! Who is to prevent me from being anxious? It is quite possible he has gone to the Cooks', — where they use petroleum!"

A mighty struggle took place in Schalom's breast; but in the end paternal affection conquered natural timidity, and going to the stables he ordered a horse saddled, inquired as to the road his son had taken, and started off in the same direction.

The night had become black, and, to add to its terrors, a heavy fog had risen and covered field and thicket. This state of affairs tended not a little toward the final extinguishment of Raphael's fictitious courage; but with a prodigious effort he put spurs to his horse and tried to divert his thoughts into another channel.

“You have never omitted repeating your daily prayers,” said he to himself; “you have rigorously observed all the religious ceremonies; you have given generously to the poor, — God will not forsake you.” He had scarcely finished this enumeration when a white apparition loomed out of the night and mist. It appeared to beckon him. The horse slowed, and its rider, trembling in every limb, began reciting his prayers.

Then followed a second spectre, the moon just emerging from its veil of clouds, casting a mysterious light about the towering form. Schalom was about turning the horse’s head and retreating ignominiously, when it occurred to him that he was in front of the cemetery. Carefully approaching the wall, he boldly looked down on rows of tombs and cypress-covered monuments, and then proceeded more calmly on his way. He had but started his beast into a trot when suddenly a devilish noise sounded from the rear, and came rushing onward with lightning speed. In a trice he had jumped a ditch and landed in a meadow.

This time it was surely the scheïdim or Lillith in person with her train of imps. Now it happened that Schalom had a particular horror of this female devil, — the offspring of depravity and uncleanness. She was Adam’s first wife, and, cursed by God, travels the air at night, followed by her legion of demons. Every thousand years she tries to seduce a man that she may deliver him over to the curse resting upon her.

“If she should meet Judah! If he should fall into her clutches!”

The thought had scarcely taken shape when a small wagon drawn by ten black ponies, sparks flashing from the hoofs of the wild little team, brushed by him and vanished in the fog. A moment later, a galloping horse was reined up at his side, — its rider a pretty young woman. She was dressed fantastically, and might have been taken for a gypsy were it not that her skin was dazzlingly fair, and that her hair fell a waving mass of gold about her shoulders. There was no room for doubt. It was Lillith, the perfidious temptress.

The awe-struck man was about to fly, when the fair unknown asked him in very correct English: “Can you tell me if this is the road to Bath?” This was somewhat reassuring. “It is rather late to be out horseback-riding, Miss. Are you not afraid?”

“I was born on horseback,” said the young woman, with a laugh. “Have you not heard of Miss Cornhill? I and my troupe are on our way to Bath, where we intend to give several performances.”

“You are —”

“A rider.” So saying, Miss Cornhill, with a dexterous lash of her whip, disappeared from sight. Schalom continued on his road, consoling himself with the uttered thought: “Well, if it was not Lillith, it was a temptress, after all. A fortunate thing that Judah did not fall in with her!”

*

Scarce had he fortified his courage by this soothing reflection, when his horse shied, stumbled, and landed him in a ditch.

“I might have expected it!” he exclaimed. Then picking himself up, and finding that no bones were broken, though his right leg was rather stiffened from the fall, he added: —

“I have always declared that it was unlucky to mount a horse in Omer.”

The fog had lightened considerably by this time, and Schalom, finding that he was but a short distance from his friends, the Cooks, took his horse by the bridle and bent his steps toward their door. Reaching the park-gate, he perceived a

cavalier in its shadow, and just above the wall, and close to this cavalier's head, the pretty head of a dark-eyed woman.

Raphael's horse was tied to a tree, and its rider, gliding through the brushwood, became a listener at Love's court.

The cavalier was Judah, as he had at once supposed; and the young woman, as he had also supposed, was Leah Meborach, the governess of the Cook children, — a pretty young girl of a respectable Jewish family, well educated, and knowing not a little of Greek and Latin, as well as of Hebrew and Arabian.

“So this is the machscheve!” said Schalom, under his breath. “This is the sorceress who has bewitched him! This is why no other young woman has appeared good in his eyes!”

“I must go,” said Judah. “My father may return at any moment, and I do not wish to annoy him.”

“You are right,” Leah made answer. “You have given him enough trouble as it is, refusing so persistently to marry.”

“I will never ask him to give his consent to our union,” responded Judah; “but, sweetheart, I will marry none other than you. Ah, Leah, how I worship you! You are my all, and nothing shall ever separate us.”

“Three years have I waited for you, dearest; how willingly will I wait longer; my whole life, if needs be, for I know, Judah, that you will never give your heart to another.”

The father had heard enough.

*

The following morning, Mr. Raphael called Judah into his library, and said, with a smile: “I have another young woman to subject to your approval as the future Mrs. Raphael.”

“Thank you, father; I prefer to remain a bachelor.”

“But this time I have a highly intelligent girl for you.”

“I shall care no more for an intelligent girl than for an ignorant one.”

“Not if her name were Leah Meborach?”

“Father, you are jesting!” cried Judah, a frown upon his brow.

“Not in the least. You shall have Leah; but on one condition —”

“A thousand if you will.”

“That you never ride during Omer, and that you will never burn petroleum in your house.”

XV.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

ITALY.

IT was a December night. Winter had transformed the Apennines into glittering ramparts, and covered the valleys with snow. A glacial wind whistled over the tree-tops, and swung great frozen crystals to and fro as though they were thousands of bell-flowers. The sky was studded with stars. Sparkling shapes, spectre-like in the mysterious light, loomed on all sides. Over all reigned the calm of death.

This fearsome night, however, seemed to have no terrors for a lonely wayfarer, travelling afoot across one of the wildest parts of the Apennines.

Leaning heavily upon his staff, Zerouja Nebouch painfully dragged himself along. He was dressed in hair-cloth, his head was bare. He appeared careless alike of cold, fatigue, of ever-imminent avalanches, of precipices yawning at his feet.

He had vowed this pilgrimage (galoth, as it is termed by the Jews), knowing full well that for companions he should have the wolf, the bird of prey.

Three days and nights had he fasted. Not a drop of water had moistened his parched lips, nor, during this time, had he laid his head to rest under a roof built by hands. His feet had not yet refused to bear him; but he felt that nature would soon reject her part in his work. The cold was numbing his exhausted body, the falling snow was soothing his senses to slumber. He knew that were he to yield but for an instant he would sink into the sleep that knows no waking. Doggedly, defiantly, he kept his course though a drowsy, music murmured in his ears, and a supernatural light enveloped and beguiled him.

Suddenly, the barking of a dog was heard, and a wreath of blue smoke curled high over a friendly house-top.

Zerouja's strength was spent. He staggered toward the building, and found himself in front of a large farm. The barn-door was open, and, groping his way toward it, he stumbled inside and fell helplessly on the straw.

The strange light was still obscuring his vision, the strange musical sounds were still wooing his senses. He felt his end approaching, and, his lips in prayer, he took the Sohar, the holy book of the cabalists, from his bosom and meekly awaited death.

Presently, the door was pushed wide open, and a glorious apparition appeared upon the threshold. It was a female figure, majestic in its beauty, a flowing white garment draped the exquisite form, a mass of black hair fell heavily over the shoulders, the right hand grasped a Turkish sabre.

"Angel of Death, I greet thee!" sighed Zerouja, and sinking backward he lost consciousness.

*

When the pilgrim opened his eyes he found himself on a comfortable couch in a lofty chamber. Before him stood a middle-aged man holding a lamp, and the handsome woman whom he had greeted as Death's angel was leaning over him, trying to restore consciousness by the aid of various strong pungent essences.

"Where am I?" asked Zerouja.

"In the house of pious Jews," answered the man, in Hebrew.

The man addressed was Solomon Bologna, owner of a house, a piece of land, and an inn. His daughter Shulamith had been awakened by the dog's barking, and hearing the creaking of the barn-door had armed herself with an old sabre, gone out to meet the intruder, and found the dying pilgrim.

"Where have you come from?" asked the girl.

"From Poland."

"And whither are you going?"

"Doth a man know whither he goeth? I seek God. Who knows if I may ever find him!" Zerouja made answer, and, sinking back upon the pillows, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the sun was high in the heavens. He hastily dressed, seized his staff, and made ready to leave. The girl put her hand upon his shoulder, and held him back.

"I may not rest more than one night under the same roof," said the pilgrim, apologetically.

"Are you mad?"

"Did not God say unto Cain: 'A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.'"

"Have you killed your brother, like Cain?"

"No, but every mortal is a sinner; and when I have done penance for my own sins, then I can make atonement for the sins of others."

"You cannot go," insisted Shulamith; "avalanches have fallen during the night, and bridges have been swept away."

Zerouja sighed.

"Beside, this is the Sabbath evening. You can not begin your journey now."

The pilgrim submitted to his fate. He sank wearily upon the wooden bench by the hearth, where flames leaped boisterously from out the very heart of the great log, and his haggard eyes sought the blaze vacantly. Shulamith took a black bottle from the cupboard, filled a small glass with a red liquid, and held it toward him.

"What am I to do with it?" he asked.

"Drink. It is a medicine."

"He who prays to the Lord as he should has need neither of physician nor medicine" said the Pole.

"If God had wished you to die, he would have let you perish last night; but he led you beneath our roof that we might save you. Come, take it!" She looked at him intently; and her eyes, as black as night, as mysterious as the cabala, casting their witchery over him, there was nought for him to do but obey. He took the glass and drank.

"And now you must eat something."

"I will this evening, since it is the Sabbath."

"No; you must eat at once. You wish to expiate the sins of others; take care that others do not commit sins through you!"

"What do you mean?"

"You would prevent us from fulfilling one of God's commands: 'To those who are hungered shalt thou give to eat, and water to those who thirst.'"

"Well, give to me; I will eat."

*

A week had rolled around, and Zerouja still lingered on at the resting-place. Quiet and good care had worked wonders with the emaciated body; the eyes had

lost their feverish glow, and a natural color replaced the deathly pallor that had spread over the emaciated cheeks.

“You are looking better,” said Shulamith, one day; “your body is showing signs of improvement, and it is to be hoped that your mind will soon be restored to its normal condition.”

“My mind is not impaired,” replied the pilgrim.

“Your soul is unhealthy,” said the girl, “because it is clouded by your fanaticism.”

“I know perfectly well what I have undertaken,” said Zerouja. “It is not sufficient that we should fulfil God’s commandments; we should do much more for our love of Him. He whose soul is imbued with true zeal takes no thought of things terrestrial, heeds neither business, work, nor pleasure. He may not marry; he must mortify the flesh that he may conquer the indwelling beast.”

Shulamith shook her pretty head. “And to what end is all this, — these torments, this zeal?”

“That the gates of the spiritual world may be opened to us, and the soul be united to its Maker.”

“Is there no other way of satisfying God?”

“There is but one,” said the Pole, in a solemn voice. “Penitence, prayer, watching, fasting, enduring discipline, suffering torment, and a continual wandering over the face of the earth.”

“And this is your idea of penance?”

“Yes. I have rolled myself in the snow in winter; I have slept upon thorns in summer; I have lashed myself till the blood flowed; I have lain prostrate at the threshold of the synagogue that those who entered God’s temple should thrust me with their feet as they passed.”

“Zerouja, you are crazy, beyond a doubt!”

“I have also taught myself to bear sarcasm and ridicule.”

“Who said I was mocking? On the contrary, I am sorry for you, I would save you.”

*

That night, Shulamith was awakened by the sound of an opening door. It was midnight. She rose and dressed hurriedly. Her first thought was that Zerouja was leaving the house stealthily, that he might continue his pilgrimage. She found him in front of a small pond near the house trying to break the ice.

“What are you going to do?” she cried excitedly.

“To throw myself in the water.”

“And why?”

“As a penance. I have sinned in not continuing my pilgrimage. I must do this to reconcile an angry God.”

The girl took the pickaxe from his hand, and, pointing to the house-door, said with an imperious gesture: “Enter!”

The man looked at her for a moment, then obeyed. She followed him into the large room on the ground-floor, closed the door, locked it, and then, taking a seat at the fireside, said in a voice that was severe and yet gentle withal: “You wish to serve God; madman, you have no conception of the Almighty! You know a God of hatred and vengeance, and with such a monster creation would you make your peace! I know another God, the God of love and of mercy; he who set the rainbow in the sky as a symbol of peace; he who delivered the people of Israel from Egypt;

the God who protected us in the Babylonian captivity, and who has not forsaken us even now that we are a dispersed and broken people!”

Zerouja lowered his eyes. He could find no word with which to make answer.

“Do no more than God asks of you,” she continued. “You presume to know more of your Creator’s will than what he himself revealed on Mount Sinai through the mouth of his prophet.”

“I must do something to appease God,” he cried. “Have pity on me; help me fulfil my penance; lash me; chain my hands and feet; trample me underfoot!”

He threw himself on the floor before her, his face upon the ground, and awaited his sentence as though in the presence of his judge.

“Ah, no!” said Shulamith, with a sigh. “God does not wish us to inflict chastisements on ourselves. He knows how much each of us in this world can bear; how much work, how much suffering, how much grief. Do not ask for trials not intended for you. Await God’s will, and endure patiently the fate he has seen fit to send you. Do not strive to be more pious than your brethren, nor to display more zeal than those to whom God has revealed himself.”

Zerouja half rose, and, kneeling before the girl, his hands folded as in prayer, looked her earnestly in the face. “I believe you are right,” he murmured. “Now I understand why we are told in the tractate Nidah: ‘God has given a more penetrating mind to woman than to man.’”

“Praised be God, who has enlightened you!”

“He has punished me in the same breath.”

“How?”

“I have sought torment, and he has sent me the most cruel suffering.”

“I do not understand you.”

“He has conducted me beneath your roof to punish me for my blind fanaticism.”

“What absurd notions! He has led you in his kindness to people who wish to help you.”

“God has chosen you, Shulamith, as an instrument for my torture. You have no need of chains with which to bind me; you tear my flesh without the whip of discipline. Torture me, lacerate my heart! The will of God be done!”

The girl smiled. “Yes, this cometh from the Lord! But your weal is at stake, not your woe. God has created me not for your torture but for your deliverance.”

Zerouja threw himself once more at her knees and kissed her feet.

“You love me?” said Shulamith, as she bent her tear-brimmed eyes upon him. “My heart is yours, Zerouja; it went out to you that bitter night when the spirit had almost taken wing from your poor frozen body, and it shall remain yours to all eternity. Come, rise.”

The pilgrim did not move, and the girl, leaning toward him, put her arm about his neck and leaned her head with its tangled mass of curls upon his breast.

XVI.

HAMAN AND ESTHER.

POLAND.

IT was Shushan Purim.²⁸ The entire town of Sandomir was in a state of lively commotion, and each and every one was doing his best to transform night into brightest day. All windows were illuminated; houses were gayly decked with lamps and colored lanterns. At the windows, sat fair young Jewesses and smiling matrons, in superb fur-trimmed cloaks, laughing, jesting, eating dainties. In the streets, merry young fellows, in long caftans, were bent on mischief and fun. The masquerade was at its height.

A party of Jewish youths, costumed as Little Russian peasants, serenaded their friends with Little Russian songs, to the accompaniment of flutes, violins, and violoncellos. Others, dressed as bears, dealt terror and confusion among the groups of girls leaning in doorways. A more ambitious band played the farce of Ahasuerus. Esther, arrayed in royal velvet and ermine, a gold paper crown on her head, was borne aloft by four slaves; then followed the King Ahasuerus, in his scarlet mantle, behind him Monderish (Mordecai) with his huge turban, and last though not least appeared the distinguished figure of Haman. This last was of course the principal personage. A tall, battered hat sat audaciously on his head, several sheets sewed together served him as princely raiment, and with the aid of his stilts, he moved nimbly about through the crowd like some ghostly giant. His great false nose, with its three enormous crimson warts, would intrude occasionally into the second-story windows of the smaller houses, and provoke terrified screams from the young girls, followed by endless jest and merriment. Haman was personated by none other than Laktef Wilna, the handsomest, strongest, boldest, lightest-hearted young Israelite in all Sandomir, where Israelites there were not a few.

The deafening noise of drums, tin lids, saucepans, and trumpets announced the approach of the royal party. Despite the cold, windows were opened, and black eyes, lighting rosy faces, peered down the street to watch the advent of the merry crew; though, truth to tell, Laktef Wilna, cutting his mad pranks with the most solemn air in the world, gained the lion's share of attention.

Mrs. Pfaumenbaum opened her casement but for an instant; that was long enough, however, for Haman to send in his greeting in the shape of an old slipper, and disappear with a laugh. To Mrs. Zuckerspitz, wrapped in her sable kazabaika (cloak), and leaning out of her window with the idea of being seen as well as of seeing, he gravely presented a large gingerbread hussar, which, strange to relate, sent the color flying over her pretty cheeks. To little Miss Greenwald, whose slender proportions were generally discussed, and exaggerated, he swore that he had just unearthed a bridegroom for her, and sedately handed her a scrawny herring. At Johnathan Schmeikes', where half-a-dozen young girls had gathered for the merrymaking, he sent a mouse flying into the room, and shook with laughter as he watched the girls jump on tables and chairs, and scream with horror, until the little mar-joy had betaken its trembling self into a friendly hole in the wall.

*

Cracking a joke with one, playing the merry-andrew with another, Laktef Wilna finally reached a long, narrow street, and paused before a wretched dwelling whose

walls were falling in like a badly built house of cards. Behind its worm-eaten doors and broken windows lived about thirty Jewish families, its two floors divided each into a dozen rooms. Laktef's attention was attracted by one of the windows whose deficiency in glass was made good by an old stocking, and looking into the room, about the size of a diminutive poultry-house, beheld a girl, in a patched calico gown. She was crying bitterly. Laktef's Shushan Purim had vanished in an instant; for, like all jolly young fellows, his heart was as compassionate as his spirits were high, and the sight of tears was more than he could endure.

He listened, standing in shadow and leaning his great nose against the pane. The end of a candle, in the hollow of a potato, cast a feeble light about the tiny room. In an old arm-chair, of which Time had ravaged one of the feet, sat a man with folded hands. Upon his face there brooded a boundless sadness. He was wrapped in a shabby caftan, while upon his gray head rested the inevitable jarmourka (skull cap).

The occupants of the room were Toby Fishthran, a poor blind tailor who had done patching in his time, and his daughter Esther. Young Wilna had recognized them at a glance.

"Do not cry, Estherka," said Toby, gently; "it ruins the eyes. What would become of us if you too could not work?"

"What is the good of working, father," said the girl, with a sob, "when God has forsaken us?"

"God forsakes not the humblest of his creatures," replied the old man. "He tries us often, but he forsakes us never."

"But we have been tried more than all the others put together, and we have not sinned more than the rest. Have I not worked from dawn till night? And I have not even been able to heat the room for my poor blind father, nor to make cakes that the poorest of the poor have on Shushan Purim."

"We do not want cakes," cried Toby; "can we not hear all the music and laughter below in the streets?"

"It makes my heart break to hear them laugh," said the girl, and again she began to weep, but gently that her father might not hear her.

Haman had seen enough. He hurried off on his stilts, suddenly metamorphosed into seven-league boots.

The son of well-to-do parents, he could readily have aided the wretched family by throwing a handful of money into the room; but that would not have afforded him the fun he wanted, and, to him, pleasure-giving lost half its charm could he not add a dash of devilry to it. He instantly decided that by playing a few innocent pranks on the rich, he could most admirably come to the assistance of these poor creatures, and, suiting the action to the thought, he hurried off to Jainkef Jeiteles', a lumber merchant. There, leaning over the wall, behind which was a large shed filled with wood, he pulled out a number of logs, and threw them over his back to Mordecai, his friend Teitel Silberbach, whom he had enlisted in the service, and then the two scampered off to the Fishthrans'. Reaching the house, young Wilna descended from his stilts, and the conspirators tiptoed to Esther's door, where they noiselessly arranged a fine pyramid of logs. This accomplished, Haman again scoured the streets in quest of his next commission. Peering into Johnathan Schmeikes' kitchen, he discovered two great plates of smoking cakes on the window-seat. The cook's back was turned. In a trice the cakes had vanished, and off darted the rogue, with never a thought to his conscience. Mordecai, still crowned with his monstrous turban, climbed the stairs without a creak of his boots, knocked three times at Esther's door, and fled rashly.

As Esther rose to open the door, Laktef, on his stilts, pulled the stocking from the window-hole, threw the cakes in the room, replaced the stocking, and drew back into the friendly shadow of the rain-pipe.

“Father,” cried Esther, as she opened the door, “here is some wood! Who could have brought it?”

“Wood!” exclaimed Toby. “You are dreaming!”

“There were three knocks at the door,” said the girl, nervously; “and when I went to see who it was, what should I find but this wood! And such wood! It is magnificent! Shall I take it?”

“Don’t stand so long talking about it, my child. Bring it in, bring it in!”

“But, father dear, this is like magic!” She carried the logs inside, piled them behind the stove, threw one of them into the smouldering fire, and soon a fine blaze cheered and warmed the room with its ruddy glow. Esther had dried her eyes.

“What are these cakes? Father! What is the meaning of all this?”

“Cakes!” repeated the blind man, with an incredulous air, and yet with a visible tremor of joy. Esther put one in his hand, and father and daughter began eating with avidity.

“They are hot from the oven,” cried the girl. “There is no question about it, father, this is a miracle.”

“You see, Esther, God has not forsaken us. Our benefactor is none other than the Prophet Elijah; he witnessed your tears, and brought you these presents for Shushan Purim.”

“You are right, father; it must have been the Prophet Elijah,” returned the girl, in an awe-stricken voice, and she joined her prayers to her father’s.

“But if he were present and saw our poverty,” sighed Esther, “why did he not send some clothes, and a pair of shoes, to my poor blind father?”

“What do I want with clothes,” said Toby, with a smile, “now that we have a comfortable, warm room? He should indeed have brought some for you, my child; for you have to run the streets all day, in the cold and snow, with a thin dress and broken shoes.”

“Don’t ask for too much, father dear. Remember I have my shawl.”

“If the Prophet Elijah wished to,” said the blind man, recklessly, “he could clothe you like a princess, and cover you with a sable cloak.”

“O father!”

“If praying will bring it, let us pray. I will ask for a sable cloak for you.”

“Stop, father; he will be angry, and the wood will disappear.”

“Well, well, I’ll not ask for sable; but it must be a cloak for you, at all events.”

“What is the good of asking, father? Be sensible!”

“A cloak lined with fur, that you will not feel the cold,” continued the old man, imperturbably.

Laktef Wilna had listened eagerly to this conversation; and, laughing from the very depths of his good, kind heart, off he went on his stilts to transform the part of Haman into that of Elijah. Haman’s nose, however, was still a conspicuous feature; it brushed by doors and windows, helping the eyes to keep a sharp lookout, and restraining not the arms from intruding into chambers and carrying off whatever the Prophet Elijah might deem needful.

Winkelfeld, second-hand dealer, had hung a pair of red boots enticingly before his door, proudly conscious of their selling qualities, as they had been purchased from a gentleman. Haman took them *sans cérémonie*. From Sprintze Veigelstock — who was rich and could spare it — he stole a black satin caftan. From Freudenthal’s daughters he purloined a dress and pair of shoes. Where was he to

find the fur cloak? A happy idea! The maskers had gathered in a body at Mrs. Zuckerspitz's, and the revelry was at its height. The pretty hostess had flung her kazabaika, lined and trimmed with sable, on a chair by the window. The sash had been slightly raised; the desperate marauder pushed it gently open, and made off with his booty.

A few minutes later, he knocked at Esther's window.

"It is the blessed prophet," said Toby, in a solemn whisper. "Open for him." Esther raised the sash, then ran and hid behind the stove, and closed her eyes. When she opened them there lay the caftan, kazabaika, dress, shoes, and boots.

"Father," she cried, "he has brought us everything we asked for." She reverently closed the window, then, hurrying to her father, took off his old caftan, threw the new one about him, tried the dress and shoes on herself, and, finally, with a cry of delight that was half a sob, slipped into the magnificent kazabaika.

"What a miraculous godsend!" exclaimed the blind father. "You must look like a princess, Estherka; come close to me." He could not see his princess, but he could feel the velvet and fur with his trembling hands.

"My child, this is sable," he breathed in a state of nervous excitement. "The good prophet hearkened to my petition; he has brought you for Shushan Purim a sable cloak. Ah, see how God cares for us in his loving-kindness! Now that the merciful prophet has blessed us with so many gifts, he should bring forward a handsome young man for my little Esther's husband."

The girl put her hand over the old man's mouth. "Be quiet, father, else everything will disappear as miraculously as it has come."

The mischievous young prophet outside peered closely through the pane, and, seeing Esther in her fine dress and magnificent cloak, muttered, "She's a pretty girl; and what a heart, as brave as pure! I wonder she has not found a husband."

At the same moment, the object of his reverie turned to the old man and said, "Who would have me, father, — a poverty-stricken girl like me?"

"Listen," whispered Toby; "you ought to try your luck, Estherka, for Shushan Purim, and spread a net."

"A good idea," she answered, with a merry laugh. "I'll go out in the street and set a trap to catch a husband. But suppose it should be an old man or a hunchback?" and, her eyes twinkling with fun, she pulled three long black hairs from her braid, and twisted them in and out, murmuring some cabalistic words the while.

Laktéf watched this snare-setting, and, laughing in his sleeve, said softly: "Wait a bit, little one, and you'll capture the wariest bird in the whole khille [community]."

While Esther was preparing to start on her adventure, Haman descended from his stilts, gave his hat, mantle, and nose to Mordecai, drew back into the shadow, and succeeded in stepping into the net just as the little schemer was about seeking refuge in the house-door. The snare had done its work, but the girl was caught as well; for, as she turned, a pair of strong arms clasped her waist, and a pair of lips sealed hers with a kiss. She tore herself loose, and, with a beating heart, fled up the narrow stairs.

*

The following morning, Mrs. Zuckerspitz bewailed her sable cloak, Veigelstock mourned the loss of his caftan, and the second-hand dealer wept tears of regret over the missing boots; when, like the *deus ex machina*, young Wilna appeared and explained all.

“I took your kazabaika,” he said to the pretty coquette, “to give it to a poor girl; she believes that the Prophet Elijah made her a present of it, but I will return it.”

“No, no!” she exclaimed. “For that matter, it was an old one, and my husband will be only too happy to give me another. You have performed a charitable action for me, and I am your debtor.”

From all his other victims he met with a similar reception; for the pious Jew knows no greater joy than that of giving to the poor.

The same day, old Wilna paid a visit to Toby Fishthrau, and formally demanded pretty Esther’s hand for his son Laktef.

XVII.

THE REDEMPTION.

HUNGARY.

IT was Kol-Nidra, — the evening before the celebration of the Day of Atonement.²⁹ The serious beauty of autumn cast its witchery over the brilliant hues of changing foliage, over vast and silent plains, over the little Hungarian town with its small houses covered with smoke-stained shingles.

Slanting rays from the sinking sun glided furtively through the heavily framed windows of Teller Herschmann's house, and spread tremulously over the floor of the large front room; but with the sudden opening of the door they flitted away, and left the chamber as cheerless as they had found it. The door had opened to give entrance to two men. The sombre room, with its gloomy corners, obscure recesses, and massive furniture, seemed to receive an accession of light and warmth in the mere presence of the new-comers, whose faces shone with the genial glow of spiritual light and intellectual brilliancy.

The elder of the men was Mrs. Herschmann's brother, Jonas Bienenfeld. The object of his visit was to offer his good wishes to his sister and her family,—a rare occurrence, for in this pious, orthodox little town he was regarded as a dangerous freethinker, consequently as one excluded from all matters of common interest. He belonged, in fact, to that class for whom the zealots of the synagogue prayed that "the earth would devour them;" and if the earth did not devour them, it was emphatically not the fault of these same zealots who invoked God so earnestly within their temple walls.

The doctor's companion, Abner Barach, was a young man whose slender figure and handsome, colorless face indicated the determined thinker, aspiring toward the truth, yearning for the light. He was Bienenfeld's favorite medical student, and had gladly accepted his friend's invitation to accompany him this evening and be presented to his niece.

Maecha Herschmann was just about beginning the ancient Hebrew ceremony customary with the observance of Kol-Nidra, when the visitors entered. In the middle of the room the eldest daughter, Mathele, was seated in an arm-chair, her head bent low; the younger children were methodically arranged in a semicircle around her, while on the floor near by lay an equal number of chickens,—kapores (victims).

Mathele wore a simple white gown that placed in charming relief the lovely, gracious face, whose expression was innocence personified, and formed a striking setting for the exquisitely modelled head with its heavy black braids. Abner's eyes were riveted upon this fair young form. What was it that made him foresee in it possibilities for suffering and resignation? Suddenly, she raised her head and opened her eyes, — eyes that were soft and grave, yet suffused with a melancholy lustre, the lustre of tears. In the exchange of the first glance, a wave of communion rolled across their souls. Had they met in another planet? Had their spirits floated in unison in a fairer sphere?

Maecha Herschmann, alive only to her religious duties, with an expressive look at her brother, whom she sighed over as one of Israel's lost, began at once the curious introductory prayer that has been transmitted from generation to generation from time immemorial: —

“The children of men, seated within the shadows, are enchained in poverty and fetters. We must lead them out from the shadows, and break their chains. They are weary of their evil conduct; they are tormented by their sins. Their souls refuse all nourishment. They reach the gates of death, and in their tribulation they call upon the Eternal. The Lord succors them in their trouble; he blesses them with his favor, and saves them from destruction. They give thanks to the Lord for his mercy, for his miraculous actions. If a man has a protecting angel who can call forth his uprightness, the Eternal will grant him grace, and save him from the destruction of the grave. And the man will say: ‘I have found Redemption!’”

With the final word, Maecha brandished a large white cock three times around her daughter’s head, — the bird submitting with a poor grace to the performance, beating its wings violently and screaming furiously, — then continued: “This is my transformation; this is my change; this is my reconciliation! This cock shall be consecrated to death, and I, I shall obtain life eternal in a long life of delight.”

After performing this expiatory ceremony about the heads of each of her other children, the kapores (victims) were distributed among the poor, who were crowding each other in the vestibule, awaiting their traditional roast in a fever of impatience.

Then the family took seats about the table, and while Bienenfeld poured forth the vials of his malicious wit against the zealots of the town; while Herschmann *père* preserved an opiniative silence; while the mother gave vent to sighs of righteous indignation, — Abner and Mathele exchanged a glance from time to time, and indulged in a few words of conversation which, commonplace as it was, sounded in their ears like sweetest music.

*

“The long night” — that rigorous fast from set of sun till set of sun — was happily past. The Israelites had resumed their usual cheerful routine of life. Abner, who made his home at Bienenfeld’s, where he was studying for his doctor’s degree, spent all his leisure hours at the Herschmanns’, gloomy and forbidding as was the nest that sheltered the object of his thoughts.

Reaching the house, one afternoon, he found Mathele’s pretty eyes overflowing with tears.

“What has happened?” he asked in dismay.

The girl pointed to her white cat, that lay under the stove breathing painfully.

“I am afraid she is going to die.”

“You think so? We don’t die as readily as all that,” said Abner, comfortingly; “and these white cats are just the kind that cling to life most tenaciously. Appoint me your court physician, and let me see your little pet.”

Mathele smiled, picked Lili up, and held the pretty little thing caressingly, while the future doctor gave her a thorough examination.

“The trouble does not amount to much,” he finally said; “a simple cold, nothing more. But to prevent your being uneasy, I will go and bring a remedy which I hope will cure your precious invalid. Lili is my first patient; if I succeed in curing her, it will be a sign of future good fortune.”

Abner soon returned bearing a homoeopathic dose of medicine; and while the girl held the cat tenderly in her arms, the young doctor opened his patient’s teeth, and forced the remedy down the little throat. This was not accomplished without difficulty. The ailing puss proved most refractory; she mewed vociferously, and used her little claws to the best fighting purpose possible; but, yielding to a mightier

force than her own, she finally succumbed, and ungracefully swallowed the dose to the last bitter drop.

When Lili began to show signs of convalescence, stretching her pretty limbs lazily, and basking contentedly in the sun, Mathele's sweet eyes were fixed upon Abner with an expression of thankfulness difficult to depict. Had he saved the girl herself from death, her eyes could not have expressed her gratitude more eloquently.

From the time of this important crisis in Lili's existence, the young doctor was always welcomed with a pleasant smile; and when he would gather the children about him, and explain, in his clear, interesting way, some of the marvels of the human organism, Mathele would listen wonderingly to the silver-tongue, and her eyes would be fixed with an admiration akin to love upon the inspired intellectual face.

One afternoon, — twilight was gently casting her spell over the day, — Abner stepped lightly into the Herschmann shop. The mother was busy bargaining with tradesmen and peasants; the daughter, absorbed in her account-book, was seated in a narrow partition covered with colored prints. Raising her head, and seeing the young doctor, she put her pen behind her ear and extended her hand.

“Good-evening, Mr. Barach.”

“Good-evening, Miss Mathele.”

“I must ask you to wait a few minutes,” she said, with a sigh of resignation. “I shall have finished in a very short while.”

“I am in no hurry; I will wait as long as you please.”

Abner took a seat on a bale in the corner, and followed the movement of the white little hand as it glided rapidly to and fro across the sheet; then his eyes rested upon the head that held such sovereign sway over the docile hand, and he speedily fell to admiring its graceful outlines and symmetrical shape; and, presently, it was the grave, sweet face bending intently over the book, its red, full lips moving with its mental arithmetic, that absorbed his thoughts and held him prisoner.

At last the young accountant laid her pen on the stand, and, stepping from her stool, approached her visitor. As she neared him, he noticed that her little fingers were quite ink-stained; and she, in turn remarking her carelessness, blushed, and looked at her hands reprovingly.

“May I have the privilege of kissing away this presumptuous ink?” asked Abner, as he took her hand; and, not waiting for her sanction, he pressed the yielding fingers to his trembling lips.

“What are you doing?” said Mathele, softly, “if mother—”

“I am doing what I must do,” replied the young fellow, with an admiring glance.

“And what must you do?” asked the girl, roguishly. “Must you embrace this — ”

“What I must do, Mathele, is to love you. I can do nought else, for I loved you from the first moment I saw you. There was no helping it. It is like a fairy tale — ”

“A fairy tale! Ah, let me tell you one,” interposed the girl, with a happy smile; “it will be quite as pretty as any you could tell me. It is all about a foolish young girl whose heart was stolen at first sight by a very intelligent, very wise young man.

Abner, I — I love you, too! But what will come of all this?”

“Nothing but happiness, Mathele!” cried the young student. “When two hearts meet, God's angels watch over them. We need have no fear of demons, my darling.”

Three demons, however, cast their baleful breath over the young people's happiness. Those of ignorance and zealotism, united by the strong hand of the vampire of avarice; and these formed a band against which neither youth nor hope might prevail.

Maecha had been mistrustful of the young man's visits from the first, and Teller Herschmann, seeing the course events were shaping themselves, had resolved to contravene them. He had already selected a husband for the girl, a man "as solid as gold," and now this beggar, this amcharetz (heretic), as he termed Abner, was trying to break the meshes of his net. Not yet, my young man, not yet! Not while Teller Herschmann was master in his house, and for that matter master of his daughter, who would obey him, who should obey him! Was not obedience a religious duty?

In due time, Mark Leiser, a rich corn merchant of Kaschau, was introduced to the wife and daughter as Mathele's future husband. Gentle and yielding as the girl had been on all occasions, this time the father met with resistance, and an energetic opposition that quite took away his breath.

"Tate," said Mathele, when alone with Teller, "do you want to make me unhappy? I can never be that man's wife. You will break my heart, for I love Abner Barach, and I can never love another."

Herschmann, however, was to be won over neither by prayers, resistance, nor tears. He was determined. His daughter's drooping appearance and pallid cheeks but added fuel to his wrath. He was not to be reached by such tricks. Dr. Bienenfeld pleaded Mathele's cause in vain.

"Give my child, my Mathele, to a man who does not observe the laws?" cried Teller. "To a man who has not a house of his own, nor a pfennig in his pocket? Do you take me for a fool?"

"Abner has more than a house of his own, and more than money in his pocket," replied the doctor; "he has intelligence and learning. He carries within him a treasure that he will never lose; no fire can touch it, no disastrous speculations can reach it. But he will make money as well, and be able to build his own house; for I tell you, and you may take my word for it, he will become an eminent physician, and will be able to command what price he chooses."

"That may be, but I don't want him for a son-in-law," cried Teller, in a rage. "I don't want him, Jonas, do you hear? I don't want him!"

"Nor I, I don't want him," echoed Maecha.

"Do you wish to sacrifice your daughter?" replied Bienenfeld, carried away by his feelings,—"do you wish to sacrifice her to your folly, to your avarice? Well, I tell you, and it is as a physician that I speak, that Mathele will die if you separate her from the one she loves, she will die like a flower pulled from the soil. Your children will die, one after the other, and you will be left alone in your old age, forsaken by all; for your children are but the kapores [victims] of your cupidity."

"God will protect us!"

"God will have nothing to do with such people as you! Good-day."

From that hour the door of the Herschmann house was closed to Abner; but every opportunity that Mathele had of escaping from the gloomy dwelling, where selfishness and delusion held sway, she would fly to her uncle's, and rest for a few brief minutes at least in the sunshine of her lover's presence. Thus time passed till the date of Abner's departure for Vienna, where he was to pass his examination. Then Uncle Jonas, coming again to the rescue, placed himself at their service as *post restante*, and helped the young people to endure their separation with fortitude if not with patience.

Having secured his diploma, young Barach established himself at Buda-Pest, and began his practice. Fortune smiled upon him. He succeeded in effecting cures among certain people of distinction whose cases had baffled other practitioners, and ere long he became known as one of the most reputable physicians of the capital.

This, however, was not all accomplished at once, and, in the meanwhile, Mathele languished visibly, and faded like some tender woodland flower in the fierce glare of the sun. Her eyes burned with unnatural brilliancy, and on her cheeks was that hectic flush which bespoke a slow yet ruthless fever.

To add to the victim's sufferings, the mother discovered the correspondence, and Teller threatened her with his curse if she wrote a single line to her lover, or continued to receive letters from him. The girl submitted to this fresh infliction; but the days grew longer and sadder, hope took wing, and she turned toward Death as a welcome friend

The festival of Kol-Nidra had returned; but the evening of the day of Atonement, Mathele was not able to be present in the large front room with her brothers and sisters, and assist at the sacrifice of the kapores. She was too ill to leave her couch, much less her chamber, where the shadows brooded so constantly, so thick. When her mother entered her room bearing the cock with blue ribbons in her hand, the girl waved her back, and said with a supplicatory gesture: —

“Mother, no kapores for me! I am dying. Bring Tate to me.”

Teller Herschmann was summoned. His face was hard and pitiless; but at sight of his child the stony heart was softened, and compassion held him by the hand.

“Tate,” said Mathele, “I will marry Mark Leiser, but you must make haste and bring him; if I am to be the kapores, I will not be sacrificed unavailingly. When you have put his money in your business, then, Tate, I may die, may I not? But hurry, lose no time, else Mark Leiser will find a corpse instead of a bride awaiting him.” She sank back in her pillows, exhausted by the fever.

Teller clasped his hands to his head, and rushed from the house. In a few minutes, he found himself before Jonas Bienenfeld's door.

“Mathele is dying,” he cried, as he pulled at his beard. “Save her, Jonas, and I will pay you whatever you ask!”

“I am not the doctor who can cure Mathele.”

“Can nothing be done?”

“Of course something can be done; but there is only one doctor who can prescribe for her, and that one is Abner Barach.”

“Let him come, then,” cried the frantic father; “and if he can save the girl I will let them marry. May God punish me, may the earth open and the fires of hell devour me, if I do not keep my word! But if he does not save her, by all that's sacred he shall not have her!”

“Have you lost your mind?” said Bienenfeld; “if Abner cannot save Mathele, she will die, and he could never marry her.”

“Alas, my wits have left me,” sighed the terror-stricken man.

Bienenfeld telegraphed at once to Barach, and when the evening star gave the glad tidings that the “long night” had passed, and that God was again reconciled with his people, the two physicians entered the sick girl's chamber.

“Well, little one,” cried Bienenfeld, with a smile, “do you want to be cured and get your health back in a flash?”

For all response, the girl slightly lifted her head, and smiled mournfully.

“You do not wish to? Wait a bit, I will write you a prescription that you will follow of your own accord. It will restore you to health on the spot!” He took a seat

at the table, where the girl had written her melancholy journal when love letters were not to be, and wrote: "Recipe: Abner Barach, from morning till night, for the rest of the patient's life."

"Come, here it is; read it yourself," he continued, handing Mathele the prescription.

She read it, and her face lighted up with a gentle smile; but the smile this time sent gloom and sickness a-flying, for it arose from Hope, — that surest comforter of the wounded soul.

"He can be your husband, but on one condition,— that he cures you," cried Teller Herschmann.

"You see, Mathele," added Uncle Bienenfeld, "you must be cured. Do you wish to, or do you not? I hope that you are not going to act perversely in your turn, naughty girl."

"I am cured already," murmured the invalid, casting a tender glance at Abner, who was down on his knees before her, covering her hands with kisses.

Mathele was not only restored to health, but her recovery was rapid, thanks to the science and devotion of her two physicians, and thanks also to that sweet and sovereign remedy, — love, which pours the balm of life into dying hearts, and causes everything in Nature to blossom with surpassing beauty and strive toward the universal good.

When spring returned, the fair girl was as bright and radiant as the flowers, and rivalled them in grace and loveliness.

In midsummer the wedding took place; and the nest for these married lovers was a dream of beauty despite the fact that scientific instruments, skeletons, and human bones were accorded a distinct and privileged place in the abode of love.

XVIII.

THE DRAMA OF THE STREET OF ROSES.

HOLLAND.

THE "Street of Roses" in the small Dutch town of Waardam owed its name unquestionably to the irony of fate. All sorts of odors were wafted on its breeze, except those from a garden of roses. The little street was so narrow that across it one could almost shake hands; and its houses were so tall that the sun's rays never got as far down as the pavement, while the lower stories were always in shadow.

Its two sides were occupied, without a break, by sombre-looking shops where various and ill-assorted merchandise was exposed for sale and spread over its proper limits out into the very streets. Bales and vats filled the air with odors foul and noisome, and the smells arising from dried fish, fresh fish, fats, skins, raw hides, and substances in various states of mustiness and decomposition were offensive to say the least.

For a century and more, there had flourished in this street, immediately opposite one another, two shops noted for the competition existing between their owners. It happened that they both dealt in the same sorts of goods, and the consequence was that the families of the respective rivals regarded each other with anything but a friendly eye. In course of time, envy and jealousy had given place to enmity and acts of hostility; and between the two present proprietors, Joseph Van Mark and Abraham Honigman, the same difference was to be noticed as — to set forth the matter clearly — distinguished the state of their souls on the Sabbath from the normal condition on the other six days of the week.

When, surrounded by their respective families, they celebrated the seventh day of creation, they appeared like patriarchs, like enlightened rulers, overflowing with nobility, wisdom, and generosity; the following six days they relapsed into the condition of vulgar tradesmen, greedy for gain, narrow, petty, ignorant, selfish, grasping, and profoundly superstitious.

At the approach of a customer, they would fight stubbornly for the prospective prize. Not only would Mark and Honigman spring upon the victim, but the two families, *en masse*, would swoop down on him like birds of prey on carrion. On one side, there would be Mrs. Mark and her daughters, her brother Lowey, with his wife and children; on the other, Abraham Honigman, his son Jonas, with his wife and children, — and then would follow a battle royal.

For instance, Hewa Mark would seize the customer, who was looking for red velvet, by the left arm, while Ovidia Honigman would take possession of the right, and little Lisa Mark and Baby Honigman would cling to his coat-tails. At the same time, Mrs. Mark, with expansive bust, would barricade the road in front, and Mrs. Honigman would cut off the retreat with broad-spreading hips. Then Mark and Lowey would display their velvet to the best possible advantage in the street, while Honigman and Jonas, taking advantage of the doubtful light in this "Street of Roses," would endeavor to pass off their purple velvet for the desired article. When the purchaser had finally made his choice, blessings accompanied him on one side, while from the other were showered maledictions innumerable, one example of which will serve for all: "May his stomach be filled with stones, and currants shoot forth on his nose!"

*

Opportunities for playing practical jokes on each other were eagerly seized by the two households, and their imagination ran riot in this particular form of amusement. One day, for instance, Mark and Honigman both assisting at a marriage banquet, Mark slyly poured some wine in Honigman's coat-pocket. In return, Honigman filled Mark's door-latch with glue, and prevented him from entering his house as speedily as he wished, on his return from the tavern in the evening.

Shortly after this, a Polish schnorrer (beggar) entered Honigman's shop, — needless to say he had been sent thither by Mark, — and, representing himself as an American, ordered a cloak for Tom Thumb, who was then on exhibition at Waardam. The schnorrer regretting that the admiral was too full of engagements to have his measure taken, Honigman promised to make a perfect little cloak for the dwarf from memory, as he had fortunately seen him once on the stage.

The cloak finished, the Pole presented himself with a man who filled the little shop-door as he entered. "Here is the admiral," said the schnorrer.

Honigman looked at the new-comer in dumb surprise. Recovering his breath, he turned to the agent, and exclaimed: "This gentleman is a giant, and you have ordered a cloak for a dwarf."

"My dear sir," interposed the admiral, "I am a dwarf only when before my public. Off the stage I resume my natural size, and am, more or less, very much like the people who crowd to see me." So saying, he bowed himself out, the schnorrer clinging close to him for protection, and left the shop-keeper standing with mouth agape.

The opportunity for revenge, however, was not slow in coming. Honigman met little Lisa Mark, one morning, running for the doctor.

"Turn around home, little one; I am going to pass a doctor's, and will send him at once," said the old fox.

In a few minutes, one of Honigman's friends, disguised as a disciple of Æsculapius, knocked at the sick man's door.

"What is the matter?" he asked abruptly, finding the patient in his shop.

"Oh, doctor," cried Mark, pathetically, "I have been suffering ever since yesterday. I fear I have a terrible attack of indigestion."

"Good!" said the mock doctor. "Take a seat here, in the middle of the shop; turn your face well to the light; close your eyes; put out your tongue. Now, don't stir until I tell you."

Mark sat in this awkward and uncomfortable position a long while, a very long while it seemed to him, awaiting the signal of release. What was that? Shouts of laughter? He opened his eyes. The doctor had vanished, and, instead, the shop was filled with gaping idlers, and the door blocked by a laughing crowd, joking and making merry at his expense.

"Thank God, you're all right again, Mr. Mark," said his neighbor Schmul, the butcher; "we thought for the moment you had gone stark mad."

*

Matters went on in this way for some time, and it seemed as though hostilities would never cease, when, one fine day, Barach, Honigman's youngest son, returned to the paternal roof and reconstituted himself one of the component members of the household.

The young man had been devoting himself to the study of law at various universities and in various countries, and now, while preparing to take his degree, had sought the seclusion of home and his own little attic chamber. His *corpus juris civili* was fascinating beyond doubt; but each time the student raised his head he could not avoid seeing, at the opposite window, half hidden behind her flower-pots, a charming girl scarce budded into womanhood. Her fingers were busy with needle and thread, but that did not prevent her eyes from casting swift, coy glances across the way.

The owner of this pair of eyes was Mark's youngest daughter, Jessica.

The month was August; the air was hot and the stifling breath of summer invaded the "Street of Roses." Windows could not be closed, and through the silent, lustrous air Jessica could note the clear-cut face, perhaps a shade too pale, bent gravely over the ponderous tomes; while Barach was made glad by the sight of the pure white throat behind the flower-pots, the blond braids, and little retroussé nose, as the girl stooped over the silks and velvets on her lap.

Jessica was rarely alone in her little chamber; she had, for companion and intimate friend, her white cat Mimi, who purred by her side or slept on the window-seat while she sewed.

One evening, during a promenade on the roof, by the light of the moon, Mimi's attention was attracted by two spouts, or rather two gargoyles in the shape of dragon's heads, projecting from her roof to the one on the opposite side of the way. These dragons appeared to be staring intently in each other's eyes. Mimi, very wisely concluding that this aerial bridge was placed there for the sole delectation of night-ramblers and other adventurous spirits like herself, resolved upon taking immediate advantage of the circumstance, and thus adding a zest to her tour of investigation. A graceful feline bound, and Mimi had crossed the Rubicon! So far so good. She now proceeded boldly to a certain window where a certain young student was star-gazing. And this same young student, without claiming to be a great astronomer, was silently seeing his way clear toward the discovery of a star which, one of these days, he hoped to know more intimately.

Mimi paused cautiously at the window-ledge, and gave a rapid reconnoitering glance within, warily balancing the occupant of the room within the scales of her feline judgment, and determining whether he was to be regarded as friend or foe. But the caresses she received from the firm masculine hand were so gentle and persuasive that, at the expiration of five minutes, Jessica's confidante had become Barach's friend.

Mimi's neck was ornamented with a blue ribbon. This fact inspired the young student with a thought as gallant as poetical. From his jardinière he cut a rose, and tied it to his new friend's collar. The pretty little thing no sooner found herself with this additional decoration than she purred for more caresses, which she received with half-closed eyes; then, with a tender glance of adieu, she ran off lightly toward her mistress's window. The cat proved a knowing messenger; for the next morning, when Barach looked casually over the way, his foolish young heart gave a great leap for joy, — his rose, as fresh as the morn, rested on fair Jessica's bosom.

A few days after this, he received, by the same intermediary, an exquisitely embroidered bookmark. Encouraged by this precious exchange, he took a sheet of pink note-paper, and, with trembling hand, inscribed a few lines which illy expressed his respectful yet ardent love. With what uncertainty and yet what hope he hung this sacred burden about Mimi's neck, and with what impatience he awaited the answer! The morrow was a happy day for him. Jessica's letter was all that the most enthusiastic lover could desire.

An innocent yet secret correspondence was thus established between the children of parents whose regard for each other was of a diametrically opposite nature; and the love between the young people grew like a thrifty plant in a virgin soil, though not a word had been exchanged between them.

The summer passed; the leaves began to fall, a season of rain set in, and winter, with wind and snow, was not slow to follow in its wake. Windows had to be closed, and Mimi could no longer enact the part of Cupid's messenger.

But Love is ingenious. Jessica had only to breathe on the pane if she wished to see her lover across the frost flowers; and Barach had but to light his student's pipe, and, presto! his windows were as clear as day. Written correspondence was superseded by the language of signs and flowers; the speech of the Orient was introduced into the little Dutch town, and, despite frost and snow, the rose of Sharon burst into glory and splendor.

*

An event of a serious character occurred one day in the "Street of Roses." Honigman called out to Mark, whose son-in-law Lowey (Lion) was measuring out some silk: "Do you know that Venice is a Jewish city?"

"You always know more than any one else," remarked Mark, not too politely.

"That's true," replied his friend, "for you are ignorant of the fact that there is a Saint Mark's place, with two winged lions, at Venice, and I know it."

This was too much. Mark rushed into the street, and was about throwing himself upon his luckless tormentor, when the women of the respective families interposed, and separated the bloodthirsty adversaries.

"This is a real drama," cried Pinkele, the buffoon; "these men would have killed each other if they had been left alone!"

Mark swore that he had no other ambition now than to get hold of something that Honigman valued more than anything else in the world.

"What will you give me," cried Jessica, "if I get possession of something that Honigman cares very much for, something that he will tear his very beard out if he loses?"

"Whatever you want, my girl, — whatever you want, even if it is my most precious possession."

"Very well, father, but I want you to sign your name to this promise."

Mark wrote at her dictation, and when he had affixed his signature, his daughter, with a pleased and subtle smile, folded the precious document and slipped it in her bosom.

*

A fortnight later, the celebration of Purim, the Jewish carnival, took place.

Night had fallen, and the Jewish quarter was flooded in a sea of splendor. All doors were hospitably thrown open. Masqueraders filled the streets and sallied in parties, large and small, into their friends' houses, where they indulged in all sorts of merry-making. There was dancing on all sides. A special performance was going on at the Marks'; "Esther" was the play, and, needless to say, Jessica took the part of the fair young Jewish queen.

Supper was announced, and the family and guests were just about taking their seats at the tables, when loud voices and frightened screams were heard without. Hewa, Jessica's eldest sister, her confidante and ally, ran out to see the cause of all

this commotion, and returned out of breath with the news that Barach Honigman was at the door, and threatened to break down the house if he was not admitted.

“Barach!” cried [Jessica]. “What a piece of luck! Have no fear, I will receive him with all the honor he deserves.”

She rushed from the room, and flew down the steps. Presently, there was heard a savage growling, and, behold! [Jessica] entered the room, triumphantly flourishing a whip in one hand, and leading a bear by the chain with the other.

“Here is Barach,” she exclaimed. “I have changed him into a bear.”

Mark did not doubt his daughter’s veracity for an instant. Only a few weeks before, a Polish Jew had told him of just as extraordinary a case. It appeared that just as a goose was about being killed, it cried out: “Schma Israel!” (misfortune to Israel). This set the wise men to work, and they discovered that great abuses had been going on in the community for some time.

Moreover, Mark knew that the Talmud relates several stories of a similar character.

“How did you change him?” cried the mother, petrified with horror.

“I threw some water in his face,” said Jessica, with a radiant smile, “and exclaimed three times: ‘In the names of Jehuel, lord of animals, and his companions, Passiel, Gasiel, and Chousiel, be changed into a beast! become a bear!’”

While Jessica was delivering this mendacious oration, Hewa had flown to the Honigmans’ to tell the news; and soon the entire Honigman family, great and small, stood in a state of panting excitement in Mark’s dining-room. Their eyes rested transfixed on Jessica, seated proudly in an arm-chair, her feet upon the bear. The ferocious animal appeared perfectly submissive, and seemed rather to like the position.

“Oh, my son! My unfortunate son!” cried the unhappy father, clasping his hands to his head.

Jessica rose, lashed her whip, and made the bear dance.

“You see, Honigman,” said Mark, “this is a judgment from God.”

“Since you had the power to change him into a bear,” said Honigman, humbly, “will you not yield to the promptings of your good, kind heart, Jessica, and restore him to his former shape?”

“Yes, I will,” answered the girl, with a subtle smile; “but on one condition, that henceforth Barach shall belong to me. I will never give him his liberty again. My father swore that he would not rest until he had deprived you of one of your dearest belongings. His vow is accomplished. Barach is lost to you forever. My father will now grant me anything I want, for I have his word in writing. Consequently, I am sure of his consent to my marrying Barach; but your son shall not resume his former appearance until you promise me faithfully, Mr. Honigman, to give us your blessing and consent”

“Ah, well, I consent,” he said with a sigh.

“And we can have the wedding at once?”

“On the spot!” cried the two fathers, in a breath.

Jessica laid her hand gently on Barach’s shoulder, murmured a cabalistic formula, and the young fellow lifted off his bear’s head as lightly as he would his hat, and gravely bowed to his audience.

“They have been making fun of us,” exclaimed Mark and Honigman, together.

“Remember that this is Purim eve,” said their little tyrant, “and that all sorts of fun are permissible.”

“Very well, what has just passed is fun, then,” Honigman made haste to add.

“All, father, except our love, than which there is nothing more serious,” and with these words Barach drew his sweetheart toward him, and pressed her to his heart.

XIX.

PARSLEY PUSS.

ROUMELIA.

HER name was Fradel Levi, and not Parsley Puss, as might have been supposed. Her nickname had been given her because of two reasons: first, that she invariably lay curled up like a cat when she slept; secondly, that she always had on her window-sill a bottle containing an infusion of parsley, — this mixture being her sovereign remedy against the large freckles which rather disfigured her piquant little face. A poor, hard-working girl with a good, clear mind that helped her to see her duty plainly, and follow it unresistingly. That duty was to work from early morning till late at night helping her parents, second-hand dealers, to buy, sell, and remodel old clothes.

Care sat heavily on the girl's brow and burdened her with a look beyond her years. How she longed for just one day of rest. To people as miserably poor as the Levis there is no Sabbath.

More than one of the young men in the little town had cast admiring glances at Puss's well rounded figure and attractive face; but who would have been bold enough to ask her hand in marriage? A rich man only could have taken such a rash step, and where was the Croesus whose parents would receive a daughter-in-law without a substantial marriage-portion? Scheva Levi and his wife Hündel had renounced all hope of seeing their pretty little girl married.

Puss, on her part, had never the time to think of a husband. Her most ambitious dream was for a jacket, not a fine one like a boyar's wife would wear, but a common one, trimmed and lined with squirrel.

Confinement and deprivation had told on the girl's health. In the close shop in winter, she would oftentimes be seized with prolonged and violent trembling, while, even in midsummer, her unstrung nerves would affect her similarly, and she would appear shivering with cold. Ah, if she could only wrap herself up in soft, warm furs, if she could but once know that luxury, she would be well, this trembling would leave her, she would be happy.

*

Busy one day in the shop, gilding a curtain-pole, she glanced up at the opening door, and saw a wizen-faced, long-bearded little man come sidling toward her. He smiled, made his bow, and offered to tell her fortune. Her visitor was none other than Chas Messing, who was blessed by Dame Fortune with the gift of chochmad jad,³⁰ and supported himself (humbly be it understood) by his calling of prophet.

Puss thanked him; she had nothing to spend for luxuries.

"I will be satisfied with a birch-bark snuff-box," he said.

She gave him the trifle, and he began to examine her hand knowingly.

"I see happiness," he cried, "and what happiness! Riches, and such riches! A man, ah, what a man!"

Puss gave an incredulous smile; but scarce a week had passed when Barom, a schadchen (professional match-maker) from Jassy, presented himself at Scheva Levi's door.

After he had seen Puss, his mental soliloquy ran in this wise: "The girl is bright and pretty, honest and brave withal. The very woman that rich old Paschelles wants

for his son. Her family has not its like in the whole kingdom; one of the old fellow's indispensable requisites was that his daughter-in-law should be of the tribe of Levi. It is God alone who has led me to this girl of noble lineage!"

A few days after this, Barom appeared again, this time accompanied by Modrach Paschelles, whom he introduced as a suitor for the young lady's hand. A month later, the wedding took place, and the day after the festivities Puss was installed as mistress in her husband's house at Jassy.

Was it all a dream? She shuddered at the thought of awakening. The sense of luxury she experienced as she glided into the great cloak her husband had brought her, and nestled in the costly fur; the bliss of lying back in the soft velvet cushions of the railway carriage, — all this must be real, it dare not be a miserable mockery of fate, a delusion of the senses!

These horses that drove her and her husband through the streets of Jassy were creatures of flesh and blood, no vision of the imagination; and this marble staircase of the little palace she was to call home did not sink away as she placed her feet upon it. No, it was all real, all true, this happiness that Chas Messing had read across her hand, and predicted for her in exchange for a birch-bark snuff-box.

She never tired of swinging the heavy damask curtains of her bed-chamber to and fro that she might see them sink back into their rich deep folds; she never wearied of passing her hands across the velvet of the furniture, nor of caressing the lustrous sable that trimmed her red-velvet house-gown.

*

Care seemed banished forever and a day. It found no room for lodgment within the lordly dwelling where choice paintings, statues from the antique, and gorgeous exotics transformed the rooms into a fairy-land of beauty.

Parsley Puss moved about amid all this splendor like the wife of a nabob. Her seizures of trembling attacked her no more. She had but to press her finger on the ivory button and the electric current carried her commands to any part of the house, or even into the town if she desired it, and set an army of servants in motion.

Her husband was her most devoted slave. After the birth of her first child, a boy, she fairly blossomed into radiant beauty, her slender figure became charmingly rounded, and the obnoxious freckles disappeared as by magic.

But the misery which had weighed upon her childhood and youth, and which had been frightened away by pleasure and joy, was not to be so easily routed. It crept silently back to her heart, and pressed upon it with more intense and cruel torture than it had done in the luckless days of yore when it had formed a fitting background for the old-clothes shop and its surroundings. Poor Puss, who had floated in bliss for a few days, who had enjoyed happiness for a few months, and had rested in sweet peace for a whole year, knew now not a moment's contentment or tranquillity.

She was driven by a sort of fever from room to room, from her house to the factory, from factory to the town, and then again and again over the weary round. She was urged resistlessly by a force mightier than her own. Waking or sleeping, the spirit of unrest harassed and oppressed her.

She would start from sleep with the thought of fire, and hurriedly putting on her silk stockings and Turkish slippers, slipping into her gold-embroidered fur-trimmed gown, and throwing a red Persian scarf about her head, she would go stealthily through the entire house looking for an unextinguished lamp or candle, and end by visiting the kitchen, where she would throw water on the dying embers.

At the theatre, listening to a bright operetta, she would suddenly exclaim: "Suppose my husband should lose his money!" and leaving her box would be driven to the factory, and reassure herself by a personal inspection of the books. Were she giving a dinner-party, she would abruptly leave the table, and fly to her baby's cradle to convince herself that her darling was not dead.

Naturally, Modrach suffered at seeing his wife the victim of such disquiet. In vain he tried to reason with her, and exhausted argument after argument in proving that her ills were all of her imagination; he would grow stern, and tell her that she was not alone making herself miserable, but inflicting pain on every one about her. For all response, he would receive a melancholy smile.

One afternoon when she was particularly nervous, he brought the boy into her room, saying, as he laid the laughing burden on her lap, "Puss, can he not make you happy?" She looked at him tenderly through her tears, and answered gently: "Yes, love, in a measure, and you, Modrach — how good you are; but happiness came too late!"

*

It was an oppressive morning. The sun shone fiercely through half naked trees denuded of their leaves by autumn wind and rain. Puss paced her garden restlessly, her fur cloak wrapped closely about her, her hands hidden-in its ample flowing sleeves. She trembled, a vague feeling of alarm possessed her, her eyes were lustrous with unshed tears.

She turned with a start at the sound of hurried footsteps, and confronted her husband's favorite workman, Assur Menderson, otherwise known as "the giant." A tall, sinewy fellow — a Galicean — who had served his time as soldier and been decorated at the battle of Jagel. Intelligence, conscientiousness, and devotion to his master's interest were not among the least of his many good qualities.

"Mrs. Paschelles," he cried breathlessly, "where is your husband? He is not at the factory."

Puss's face grew deathly white. She knew that Assur was the bearer of bad tidings.

"There is a strike in town," said the young fellow, he had regained his composure, and spoke gravely; "the rascals who have been trying so long to excite the populace against us have gained their point. The rabble have begun their work; several shops have been rifled. The police look on and do nothing. The mob is moving now in our direction, and we must lose no time in preparing for the attack."

The words were scarcely uttered when Modrach arrived, confirming the report, and bearing further alarming news. The men at the factory had asked for higher wages, had been refused, and had instantly quitted work. Puss looked at her husband; he was calm and determined. Suddenly and unaccountably, as it were, she too became cool and self-possessed, and said, in a tone which struck her husband strangely: "Modrach, take your precautions at the factory. I will take mine here in the house." She held out her hand to her husband, who pressed it thankfully.

Her orders were given quietly and prudently. She sent her child to the safest quarter of the house, hid her jewels and cash-box in the garden, and then, slipping a small loaded revolver in her pocket, calmly awaited the attack.

Suddenly, there was a hubbub in the street. A crowd of drunken loafers came on with shout and yell, and, forcing an entrance in the courtyard, began addressing the workmen.

“They are right,” cried Borescau, the leader of the strikers, “we must not leave a Jew in the place.”

He hurled his crowbar aloft as he spoke; some of the crowd followed his example, and then, with savage shouts and oaths, the greater part of the mob threw themselves against the great door of the factory, which stood the assault with grim defiance.

Others tried to force their way into the house, but they fell back at Modrach’s approach. His face was perfectly composed, and, stepping close to the angry mob, he began addressing them quietly, dispassionately, appealing to their common-sense and ideas of justice. He watched the effect of his words; they were beginning to tell, when suddenly he felt himself seized by the throat, and Borescau hissed out: “Give us your money, or we’ll have your life, dirty Jew!”

His arms were pinioned, his feet pushed from under him, he gave himself up for lost, when his wife, making her way through the mob, and giving Borescau a blow, cried out: “What do you want, robbers, assassins?” Her flashing eyes darted angry flames at Modrach’s assailants.

“We want your money,” muttered the leader, and he seized his victim more firmly by the throat.

“Back with you!” cried Puss, threateningly.

“Be done with her,” shouted Borescau. Twenty crowbars were raised; but the little heroine, foreseeing his command, had drawn her revolver from her pocket, and before the words died on his lips a bullet had struck him. He reeled, his hand slackened its grasp on Modrach, and in an instant he was lying with his face to the ground, like a slave at his mistress’s feet.

The crowd drew back. Puss stood proudly before her husband. Her eyes seemed on fire; she clutched the pistol firmly, and showed a brave front to the enemy. But her courage would have counted for little against the inflamed passions of the men, had not help come from another quarter. Swinging a sledge-hammer lightly, Assur stepped in front of his mistress, and once again the mob was driven back. “The giant” protected the retreat, and, in a few moments, Modrach, his wife, some Jewish factory hands and servants, and Assur himself had found refuge within doors, where they barricaded themselves as best they could, and, taking stand at the windows, threatened their assailants with instant death if they made a second attempt to force an entrance.

The workmen fell back, held a council of war, and then retired, but only to set fire to the four corners of the factory.

Flames shot up from all sides, and soon the house was enveloped by smoke and blaze. The incendiaries had retired to a safe and respectful distance, and stood watching their work with all the pride of successful artists.

“We must clear a way through,” said Modrach, “if we do not wish to be suffocated by the smoke.”

Puss, her boy in her arms, and the little band of faithful defenders behind her, descended the stairway, and, resting with a sense of protection on “the giant’s” powerful arm, made good their escape.

Scarcely had they left the building when the sound of trumpet and hoof-beat was heard, a squadron of cavalry rode up, and a few thrusts of their swords sufficed to disperse the cowardly ruffians.

Modrach made a final effort to save his house, but soon saw how futile were his labors, and stood, with clenched teeth and frowning brow, watching the flames as they consumed with their fatal breath house, home, and property.

Suddenly a little hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a low voice, loving but determined, whispered in his ear: "Don't despair, husband mine; we can rebuild house and factory. I, I have you, and you, love, have wife and child. What we have lost, we can do without."

*

The brave little woman had miraculously recovered her self-poise and energy. Misfortune had come, and found her armed with a strength of character that baffled all assault. Order had scarcely been re-established in the town, the lives and property of the Jews placed under civil protection, when Mrs. Paschelles presented herself at the minister's, not to solicit aid, but to make accusation and demand restitution. She made the government responsible for all damages, and succeeded in obtaining all redresses claimed. This accomplished, she went from town to town, from country to country, from Bessarabia to Bukowina and Galicia, thence to Hungary and Transylvania, and obtained a payment of notes before their maturity from each and every one of her husband's debtors.

On her return, the work of rebuilding was promptly begun, and on the ashes of the old a new home sprang into existence. Parsley Puss had conquered fate; the burden on her soul had been lifted.

Modrach and his wife stood in the old courtyard, their eyes resting now and again on the little fir-tree waving its fluttering ribbons over the new house-top. An aged mason stood aloft, and, glass in hand, drank to the health of master and mistress. Suddenly, a soft white arm was laid caressingly about Modrach's neck, and a low voice, with a tremor in it that made the words echo, whispered in his ear: —

"We have lost much, husband dear, but my gain has been great."

"Have you won content at last, darling?" said Modrach, with a tender smile.

"Ah, I am so very happy! God punished me; but he was merciful at last, and his hand led me as in olden times it led his people, from Egyptian bondage into liberty, from darkness into light."

THE COUNTERFEIT COIN.

SOUTHERN GERMANY.

SUMMER had passed, and autumn was spreading her brilliant tones over the landscape, when Martin Friedlieb returned, a stranger as it were, to his native town in Southern Germany, and set about looking at life from the practical bread-and-butter standpoint. His home-coming had given his coreligionists food for talk and gossip, and in the Sindel household — Sindel, be it known, was the richest Israelite in the community, and the owner of a large toy manufactory — young Friedlieb's affairs were seriously canvassed and discussed.

"Here is this fellow," said the paterfamilias, "getting on in years, has squandered his money on travelling and book-learning, and back he comes to town without a pfennig in his pocket. Of course the community will be at the expense of supporting him."

"That will never come to pass," said Mrs. Eleanor Sindel, the feminine *bel esprit* of the city; "he has completed his studies in the first universities of Munich, Berlin, Heidelberg, Prague, and Vienna; he has travelled through Italy, France, and the Netherlands, has visited all the galleries, and studied the most celebrated works of ancient and modern art."

"All of which will not buy him a pair of boots," interrupted her spouse, with fine irony.

"He is devoting himself to the history of art," continued Eleanor, placidly, "is engaged now in writing a book, and will in a short time become a professor."

"Which lucrative means of gaining a livelihood yields next to nothing."

"Sindel, you know that we have professors now who make ten thousand marks a year, and more."

"Well, he who lives the longest will see the most."

Deborah, the daughter, had listened silently to this spirited conversation, had in fact gone on quietly with her work, — she was engaged in the absorbing occupation of dressing a doll; but her interest was aroused and her compassion awakened for the youthful scholar, and, as a natural consequence, when Martin paid his first visit to the Sindel mansion, on the following day, Deborah's heart went pit-a-pat in a most undignified and truly maidenly fashion.

Martin, strange as it may seem, experienced a sensation of absolute delight at the sight of Deborah's girlish figure and sweet innocent face; while the object of his admiration found him — to express her feelings mildly — a manly fellow with a bright, intelligent face. When the visitor rose to leave, a magic bond drew the young people more closely together than appearances would have indicated to the casual observer. Mrs. Sindel, however, was a close observer. The magic bond was not an invisible one to her. Charmed with the young professor, as she was pleased to term him, she invited him to dinner, and, taking pity on his solitary state, proposed that he should aid them in the construction of the tabernacle, in preparation for the approaching festival. Martin accepted with thanks; and, in her joy, pretty little Deborah blushed violently, as she shook hands and said good-by to the handsome stranger.

The next day, the opportunity presented itself to the dinner-guest to gain his host's kindly consideration up to a certain point. The conversation turned on the nearing festival of Tabernacles, and the young scholar explained its significance so

clearly, and yet so modestly withal, that a certain condescension was noticeable on Sindel's part. Martin, after pointing out its meaning, declared the feast to be at one and the same time a memorial of the sojourn in the Wilderness, and a sort of harvest festival, as it fell coincidentally with the vintage season, and gathering in of the fruits and grains in the Promised Land. He wound up his remarks with the quotation: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.' And yet," he added, "the fruits we hang in our booths are simply symbols of the Palestinian harvest feast."

Three days previous to the festival, the building of tabernacles was begun in all Jewish households, old and young putting hand to the work with a will. Facing the factory, stood the Sindel mansion, spreading broadly in its mediaeval German architecture; behind it ran the garden, and here it was that Martin drove, with sturdy strokes, the four stakes that were to uphold the booth. Laths were nailed up from stake to stake, thus forming a sort of wall. Sindel and his son Julius decorated its exterior with fir-branches and moss; the ladies draped the interior with white muslin; Martin undertook the ceiling. This was accomplished by means of wood and spruce-boughs so arranged that while forming a sufficient protection, the vault of heaven might not quite be shut from view.

Then began the work of ornamentation; and though this duty was relegated to the ladies, Martin insisted upon making himself of service, and, with an alacrity and dexterity worthy the cause, he hung upon the ceiling colored-paper garlands, branches of the service-tree, whose red fruit gleamed out brightly against the dark lustrous background, apples, pears, grapes, gilded nuts, and birds made of eggshells, with beaks and wings of gilded paper.

After hanging the branch of palms (known as the loulef) and the zedrach (apple of Paradise), the Mogan Doved (shield of David) was placed in the centre of the ceiling, and an iron ring was securely fastened into a gilded wooden triangle, to hold the seven-branched lamp.

During these interesting operations, the hands of the young people were brought in frequent contact, and on each of these frequent occasions would Deborah blush.

"And now one more thing," said the girl, her clear, innocent eyes lighting her face with a rare smile.

"Well, what is it?" asked Martin.

She had her hands behind her back, and, bringing them slowly forward, displayed a great red onion decorated with a cock's feathers.

"What could I have been thinking about!" exclaimed her assistant. "It would never do to forget this talisman against evil spirits."

They hung the onion over the doorway, and sheidin and massikim (evil spirits and demons) went flying away over the threshold of the souka (tabernacle).

"You must find us horribly credulous," said the girl; "such a great traveller as you have been!"

"Do not fancy that people are happier or more enlightened where the great waves of life come breaking in and dashing the foam about. Superstition is immortal. It is forever arrayed in changing garbs, but it never disappears. To-day, it is a religious folly, to-morrow a political folly, the day after a scientific folly. But humanity could not exist without folly."

"So you do not find us ridiculously old-fashioned." She tossed her head back as she spoke, and one of her heavy black braids struck Martin on the cheek.

He moved hastily.

“Have I hurt you?” she asked sympathetically.

“No; the sensation I experienced was as though a magic wand had struck me, and now I fear all the red onions in the world could not protect my heart against the invading hosts.”

“Wicked scoffer,” cried Deborah, with a laugh; and braid number two gave the other cheek a gentle blow.

This time Martin did not move. He stood still, wrapped in a bliss that bewildered him.

*

It was the first day of the festival. Sindel had gone to a whist party. Mrs. Eleanor Sindel was buried in one of Spielhagen’s novels. It was raining heavily. Gutters were overflowing, the sky was black, ennui filled the air.

Deborah, making up her mind that the day should be passed in the laziest and most delightful manner possible, had bestowed her small self comfortably in the tabernacle, and the weather was ignominiously ignored. She had put some boards on the roof, hung a portière against the door, lit the lamps, piled up cushions for a seat, wrapped herself in a shawl, and then, her feet on a footstool, had leaned back in her cushions with a sense of luxury that she found soothing, and well fitted to the spirit of revery that possessed her. She glanced now and again at the egg-shell birds and gilded nuts oscillating in the slow-stirring air; she listened to the pitter-patter of the rain; she was pleasantly conscious of the resinous fragrance of the spruce about her; and she was just about sinking away into dreamland, when suddenly a shudder passed through her frame, the curtain was drawn aside, and Martin stood in the doorway. The shudder that seized her, however, was one of joy; and the hand she stretched out to the visitor pressed his with a warmth that one more learned in woman’s ways than the young scholar would instantly have noted as encouraging, — perhaps more than encouraging.

“Pardon my intrusion, Deborah,” began Martin, rashly; “but I have taken advantage of your father’s game of whist and your mother’s novel. I want to speak alone with you.”

“Speak, I am all attention.”

“Deborah, I do not know how to turn pretty compliments; and, besides, what good would they do? If you care for me, I shall have no need of them; if you do not, they will not aid me. I — Deborah — I love you, I love you with all my heart.”

“And I, Martin, will never marry any other than you,” cried the girl, her face alight with the joy of love. “Father, of course, will put difficulties in the way; but I am quite as obstinate as he, and I will not yield a point until I am —”

“Until you are Mrs. Professor.”

“Yes; and here is my hand. It is yours now.”

The rain fell steadily, the wind wailed a melancholy accompaniment to the falling drops, but the lovers had no thought of wind or rain. Their hearts beat tumultuously with their new-found joy; and if, from time to time, their lips met as well as their hands, who that reads this simple chronicle would say they should have waited for papa’s consent?

When Deborah confided the wondrous intelligence to her mother, that good lady bestowed her complete approval upon her daughter’s choice. Mr. Sindel, however, took a different view of the matter; and when Martin called the next day to make a formal proposal for his sweetheart’s hand, the father frowned ominously, and, despite his wife’s side remarks, said curtly,—

“I have nothing against you, Mr. Friedlieb, nothing in the world; but will you be good enough to tell me upon what you expect to support a wife?”

“I count upon my brain to support us, Mr. Sindel.”

“Possibly. But my daughter cannot wait until you become a professor; besides, my son-in-law must be one who can take an interest in my business. You are a spendthrift, Mr. Friedlieb, that is the unfortunate part of it; and I cannot deliver my daughter over into certain misery.”

Mrs. Eleanor’s oratorical talents were expended in vain. Deborah’s tears flowed without producing the least impression on Sindel’s stony heart. He remained as firm as adamant.

The following day, Aaron Berkopf, Sindel’s factotum, paid Martin a visit. “I have come to make you a very pleasant proposition,” said he, a smile spreading generously over his florid, greasy countenance. “It seems that you have turned the young lady’s head, and the question is now how to get it back in place. Mr. Sindel offers you ten thousand marks on condition that you relinquish all claim to his daughter’s hand.”

“Never!”

“Why ‘never’? You cannot have the girl, and ten thousand marks is a fat lot.”

“That may be. But I love Deborah, and I will not sell my happiness for ten thousand millions of marks.”

Berkopf took his departure, shaking his head sadly over this pig-headed young man. The pigheaded young man seized his hat and straightway repaired to the toy-maker’s. He had made up his mind to see his sweetheart, bid her farewell, and leave the town. He met the girl on the steps.

“Take the money,” she said eagerly. “With it you can make a position, and when you become a professor, father will never withhold his consent. As for me, dearest, I will marry you, and none other.”

Martin reflected for a moment with lowered head, then, kissing Deborah’s hand, he bade her farewell, returned to his lodgings, and despatched a hurried line to Sindel.

An hour later, Berkopf appeared, a still more generous smile suffusing his ruddy and expansive face; following him were two workmen from the factory, carrying ten bags, each containing a thousand marks.

*

Still an hour later, Martin Friedlieb paid Sindel a visit.

“Well, Mr. Friedlieb, to what am I to owe the honor of your presence,” said the toy-dealer; “have you not received the ten thousand marks?”

“No,” answered the young man, and as he spoke he threw on the table a thaler which fell with a dull, hollow sound. “That thaler is counterfeit.”

The rich man adjusted his eye-glass, examined the piece, let it fall on the table again, and finally said: —

“Yes, this thaler is counterfeit.” Then he looked at Martin fixedly for a long time, and said nothing.

“Mr. Sindel, my time is precious.”

“Mine is also. That remark of yours has not impressed me; but what has impressed me is this thaler. Listen, young man. I have made a mistake. You cannot be the spendthrift I took you for. A spendthrift would not have counted the money. Besides, I am not fond of seeing red eyes and tears about. You shall have another thaler, and my daughter in the bargain.”

“Mr. Sindel, you are too good.”

“Come here, son-in-law, embrace me; you have my consent.”

Martin pressed him to his beating heart. “I am not as fascinating as Deborah, I’ll admit,” continued the old fellow, jocosely, “but under these circumstances you may embrace me; and now hurry away and talk it over with the little one.”

XXI.

TWO DOCTORS.

AUSTRIA.

IN a well-wooded district of Austria, near the Bohemian frontier, where purling, frothy rivulets dash merrily along, where majestic forests rear their battlements of green, and where fair, shining mountains are graced by ruins of knightly castles, there stands a pretty little market-town with white, red-roofed cottages.

Here, from time immemorial, has flourished a small Jewish community, and, owing partly to its remoteness from the centre of commercial activity, partly to the simplicity of life about these artless folks, they have preserved intact their ancient customs and marked peculiarities of character.

The great luminary, the "Ilan" of the community, was the talmudist, Mebous Kohn, its counsellor, oracle, and physician. Happily and tranquilly, Mebous had lived with his daughter Perla, in butcher Zimmermann's vine-clad cottage, until, one fine day, into the woodland covert fluttered a strange bird in the shape of a young Jewish doctor, Leopold Pfeffermann, and disquiet took up its abode in the old doctor's heart.

Until this intruder's advent, the little community had known no other medicine than the Talmud. By means of the sacred book, Mebous had cured all sorts of disease and organic troubles, or had not cured them, according to the ascendancy of good or evil spirits.

Then suddenly had come this stranger — a young man, a pouretz (coxcomb)—to dispute his well-earned, well-merited glory!

The old talmudist hated the doctor from the first, — not at first sight, for he hated him before he saw him; and his antipathy was increased not a little by the attitude maintained by Pfeffermann's sister, a young woman who drew forth comment, not alone by her amiability and learning, but also by her indifference to public opinion, and last, though not least, by her exquisite gowns. She warmly defended all that was worthy and reasonable in the observance of Jewish laws; but at the same time she had irretrievably cut herself loose from those customs and prejudices which the nineteenth century cannot assimilate.

It was all-sufficient that the books read by the young woman were neither Hebrew nor heavy folios, for the talmudist to regard her as an arch-heretic. To these enormities add the incontrovertible fact that the fledgling physician had a human skull on his desk and a skeleton in the corner of his study, and then fancy the picture such a situation presented to worthy Mebous, if you can. It was simply a violation of the Law; and in saying that, what more could be said?

Fidelity to the Law, however, availed the talmudist naught. The doctor effected some remarkable cures; while his sister faced danger and exposure when it was a question of caring for the sick, venturing unhesitatingly into the poorest cottages, and nursing the unfortunates with all the self-sacrifice of a noble, womanly soul. Mebous's practice grew perceptibly less, and the young physician gained what the old one lost. True, Pfeffermann did not observe the dietary laws; but who should say that his true Jewish heart was not in its rightful Jewish place?

When Mebous was called upon for medical advice, the old gentleman would gravely inquire of the patient whether he had not committed some indiscretion in cutting his nails, eating forbidden food, entering a ruin inhabited by the massikim

(evil spirits), or perpetrated some other imprudence of a similarly mischievous character. After which he would open the Talmud, recite a few prayers, and place his hands on his patient. Occasionally, too, he would offer a decoction of herbs of his own gathering.

Pfeffermann's practice, on the contrary, was based on somewhat more accurate principles. If his patient complained of sore throat, the throat was examined; if his attention was invited to a pain in the chest, he would be satisfied with nothing less than auscultation and testing the pulse; and only after he had convinced himself of a correct diagnosis of the case would he write his prescription and order a course of treatment. The use, however, of his wonderful instruments and electrical apparatus had an absolutely overwhelming effect; for the mysteries of science were more awe-inspiring to these superstitious people about him than all of old Mebous's cabalistic formulas.

And thus it came to pass that in course of time, and that of the very shortest, Mebous found himself dethroned. He brooded over his troubles, grew pale and thin, and finally decided upon giving up the unequal contest and leaving fireside and country, when Providence came to the rescue, and brought him with a rebound into popular favor. This was effected by means of a miraculous cure which he made in the case of his landlord, the butcher.

The young doctor determined to unravel the mystery, and straightway repaired to the talmudist's. Old Mebous accorded his visitor a cool reception, perhaps cold would be the better adjective. Perla stood behind her father's chair during the interview, her slender, girlish figure and clear, trustful eyes making her appear the very personification of grace and innocence.

"Will you be good enough to explain to me, Mr. Kohn," began Pfeffermann, with but little preliminary, "how you treated Zimmermann? For one who has never studied medicine, you have achieved wonders; and as I like to get to the bottom of these phenomena, I should feel much indebted if you would let me know your method."

"You believe that it is absolutely necessary to dissect corpses to understand the human body," responded the talmudist. "As for me, young man, I understand it better than you, in spite of the fact that I have never put a carving-knife into God's handiwork. Besides, who tells you that we ought to cure all maladies? If the Lord sends a disease, we can pray to have death averted, but we should never struggle against the will of the Creator."

"But, Mr. Kohn, I am most anxious to know your method; that is the undisguised object of my visit."

"My method," said Mebous, softly, closing his eyes as he spoke, "you would never understand it. You have not the proper spirit; you lack the fear of the Lord, young man. To cure the sick, we must not consider the physical side of the question, but the moral. In Treatise Makoth,³¹ we are told that man has two hundred and forty-eight members and three hundred and sixty-five veins. On the other side, we find in the Torah two hundred and forty-eight commandments and three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions. If one commits a sin either in violating a commandment or disregarding a prohibition, the member or vein corresponding with the commandment or prohibition becomes debilitated, and causes sickness."

Pfeffermann gazed blankly at the old visionary. He was dumfounded. He could almost fancy that, like Faust, he was listening to a "choir of a hundred thousand fools."

"The more a man sins," continued the talmudist, intent on his explanation, "the greater and more numerous his physical disturbances; and if he delay repentance

too long, no medicine in this world can save him. Only repentance proportionate to the sin committed can delay death; for God has said by the mouth of his prophet Ezekiel, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'

"And this is the method you have employed in curing Zimmermann?" asked the doctor, absolutely stupefied at the explanation.

Mebous nodded affirmatively, and then continued placidly: "He confessed his sins to me, and promised to make amends; and then I prayed to the Lord, and made myself answerable for Zimmermann's repentance. You see his health was restored."

*

Mebous Kohn's day of triumph was succeeded by defeat and discouragement. His daughter Perla fell ill; and this time neither promises, penitence, prayers, nor the Talmud could accomplish a cure. The girl grew daily weaker and more languid, and her father, driven to the point of desperation, finally decided to call in the young doctor.

Downhearted and crestfallen, he stood in Peffermann's study, and proffered his request very much as though he were some Oriental monarch presenting his neck to the adversary that the latter might place his foot upon it and show himself the victor.

The young physician displayed magnanimity. He gave no expression to his secret satisfaction, and, wasting but little time in empty words, hastened to the girl's bedside, made a careful diagnosis, gave his orders, wrote his prescription, and then sent for his sister, who took charge of the case with a tender watchfulness and a natural skill that made her task a very labor of love.

The young physician came twice a day. Oftentimes, he passed the night at Perla's couch; and, gazing at the girl in the still watches of the night, as she lay, indifferent alike to what was going on about her and to her own condition, her cheeks aglow with a fictitious color, he could not disguise from himself the fact that it was Perla the woman who interested him more than Perla the patient. His usually steady hand trembled strangely when he took her temperature; his heart beat violently at every alarming symptom. Would he have struggled thus untiringly, thus obstinately, had not the life in the balance become to him the most precious thing on earth? — he asked himself, half reproachfully.

The fight was won; the disease routed; strength and health slowly gained the mastery. An unutterable delight filled the doctor's soul at the thought that his invalid was convalescing, that at each visit a pair of soft black eyes would be raised trustingly to his, and would greet him from afar.

The girl was able to leave her room and sit in the garden, lazily watching the great out-of-door world, and drinking in health with the sunshine. But the doctor's calls were not discontinued.

"I cannot persuade myself," said the convalescent, one morning, a rare smile playing about her delicate lips, "that there will ever be a day when you will not come to see me, doctor. I wish —"

She checked the words on her tongue, and lowered her eyes.

"What do you wish, Perla dear?"

"I wish I could be always sick, that you could always come."

The young fellow took her white, thin hands in his manly ones, and, looking her tenderly in the eyes, said solemnly: "No, Perla, do not wish yourself ill again.

You do not realize what anguish your illness has cost me. But if you care for me just a little, sweet, I adore and worship you with every particle of my being; and the great wish of my life is to lead you as queen and mistress into my home, that it may be graced and blessed by your loving presence.”

“Is what you are saying true?” gasped Perla. She pressed her hand to her heart; her limbs trembled.

“Do you not wish it too, sweet?”

“Why do you ask? You must know that I do!”

“But your father —”

“Will be open to conviction.”

*

Shortly after this the forester shot a stray dog who was appropriating game that belonged to his betters; Pfeffermann got the carcass from him and sent it to the old doctor’s. When the talmudist returned from his matutinal ramble, a bunch of precious herbs in his hand, he found the young doctor and Perla intent over their bloody work, or rather the girl was listening religiously while her Mentor was dissecting the corpse, and explaining its organical structure.

At first, Mebous pretended not to see what was going on, then, irresistibly, he gave a surreptitious glance at the interesting operation, and, finally yielding to overpowering curiosity, he approached on tiptoe, and stood silently watching the dissected body. A sort of holy awe possessed him. It was as though the young doctor had thrown open a mysterious door, and shown him with a sudden flood of light a part of God’s work-room.

“What a miracle!” he cried, raising his arms toward heaven as he spoke. “The words of the prophet Joel are fulfilled: ‘And it shall come to pass, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.’ Your hand, Mr. Pfeffermann, your hand! Henceforth, I shall never have the audacity to pretend to cure a human being.”

“Why not, Mr. Kohn? Henceforth, let us be partners. I will cure the body, you the soul. You see I give you the better part; for there are sick and suffering souls in this world, and the holy writings of the Talmud represent to them a panacea that has proved its efficacy over and over again.”

“You are right; we should remain friends, Mr. Pfeffermann.”

“That is not enough,” responded the young doctor, warmly.

“Well, in Heaven’s name, what more do you want?”

“Your daughter, Mr. Kohn.”

“Perla?”

The girl looked at her father, a blush mantled her pretty cheeks, the eyelids veiled the tell-tale eyes.

“You love each other?”

“Yes, father.”

“And, doctor, you are not too proud to marry old Mebous Kohn’s daughter?”

“Mr. Kohn, you do me an injustice.”

“No, no; I shall be proud of such a son-in-law,” cried the old doctor, in a burst of joy and enthusiasm; “for Solomon says: ‘My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.’”

XXII.

POULTOFF'S ILIAD.

RUSSIA.

BENDAVID CAFTAN and Mordahil Grünspahn were neighbors. The relations they entertained toward one another were of the most friendly character, as were also those of their respective wives, — Vogele (little bird) and Veigele (little violet).

Nothing is permanent in this world however, and, on a certain day, an event, not in itself remarkable, cast the shadow of discord between them, and converted the relationship into that of mutual enmity.

The great fair was taking place at Novgorod; and, like good Jewish merchants, Bendavid and Mordahil repaired to the fascinating town. "He who loves his wife as himself, and venerates her more than himself, will have peace for his tent." Bearing in mind these words of talmudic wisdom, Bendavid, when taking leave of his wife, gave her a well-filled purse, begged her to deprive herself of nothing during his absence, and to satisfy whatever wishes she might have. Mordahil followed his neighbor's example, and gave a like sum to Veigele.

In due course of time, the two husbands returned. On Mordahil's threshold stood Veigele, a bag of money in her hand. She had spared, stinted, and saved, thinking, in the delight of her foolish little heart, that she was thus preparing a delightful surprise for her lord and master. But she was pale and thin, her dress was shabby and worn. The money-bag was unnoticed, and her husband could scarce conceal his mortification and annoyance.

Vogele, on the contrary, had not saved a ruble. She, too, met her husband on the threshold, but she was as pretty as a peach. A jaunty little red-ribboned cap sat coquettishly on her black, curly head, her neck and arms were covered with gems whose brilliancy rivalled that of her dancing eyes, and a magnificent fur-trimmed jacket set off her well-rounded figure to perfection; but, prettiest of all her prettiness was the charming, fascinating smile that wreathed her rosy lips.

Bendavid fell in love with his wife anew. He pressed her to his heart, and the question of her saving or spending entered not for a moment into the thoughts that crowded his happy home-coming. He knew full well that she had dressed and decked herself for him. "Infinite are the evil actions of the wicked woman; infinite are the kind actions of the good woman!" he cried, quoting from the Midrasch.

Mordahil had scarcely glanced at his wife. Veigele sat weeping in the corner.

"What are you concocting in that busy little brain of yours?" queried Bendavid, as he looked back over his arm-chair, and saw his wife leaning over his shoulders, a mischievous smile playing about her full red lips.

"Do you know what advice the Talmud gives women?" she made answer. "The mother says to the daughter: 'My child, thou shouldst be upright before thy husband as before thy king. Thou shouldst serve him. In serving him thou wilt make of him thy slave, and wilt become his mistress.'"

"From which words of wisdom I am to infer that I am your bounden slave," said her husband, with a merry laugh.

Vogele nodded, and closed his mouth with her daintily perfumed lips.

Bendavid's wife was as great an adept in the art of beautifying her mind as in adorning her pretty little body. She was an eager reader, and as her husband had

but little time to devote to books, when they sat together over the blazing logs in the winter evenings, or on the bench before the door in summer, she would speak to him of things curious and interesting of which she had read, and tell him tales and novels very much as we tell fairy-stories to listening children. He learned not a little from her lively descriptions of the wonders of the starry heavens, of animal and vegetable life, of rock growth, of the formation of the earth, of foreign lands and strange customs. And thus Bendavid became, little by little, a sort of freethinker; whereas Mordahil, forced to seek away from home such comforts as were not attainable there, fell, little by little, into the hands of the Chassidim,³² and became in the end a fanatic.

The entire community, great and small, wise and foolish, bent in submission beneath the authority, or rather despotism, of the zadick,³³ sur-named “the Pious and Just,” whom the Chassidim idolized as their chief. The rabbi, Mayer Horwitz, a man of intelligence and irreproachable character, was powerless in face of this pope of the fanatical Jews, and was forced to content himself with a little body of followers who not alone represented Judaism in its purity and truth, but defended it as well.

Veigele, becoming ere long consumed with envy of her pretty neighbor, was not slow in finding means to satisfy her spirit of petty spite. A few insinuating remarks from the jealous woman, and Mordahil was convinced that Vogele was everything that was bad. A few insinuating remarks from Mordahil, and the zadick could not understand why his suspicions had not been aroused before.

The “All Powerful” was seated one evening on a divan in his reception-room; his followers and disciples had gathered about him, listening to words of wisdom as they fell from the oracular lips. Mordahil, noticing that the mighty man’s pipe was out, refilled it, and held a light for its re-illumination, whispering the while in the august ear: “Vogele Caftan is letting her hair grow, Reb; the forked lightning of thy anger will strike her soon.”

The zadick, Lewy Jaffa Löwenstamm, remained motionless. In his dark-red fur-trimmed satin caftan, his red cap upon his black locks, seated luxuriously back in his cushions, he presented to the life the picture of the “holy man,” — that mortal temple wherein the holy of holies has taken up its earthly residence; or, presenting a less profane comparison, he looked the sultan surrounded by a band of humble and devoted slaves.

Scarcely fifty, his sovereignty was more extended than many a similar potentate can hope to attain at an advanced age. And yet this ascendancy was easily understood by a glance at the man. His handsome face was virile to a degree; power and determination asserted itself in every line of his figure; and the imperious glance of the eyes was quite sufficient to strike terror into the breast of the unlucky wight who provoked his ire.

“She reads profane books, too,” continued Mordahil.

“For the sinner, there is but one means of reconciliation with God,” said the zadick’s favorite disciple, Rouben Nesselblatt, who had overheard the whisper; “and this is, according to the Sepher Hamidoth [a work written by the founder of the sect of the Chassidim], a continual contribution toward the zadick’s receipts.”

The functionary discussed inclined his head in approbation.

Schamos Makler the peddler repaired that very evening to Bendavid’s, and gratuitously counselled him to secure God’s favor and the zadick’s by a gift to the latter.

The present not being forthcoming, Makler once again visited the culprit, and menaced both him and his wife with an anathema, if he persisted in his obstinate course.

Vogele went forthwith to the rabbi's, and presented the case.

"Do not trouble your head about these anathemas," said her protector; "I will see that no harm befalls you."

Her talk with the rabbi set her fears at rest; but since the zadick had declared war, she decided upon acting on the offensive. An occasion soon presented itself; she accepted it with alacrity.

The winter had been extreme. Hunger had driven the wolves to the environs of the town. One evening, Schamos Makler was forced to go into the country, and the prospect being an intimidating one, he begged the zadick for his protection.

"You have your stick," said Lewy Jaffa; "if God wills it, the stick will go off like a gun, and if he should not will it, a pistol itself would miss fire."

Clutching to his heart what small comfort these words conveyed, the peddler set forth. He was nearing the forest, when he saw an immense wolf come bounding toward him. The blood froze in his veins; but self-preservation being stronger than fear, he raised his stick to a level, took aim, a shot was heard, and the ferocious beast fell forward in the snow.

Makler paused not an instant to investigate the results of his courage, he took to ignominious flight; and only when at a safe distance from his powerless enemy did he take counsel with himself and wind up his soliloquy with the words: "And to think I had this stick all these years, and never knew that it was loaded!"

This incident elicited a fresh round of praise from the zadick's disciples. The great man's power and direct influence in the heavenly government were sounded in the ears of those who would and of those who would not hear. In the midst of this general jubilation, Vogele appeared at the pontiff's door, and asked an audience. The guardians at the gate were about refusing admittance, when Rouben exclaimed, his voice sonorous with the little authority in which he was dressed: "The sight of the zadick is sufficient for vice to take flight [Sepher Hamidoth, § 14]; let the woman enter." Vogele crossed the threshold before which demons recoil in dismay, and stood defiantly before the spiritual director.

"What is it you wish?" he asked, eying the pretty woman with a well-satisfied air.

"To tell you that you are either a fool or a knave," said Vogele, coolly.

A unanimous outburst of rage from the angry Chassidim; a unanimous movement to hurl themselves against the heretic, and dash her to the ground.

Vogele was not to be intimidated.

"It is said that Schamos Makler, by your aid, killed a wolf with a pistol-shot from his stick. It is a lie!"

"She is possessed of the devil," said the zadick.

As he spoke, the forester, who had been impatiently waiting outside, burst into the room, exclaiming: "It was I who shot the wolf!"

A zadick, however, is not easily disconcerted. "I am aware of that fact," he said; "but it was I who sent you to do it."

The forester shrugged his shoulders.

"You confirm the verity of Rabbi Bechai's words," continued the accused, as he turned toward his prosecutor; "you are of a truth the living testimony that Satan entered the world with woman."

"Prove it."

"It has been proven. We do not find in the sacred Scriptures the letter 'sameih,' the first letter of Satan, until the creation of woman; but when woman was formed,

it was said: 'He closed up the flesh,' and then the character 'sameih' was employed for the first time."

"Your Rabbi Bechai was an imbecile!" exclaimed Vogele, "and those who call the zadick 'the crown of the universe' are imbeciles as well! Woman is the crowning piece of creation."

"Prove it!"

"Each day, God formed something better and more perfect than the preceding day; and, last of all in the creative week, he made man, and appointed him lord of the earth. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"Well! Since he formed woman after man, woman must be the most perfect of his creatures and, consequently, mistress over man."

"You have unquestionably more intelligence than I gave you credit for," said her adversary; "and I see that it will not be pains thrown away to try and convert you."

"Take care that I do not convert you!" retorted Vogele, her clinched hands resting comfortably on the stout hips that carried their burden of silk and fur with a certain grace. "Since when has a man converted a woman, I should like to know? The Talmud tells us of a respectable couple who had become divorced from some unexplained reason, and who, having married again, made most unfortunate selections. And what happened? The woman soon made of her good-for-nothing husband an excellent help-meet; while the divorced man in his second marriage sank to his vicious wife's level, and became a disreputable fellow. Hence, you may see, if you choose, that woman can make of man precisely what she pleases; and should I so wish, I could convert you, most puissant 'crown of the universe,' into my servitor, my bondsman, my slave."

With which words, Vogele swept from the room, leaving the zadick and Chassidim confounded and mute with astonishment. Rouben, realizing the evil he had brought upon his confreres, and endeavoring to put an end to it, intoned Rabbi Luria's mystical song: "May the children of the Palace, who are afraid to gaze at the Seir Auphin [microcosm], appear here where the king is present in his image."

*

Shortly after Vogele's first and brilliant triumph, chance led her to a second, still more imposing.

It was a stormy spring night. The Jewish quarter was in flames, and the fire spread with frightful rapidity, for the simple reason that the community was destitute of fire-engines and ladders. Some years before a fire-company had been organized; but Lewy Jaffa, deeming this association a menace to his divine power and rights as zadick, summarily issued the edict for its disbandment.

The Jewish quarter seemed doomed. The large square was crowded with helpless creatures whose fear paralyzed them, and who watched the destruction of their property with a quiet born of despair. Suddenly, Vogele appeared among them, made her way through the throng, and exclaimed in loud, piercing tones: "Do you see now how you can rely upon the zadick's power, and do you perceive how much his influence is worth with the Almighty? He has told you your precautions against the flames would provoke the Lord to anger; he has blessed you, and told you that he has entered into a pact with God by which the town should lose but one house a year by fire, — and now there are eleven houses in

flames! If the Christians do not come to our rescue the whole quarter will shortly be a bed of white ashes.”

“She is right!” shouted Teit Teintuch and Vohl Krakow; while many, less daring, nodded their heads approvingly.

Fortunately, a Christian fire-company was soon on the spot, and saved the little that was left to be saved. Lewy Jaffa’s authority, however, had received another fatal blow; and the high priest of fanaticism felt the sceptre pushed from his grasp by the feeble hand of a woman.

*

Three days after this incident, Vocele awoke one morning to find written on her front door the portentous word “Hairem,”³⁴ – the zadick’s fatal anathema. The recipient of this unmerited attention quietly took her dish-cloth and effaced the terrible word, then went about her work as though nothing had occurred.

It was a beautiful, sunshiny day. The trees were in flower, the grass was green, birds sang on the hedgerows.

The zadick, following one of his favorite customs, had gone out with his little band of followers to hold his discourse under the open sky, with Nature looking on as smiling and impartial witness.

He had taken his seat under a linden, its grateful fragrance imparting a sense of buoyancy to the warm spring air; his disciples had clustered about him, when, raising their eyes for a moment, they noticed a woman deftly making her way through a field of corn, and rapidly approaching them.

It was Vocele.

She stood before her enemy. With her blue-velvet cloak trimmed with silver-gray fur, her yellow-silk turban on the heavy black hair, she seemed but one flower the more that budded at the feet of the wise men.

“Who wrote ‘Hairem’ on my door?” she cried angrily.

“I gave the order,” responded Lewy Jaffa.

“How dare you arrogate such a power? You are no rabbi; and even a rabbi may not pronounce anathema. The *beschdin*³⁵ only has the right.”

“I do not trouble myself about the *beschdin*,” was the quiet reply.

“The zadick is the crown, the ornament, and the light of the universe,” interposed Rouben the faithful.

“If that is the case,” said Vocele, “show us your power; perform a miracle.”

By this time a crowd of idlers had gathered about the little group.

“Yes; let us have a miracle!” cried several voices, simultaneously.

“May this woman become dumb on the spot!” exclaimed the wise man, his voice harsh with suppressed anger.

Vocele did not become dumb; on the contrary, she cried exasperatingly: “Have I not already told you, – you are either a fool or a knave?”

“May the earth open and swallow her up!” cried her victim, his anger having burst the fetters of restraint.

The earth did not obey the zadick’s commands. Vocele was not swallowed up, and now came her turn to perform a miracle.

“You are judged,” she said with a laugh. “God has humbled you before me. Come hither, that I may crush you with my heel, for you are the seed of the serpent.”

Jaffa could contain his rage no longer. He rose, and strode toward her, that he might cast his malediction in her face; but one of the evil spirits must have blinded

his eyes, for he tripped upon a stone, and stretched his length at his adversary's feet. With a burst of cruel laughter, and in her eyes a look of triumph that would have fitted an avenging angel, she placed her little foot on her enemy's neck.

"God is with her!" cried the crowd. Some of the fanatics threw themselves on their knees before her; others pulled branches from the trees and waved them over her head, as they would the branches of the blessed palm.

Vogele at length withdrew her foot from its resting-place, and Lewy Jaffa arose. His face was pale, his bearing crushed. Alone, with bowed head and dragging limbs, he moved toward the town, like a vanquished general returning without his army.

XXIII.

THE LEGEND OF THE ROMAN MATRON.

SWEDEN.

THE wind came roaring down the chimney, great snow-flakes were dashed against the panes; and yet the wind might have been soft and wooing, the air filled with the tremulous song of birds, for all notice that the elements received from the sad-eyed, pale-faced young woman who sat in her boudoir, her head in her hand, gazing far away into the misty, troublous future.

The future had at least the possibility of hope to rob it of its gloom; the past, obtruding with its host of memories, seemed like a dream, — a goblin-tale that brought a shudder with it.

When a mere girl, Karola had fallen desperately in love. One of the frequent visitors at her father's, Roubenborg the banker, was Dr. Siegfried Forenskiold. The doors of all respectable Jewish Stockholm were open to the young man, for despite the unfortunate fact that he was poorly provided with this world's goods, he was universally respected as a reputable scholar and an upright man. Even Roubenborg, the magnate, was pleased to say of him: "Siegfried will make his way." No sooner, however, did he discover that Karola had given her heart to the young physician, than he straightway married her to the ship-owner Skandorff.

The girl, it must be confessed, made efforts at resistance; but vanity completed what filial affection began, and the picture of luxury and splendor which her marriage with Skandorff would transform into reality was too powerful a temptation to be resisted. She herself wrote to Forenskiold announcing her betrothal, the forced sentimentality in her letter adding cruelty to the blow. She received no acknowledgment. A few days later, the young doctor quitted Sweden, having joined an Arctic expedition.

Nothing had since been heard of the discarded lover. Karola, in the meanwhile, however, had glided, by right of her position, into the most brilliant life of the capital. She had been feted, admired, adored. There seemed nothing left for her ambition to feed upon, and her jaded vanity succumbed to the invading forces of lassitude and ennui.

At the height of her brilliancy and power her husband died. She withdrew from the circle where she had reigned as despotic sovereign, and a season of resignation, renunciation, and joylessness followed that of mad, intoxicating, social triumphs. The widow found herself deserted. Despair crept in and found a lodgment in her heart. Gradually, however, the mists were dissipated, and the figure of Siegfried, the old sweetheart, the man to whom she had acted in such bad faith, appeared before her, stood out clearer and clearer as the days came and went, and finally became her shadow, moving as she moved, and filling her loneliness with its loving presence.

The shades thickened about her as she sat on in the darkening room, her head upon her hand. Of what use was life to her now? Widowed, childless, friendless, loveless, why must she keep on living in a world that cared naught for her? She had thrust back happiness with a sacrilegious hand; she had followed a phantom.

Could it be possible that Forenskiold was still alive? Now that all her illusions had been swept away, she preferred mourning him as dead, away from this world, alone with his longing, his passionate regrets.

She dared dream no longer. She must act her part in the busy world about her. This was the first evening of Chanuka,³⁶ and she might not be absent from her parents' home, where there would be a family gathering for the celebration of the festival.

"All Israel is lighting its Chanuka lamp to-day," she softly murmured; "but in my soul light is extinguished forevermore."

"No gloomy faces this evening," cried Roudenberg, at the sight of Karola's sad, pale countenance, with the far-away look in the eyes. "We must all be happy and jolly to-night. Beside, we expect an agreeable guest, whom I am sure you will find entertaining."

Karola shrugged her pretty shoulders disdainfully.

The paternal residence had been gayly decorated and illuminated, for this was a day of great rejoicing, — the day when Judas Maccabeus, having gained his victory over the Syrians, had purified the Temple and reilluminated the sacred lamps to the sound of music and chant of Levites. On the chimney-piece stood the old candlestick of *repoussé* silver, with its seven burners, and ornamented with small silver figures representing various Biblical personages. Eight candles had been placed in this family treasure; for the feast was to last eight days, and each day of its continuation an additional light was to be lit.

After the noise of greeting had somewhat subsided, Roudenberg, surrounded by his entire family, approached the sacred vessel, pronounced a prayer aloud, and solemnly lit the first candle.

At that instant, the door opened gently, and Karola beheld a vision. A vision of flesh and blood; for the entering guest was Siegfried Forenskiold, — the banished lover, the friend of the days beyond recall. Siegfried with the same fine, intelligent countenance, though bronzed by sun and weather, and the same frank blue eyes, grown graver and more manly during the years that had marked them in their flight.

The widow sat motionless in her chair by the chimney; her limbs might have been turned to stone for all power she had to move them. Forenskiold shook hands with the old people, and bowed gravely to Karola. The young woman's hands clutched nervously at the fluted column of the chimney-piece, her eyes were raised beseechingly, and still the guest remained standing at a respectful distance. With a visible effort, Karola stretched out her hand, — the hand that had once been so passionately desired. It was not taken; and then, the barriers of pride all giving way, she said, in a trembling voice, "Siegfried, give me your hand."

Forenskiold approached her, and brusquely seized her two hands.

"Have you forgiven me?" she asked, the words scarce parting her colorless lips.

"We only forgive when we forget."

"You have not forgotten me?" — a mournful smile lighting her face as she spoke.

Other guests were waiting for their turn to welcome the stranger; and soon the hero of the evening was seated at the table, narrating his eventful history with a quiet that gave evidence of its truth.

Shorn of detail, it told the story of a brave man ship-wrecked on a voyage to the Arctic regions, rescued by an American vessel, and happily landed in New York. There he had practised for a short while his profession of medicine; but, yielding to a longing for home, he had turned his back on the New World, and crossed the ocean that his ear might rejoice in the sound of his native tongue, his eye be gladdened by the sight of old friends.

When the guests rose from table, and gathered in the drawing-room, the children began dancing about the lights, and then, shyly glancing at one another, tiptoed around their elders to receive the Chanuka money.³⁷

Other guests arrived, and, very soon, old and young were interested in games of various descriptions. The youngsters, having tired of playing at dice, made friends with the tall stranger, and begged a story of him,— a terrible story of the great frozen ocean, of sliding glaciers, white bears, and aurora borealis.

“True, true,” said Forenskiold, with a pleasant smile, “it used to be the custom to tell stories on Chanuka; but they had to be Jewish stories.”

Gustavus, the youngest of the little importunate band, having decided that the story should be a Jewish one, the narrator took a seat in the large arm-chair near the fire-place, the eager listeners formed a pretty group about him, while not the least attentive of the audience was Karola, her hands over the back of a chair and her eyes with that dreamy, far-away look which comes only to poets and to women.

*

“Once upon a time,” began Siegfried, “a Roman matron asked a rabbi, Joseben Chalافتا, in how many days God had made heaven and earth.

“ ‘In six,’ said the rabbi.

“ ‘Well, then,’ returned the woman, ‘what has he been doing since the creation?’

“ ‘His principal occupation since then,’ replied Rabbi Jose, ‘has been in uniting men and women in the bonds of marriage and making them happy.’

“The Roman matron found it difficult to understand this. ‘Is such an occupation worthy a God!’ she exclaimed. ‘It is easy enough to marry people. I wager I could do quite as well as your God, if that is what he does. I have a host of slaves, men and women, and I can marry every one of them in an hour. There is no need of divine power for such work.’

“ ‘Perhaps,’ said the rabbi, simply; ‘but our God finds it quite as difficult of performance as any other of his miracles.’

“Nothing daunted, the woman chose a thousand male and a thousand female slaves, and married them in an evening.

“Well, what think you became of these husbands and wives in whose marriage neither prudence nor love had a voice?

“The next morning, they gathered at their mistress’s door, in the most deplorable condition imaginable, and threw themselves on their knees before the disposer of their fates. Some had bleeding heads, others bandaged eyes, others marks of the lash on their backs, and all, with one accord, begged and implored to have their marriages annulled.

“Their prayers were granted. When the Roman matron met the rabbi again, she said, in a tone that denoted self-conquest: —

“ ‘You are right. My God does not compare to yours, and our laws are inferior to yours, for your doctrines are founded on Truth.’

“There was a gentle smile on Rabbi Jose’s face as he made answer: —

“ ‘Did I not tell you that one of the most difficult things in the world is to unite men and women in wedlock?’”

“And the moral?” called out Roubenborg, from the whist table.

“Formerly marriages were made in heaven,” said Forenskiold, quietly; “but nowadays that is changed, and the Roman matron would have had right on her side had she lived to-day, for Horace’s lines are still true.

“Wealth can to its master bring
Fame, virtue, beauty, everything
Divine and human. Gain that prize,
You’re noble, valiant, upright, wise.”³⁸

“No, not everything,” said Karola, in a soft, pleading voice; “it does not give affection, it does not give happiness.”

Forenskiold rose and leaned against the chimney-piece. The widow was pale, her limbs trembled; but, subduing her weakness with a strength born of love, she stepped close to the man she had wronged and, seizing his hands, said in a passionate whisper: “Siegfried, pardon me. I too can tell you a story, the story of a woman who, dazzled at first by riches and luxury, soon walked blindly on through feast and carnival like some lifeless creature with a heart of stone. She committed a wrong, Siegfried; but she sinned against herself more than against others. And her expiation has been great. Is it nothing to live for years side by side with a husband whom one does not love? Is it nothing to be surrounded by the glittering vanities of the world, and then suddenly to feel them snatched from one’s grasp, and be forced to endure years of solitary widowhood? The sole light that pierced the gloom was remembrance of things past, and hope for the future. If you deem that her repentance has not been deep enough, if you think her expiation not cruel enough, tell her. She will strive for resignation, she will suffer and be silent; but, Siegfried, do not take from her all hope.”

“What do you want from me, Karola?”

“Forgiveness.”

“I must forget you then?”

“No, no!” and she made a movement as though she would fall at his feet. “I belong to you. I have always belonged to you. To you alone. Do not deny me; do not dash the cup of hope from my burning lips.”

“Karola, what hope have you?” His eyes held hers fast; it seemed as though they could pierce through night and gloom.

“Oh, my friend, this is Chanuka! — the day when Judas Maccabeus dashed the false gods to earth, and raised an altar to the Most High. Let us shatter the idols before whom we have made sacrifice: the idols of riches, vanity, and pride, and also of hatred and vengeance.”

“I have never hated you,” said Forenskiold, with a sigh that might have been a groan.

“Let us return to the only true God.”

“And who is this God, Karola?”

“Can you ask me?” she cried as she threw herself into his arms. “Siegfried, he is the God of Love.”

Forenskiold pressed her to his beating heart, and, as she raised her eyes to his, two great tears rolled down her face, and wet the hand that caressed her.

XXIV.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL!

CROATIA.

COUNTESS MARA BAROVIC was the Circe, Omphale, and Semiramis of the mountainous part of Croatia. Old and young (men, be it understood) were at her feet; and this despite the fact that she was regarded as plain-looking rather than pretty. Her ugliness, however, was the sort that strikes attention, attracts consideration, and excites interest. Moreover, she boasted a "past" that cast a halo about the present.

It was rumored that one of her lovers had "accidentally" shot her husband while out hunting, and that this accident had occurred at a time when the Count had become "embarrassing."

Besides, she was original.

If it be true that woman is a work of art, as a celebrated poet has said, it must be borne in mind that in these days the agreeable and pleasing in art is no longer "the thing." Cruel, unadorned truth is preferred to draped loveliness, in love as well as in art.

The Countess belonged to the type demanded by the modern school. By her two most ardent admirers, Baron Kronenfels and Mr. De Broda, she was termed respectively the iconoclast and the naturalist.

She mounted her horse like a hussar, was a dashing whip, and indulged a passionate fondness for hunting. One of her favorite pastimes was roaming field and forest in the picturesque costume of the Croatian peasant; and she could apply the horsewhip as dexterously and mercilessly to her creditors as to her refractory horses.

The fair lady was head over ears in debt. There was nothing she could longer call her own, not even the furniture in Chateau Granic, not even the false braid which adorned her well-poised little head.

The young aristocrats who danced attendance upon her ladyship explained the preference displayed by this Croatian Circe for the "wise men of the East," — as they called Kronenfels and De Broda, — by the brilliant financial position of her two Jewish admirers.

Of the two, Baron Kronenfels' noble birth rested upon the more ancient foundation, and for that reason, perhaps, he enjoyed a certain priority in the fair lady's preference. De Broda was a mere sapling in the forest of aristocracy, having been but recently ennobled. The unfeigned adoration he displayed for his armorial bearings made him the butt of endless practical jokes. His coat-of-arms glittered wherever it could find a resting-place. It shone upon the collar of his dog; it was emblazoned on his cigarettes, made especially for him at Laferme's.

Despite certain differences of taste, Kronenfels and De Broda were good friends, good comrades as well, for they were both officers in the Reserve. But how often does friendship stand its ground against the whispers of jealousy, especially when a woman's favor is the prize at stake? The relationship between the two grew strained and unnatural, and they were both secretly conscious that they were walking along a path where the least deviation from the centre would result in a catastrophe.

The long-looked for altercation took place one evening at the club. Wine had been flowing freely, the betting had been high. Countess Mara was the subject under discussion, and Baron Roukavina was telling an amusing story in that lady's eventful life.

She had not paid her taxes for years, was threatened with an execution, and had been moving heaven and earth to avert the impending disgrace. She had gone to Agram, from there to Buda Pesth, importuning ministers, seeking favor with deputies, and had actually got so far as to ask an audience of the king. She had received hopeful promises everywhere, but the danger hung heavier over her head with the passing of every hour.

At this particular juncture, Baron Meyerbach called on her, and offered to settle her troubles. Meyerbach was an intelligent fellow, with a good heart, and a purse with the proverbial open mouth; but Hungarian aristocracy could not receive him within its inner circle for the simple reason that he was a Jew.

"Have you so much influence?" asked the Countess. Her breath was almost taken away by the offer.

"Do not inquire too closely into my *modus operandi*, Countess," said the Baron. "It must be sufficient for you to know that my success is assured."

"And what do you ask in exchange for this service?"

"Simply this: that for the next two weeks you will take a walk with me every day for an hour in Vaitzen Street; that you will skate with me an hour in the park; and that each evening you will give me the privilege of escorting you to a different theatre."

"And is that all?"

"All."

The Countess yielded willingly to the Baron's terms. At the end of the fortnight, she received a receipt in full for the payment of her taxes, — thirty-two thousand florins, — and Baron Meyerbach found Hungarian aristocracy ready to receive him with open arms even within its most inner of inner circles. The Countess had launched him.

The story closed in a burst of laughter, and the diplomate Meyerbach's health was drunk repeatedly and variously.

Of all the convivial party, De Broda alone was silent. Finally, with Goethe's words in mind, he said in a low voice: "Everybody seeks money, and everybody clings to it."

Kronenfels flung his cards noisily on the table, looked savagely at De Broda, and said, with an ugly frown: "Do you imply by that that such a woman as Countess Mara Barovic would willingly let herself be blinded by money?"

De Broda shrugged his shoulders.

Springing from his seat, the Baron cried out, scornfully: "You are a Jew."

For a moment, participants and listeners seemed paralyzed with astonishment; then De Broda, every nerve tingling with rage, hurled angrily back at his assailant: "You are another!"

A challenge to a duel was the result of the quarrel. Seconds were chosen on the spot, the weapons were to be pistols, and the oak forest near De Granic was to witness the affair early the following morning.

*

De Broda had gone home. He was arranging his papers in order, when Rabbi Solomon Zuckermandel walked into his sanctum.

“You are going to fight?” were the old man’s first words.

“Yes.”

“And with a Jew? No, Mr. De Broda; you cannot, you dare not shoot a man! You will not do it.”

“Pardon me, Rabbi Solomon, but my knowledge is somewhat deeper than yours in affairs of honor.”

“Do you think so!” replied the old man, with an indulgent smile. “Ah, well, we shall see. You think we can wash our honor only in blood? My dear Mr. De Broda, spotless honor needs no washing; and if it has a blemish, it cannot be effaced even by blood. The Baron called you a Jew. Is that an insult?”

“In the sense he attached to the word, yes.”

“Not so. Neither in that sense nor in any other. Does the name of soldier become an insult because soldiers have deserted their flag? The Jews we call to mind when the word ‘Jew’ is used in reproach, are those who have forsaken their standard. They are no longer Jews. Judaism is the fear of the Lord, love of liberty, love of the family and humanity. The honor of the Jew consists not in spilling blood, but in acting uprightly and doing good.”

“You are right; but —”

“No, no. No ‘buts.’ When God in the midst of thunder and lightning gave the Tables of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, there were no ‘buts;’ He said: *‘Thou shalt not kill!’* You are a Jew, Mr. De Broda. In other words: Man, thou shalt not kill!”

The young fellow turned toward the window. The rabbi should not see his emotion. But the Jewish heart was touched, and the old man who gave no thought to title and coat-of-arms had conquered the aristocrat’s pride and prejudice.

*

Midnight had struck when Rabbi Solomon reached Kronenfels’s quarters. The letter he handed the Baron from his adversary, read as follows: —

DEAR SIR: — You have insulted me grossly in calling me a Jew in the presence of a number of gentlemen, and have added to the insult, as it were, by making it at a time when Mr. De Treitschke in Berlin has spoken of the Jews as the *schlamassel* [the plague of the Germans]. You are, however, an only son, the pride of your family, and I should like to avoid our meeting for to-morrow. You have often seen me hit the ace at a good range; and you know as well that I am no phrase-maker. I propose, therefore, that we shall both shoot in the air, and that we shall mutually exchange our word of honor not to speak of this arrangement.

BRODA.

Kronenfels held the letter to the rabbi.

“What is to be done?” he asked, with a smile.

“Mr. De Broda has proved himself a true Jew,” responded Zuckermandel, gently. “Do not let him surpass you. Prove to him that you, too, are of a race which, boasting the most ancient civilization, is above all others from the humanitarian standpoint.”

Kronenfels wrote some hurried lines which Rabbi Solomon conveyed to Mr. De Broda before daybreak. The Baron’s answer was couched in these words: —

DEAR SIR: — I was about to address you when I received your note.

I, too, should deeply regret having a mortal encounter with a young man upon whom so many hopes are placed.

I accept your proposition.

Moreover, between ourselves be it said, we are Jews, — in other words descendants of ancestors whose house is more ancient than that of the Lichtensteins or Auerspergs, ancestors who have transmitted to us two qualities which Mr. De Treitschke could scarcely possess, being as it were the offshoot of a somewhat recent civilization: and these are, repugnance to shed blood, and the ‘rachmonni’⁹⁹ of the Jewish heart.

KRONENFELS.

The duel took place at six o’clock in the morning, the venerable oaks of De Granic forest casting an air of solemnity over the bloodless scene. The adversaries kept their word; the pistols were discharged in the air; and the witnesses declared that honorable satisfaction had been made. As De Broda and Kronenfels were shaking hands with hearty good-will, the brush-wood parted, and old Rabbi Solomon slowly approached the young men. Raising his arms in benediction, he said, and the light of happiness beamed from his eyes: “Gentlemen, you are Jews!”

XXV.

BAIR AND WOLFF.

SWITZERLAND.

HERTHA BAIR and Selma Wolff were considered the prettiest women in Basel, not alone by the Israelitish fraternity, but by Basel collectively and individually. One was never seen without the other; and the method of this madness was apparent, said those who prided themselves on their plainness of speech, in that one acted as a foil to the other.

Hertha was a blonde, with a dazzling complexion and an exquisitely moulded figure; Selma, on the other hand, suggested the Eastern type of beauty: her skin had a rich, warm coloring; her graceful, slender form pictured the bride in the "Song of Songs;" and her bluish-black hair seemed to have caught in its meshes the tranquil loveliness of night.

Good friends, too, were their respective husbands, — Wolff the wine merchant, and Bair the dealer in colonial commodities.

Unfortunately, a young poet had conceived the untoward idea of singing Selma's charms, and a struggling paper had been beguiled into publishing the effusion. Hence, the flame of rivalry burst out between the inseparables, and threatened to overleap all barriers. The quondam friends contested the palm right royally with each other — at their husbands' expense. In their house-decorations, costumes, jewels, they each claimed superiority; in their skill in the art of cookery they each boasted pre-eminence; and the intelligence, talents, and beauty of each one's respective children were vaunted high, as against the opposite qualities of the contending force's progeny.

Thus, the clear flame of sympathy became extinguished in the ashes of antipathy, and these, in turn, grew cold and black in the cinders of hatred.

*

Hertha, who, like all Jewish women, had aspirations toward art and literature, took a violent fancy, at the time when this rivalry was at its height, for a young actor whom she had first seen in Lessing's "Nathan," and one evening, on the occasion of his playing Romeo, her enthusiasm rose to such a pitch that she threw him a wreath from her box.

This incident Selma used to good purpose; she invariably spoke of her fair antagonist as Juliet, and envious tongues were not slow to catch the sneer, and use it dexterously. Hertha wept her pretty eyes red, and Bair broke off all association with Wolff.

For a little while the storm brooded; the two families contenting themselves with reciprocal avoidance, but finally assumed indifference degenerated into active hatred, and hostilities began.

Bair told his intimate friends, in confidence, that Wolff adulterated his wine, and was sending his customers poison, — slow but sure. Wolff was not to be outdone. He quietly spread the report that Bair was selling toasted bread for coffee, and hazel-nut leaves for tea; that he was mixing brick-dust with his cinnamon, and chalk with his flour.

The two traducers found willing listeners; and as defamation grows in the mouths of its reporters, Bair and Wolff soon became the victims of ill-report, and found their sales diminishing, and their customers leaving them — slowly but surely.

*

Nearly a year had passed; the mutual animosity had become none the less bitter, and Rosch Haschonnah, the Jewish New Year, was at hand.

It was a foggy autumn day; the male portion of the Jewish congregation had gathered at the temple entrance early in the day, and remained earnestly praying. The services were conducted by Rabbi Goldsmith. At ten o'clock he opened the Ark, and reverently took out the Law. Then he mounted the platform, unrolled the sacred parchment, and the chanter began intoning in Hebrew the history of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. After this followed a florid sermon, wherein the rabbi dilated graphically upon the holy alliance by which the chosen people had bound themselves to God's service. The address concluded, Nathan, one of the most pious of the pious flock, was called to blow the schophar (the ram's horn).

Slowly, and with dignity, the old man ascended the stairs, and when he and the rabbi had covered their heads with their taliths (praying shawls), and the prayer had been pronounced, the entire congregation bent their eyes to the ground, for "the gaze of the multitude may not rest upon the sacred horn when its voice goeth out."

Nathan raised the instrument solemnly to his lips, and each time that the sounding of the schophar was invoked according to the ritual, he blew it vigorously. This ceremony is ordained that the trumpet on the Day of Judgment may be called to mind.

The last sound of the horn trembled into silence, the Law was again placed in the Ark, the chanter began his intonation afresh, the congregation prostrated themselves invoking God's mercy, and the Kydusho⁴⁰ and triple hosanna terminated the solemn service.

At the synagogue door Bair was met by the schamos (beadle) with the request that the rabbi would like to see him.

In less than ten minutes he was sitting in Goldsmith's study, absently answering the rabbi's kind inquiries as to the health of wife and children, and secretly laboring with a curious misgiving regarding the object of the impending interview. He was not to be kept long in doubt.

"You know, my dear Mr. Bair," began his host, "that in ten days we celebrate the Day of Atonement."

Bair nodded.

"Have you not decided to put an end to this childish enmity between you and Wolff?"

"I cannot make the first step," said Bair; "Selma Wolff offended my wife."

"But you were the first to slander Wolff."

Bair was silent, his eyes riveted on his highly polished boots.

"You know," continued his friend, "that God forgives on Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] the sins we have committed against him; but not those we have committed against our neighbors. You must go, Mr. Bair, and ask Wolff's pardon; and Selma Wolff must ask forgiveness of your wife."

*

The nine penitential days preceding Yom Kippur had accomplished their purpose. Bair's heart was softened. At two o'clock he repaired to the synagogue, and recited the customary prayers. Thus fortified, he made a bold plunge into the inevitable and disagreeable, and resolved upon humbling himself before his enemy. Before taking this painful step, however, he subjected himself to one of the most severe of the prescribed self-mortifications: crouching before the portals of the synagogue, he received from the temple servant the thirty-nine traditional lashes across the back; then, with bent head and humbled mien, he made his way homeward in silence.

The evening meal over, he gave the blessing to his children, changed his clothes, and repaired again to the house of prayer.

Night was falling. The autumn fog was thick and penetrating. Through the gloomy mist walked ghost-like men, clad in long, silver-embroidered death-ropes; their heads, covered with white hoods, were bent contritely earthward. When two of these spectres met, they would stop for a few moments, and humbly ask each other's pardon for any offence they might have committed. Bair had walked rather quickly; but at the corner of a street where Noe's tun was blazoned forth as signboard his pace slackened. He stood in front of the enemy, or rather of the enemy's house.

An irresolute movement, and then, putting spurs to his good resolve, he walked briskly up the steps. Glancing up as he did so, he saw Wolff on the first step coming down.

"I have come —" began Bair. Not another word could he utter; his voice was thick with tears.

"It is I who should ask your forgiveness," interrupted Wolff. "It is I who am to blame; my wife —"

"No, it has been my fault," cried Bair.

There was no need for further word, Wolff had thrown himself in Bair's arms. A quarter of an hour later, the two enemies entered the temple hand-in-hand, and a murmur of approbation ran through the congregation.

*

The great day of repentance was ushered in; the Israelites' day of solemn invocation, when, prostrate in the dust before their Maker, they pray for mercy from Him who is mercy itself. Not a morsel of food, not a drop of water, passes the pious Jew's lips for four-and-twenty hours; commerce and work is suspended; all thought of things terrestrial is banished; and the Jewish heart is filled with a profound yearning to wipe away its sins in deeds acceptable to God, and thus be fitted to approach the Eternal Throne.

While the male portion of the congregation were still praying and reiterating their penitential vows, the women quietly and reverently left the synagogue and hastened home.

Hertha Bair put her children to sleep; then, with the kisses from their innocent, rosy mouths still warm on her lips, she shut herself in her little study adjoining her bed-room. This evening, however, her books were to remain unopened; she intended to pass the time in supplication and reflection. The room was lighted only by the flames from the great green earthenware stove. Hertha's eyes rested half unconsciously on the tall exotics in the embrasure of the window, and on the flickering red reflections playing on the tapestry-covered walls. Her lips moved gently as in prayer.

Suddenly there was a timid knock. Who could it be? Hertha rose and opened the door. A thickly-veiled woman crossed the threshold; trembling fingers unfastened bonnet and veil, and there stood Selma confessed, shame and emotion covering her pretty face with their crimson flush. Hertha was embarrassed, astounded, knew not for the moment what to say or do.

“I have come to beg your pardon,” began the luckless visitor, in a faltering voice.

“You might have spared yourself this humiliation,” returned her enemy, her eyes growing hard, her voice sharp with sarcasm. “You did not think it beneath you to attack my character; you flung black-mouthed suspicion against me, — against me, an honest, virtuous Jewess. No, I cannot forgive you! I cannot!”

“I bitterly regret having done so.”

“Phrases, mere phrases!”

“I will perform any penance you choose to impose.”

Hertha looked at the suppliant fixedly; her thoughts seemed to leap in advance of her judgment.

“Punish me,” murmured Selma, throwing herself at her enemy’s feet. “I dare not return to my husband’s roof without having obtained your pardon; trample me underfoot, but free my soul by your forgiveness.”

“Very well,” said Hertha, and as the words escaped, her lips trembled with cruelty and revenge; “I will trample you underfoot, lash you; after that perhaps I can pardon you.”

With closed lips and heaving breast, the penitent prostrated herself as before some outraged divinity. Hertha planted her slender foot pitilessly on her fair foe’s neck, and then, intoxicated as it were by the abasement of her enemy, she leaned over and seized a whip that she had used at times on her husband’s mastiff. Calmly and silently, Selma unfastened her dress, exposed her white shoulders, and bent her head still lower before her tyrant.

With a trembling hand, Hertha raised the lash, and the next instant Selma’s neck was marked by a sharp red line that sent the blood spinning in opposite directions. The sight of this cruel stroke recalled the mad woman to herself. Covering her face with her hands, she sobbed hysterically: “What have I done! Insane creature that I am! And this on the day of repentance, of reconciliation!”

The penitent rose, and throwing her arms tenderly about the sobbing woman, tried to console her.

“I insisted upon your punishing me,” she said gently; “you have done no more than I asked of you.”

“No more? Well, then, punish me in your turn, Selma; for I have more need of forgiveness than you, good, magnanimous woman that you are!”

With feverish haste she loosened her Turkish dressing-gown and embroidered chemise, and, kneeling before her compassionate enemy, exclaimed: “Do not spare me; have no mercy!”

Selma took the whip and gave her three strokes; but had she used a flower, and feared to break it, she could not have handled the whip more tenderly.

“Selma,” cried Hertha, “you humiliate me far more than I have lowered you. Can you forgive me?”

For all reply, Selma drew the kneeling woman toward her, and gently pressed a kiss upon her brow; but Hertha, pushing her off, with a gesture of self-abasement, bent low, caught Selma’s feet in her feverish hands, and reverently touched them with her lips.

*

The day was drawing to a close; the long day that seemed to have no end was slowly dying, and the final prayers were filling the temple with a solemn murmur, and floating upward to the throne of the Eternal.

While the Nengilah (final prayer) was being pronounced, the candles flared in their sockets, flickered, and went out.

The sacred place was gradually growing darker. Finally, the rabbi repeated the hallowed words, — words that every pious Jew pronounces when resigning his soul to God: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One.”

This solemn formula was repeated seven times, the schophar was sounded for the last time, and then, with grave and measured steps, the congregation left the synagogue.

Bair and Wolff met before the temple door. Not a word was spoken by either; but, arm-in-arm, they walked together homeward. And over them shone the evening star, — the harbinger of the Sabbath, the messenger of peace, good-will, and reconciliation.

XXVI.

TWO NOBILITIES.

FRANCE.

THEY had come from Frankfort to Paris. One of their ancestors had been made a baron, his worth, not his money, having raised him to his high estate. He was the first Jew who had taken his place among the descendants of knights and troubadours without changing his religion.

He had no need to be ennobled. He was descended from a distinguished and noble Israelitish family more ancient than the Hapsburgs or Hohenzollerns, — a family that for centuries possessed that loftiness of soul whose ensign armorial is the tear of pity.

The present guardian of the name was a patron of the arts and sciences, and his wife, the Baroness, was pleased to play the Lady Bountiful in such a way that she was constantly being mistaken for a live fairy. In common with the great Empress, Maria Theresa, this brilliant and charming woman had a weakness for match-making; and, in common with another potentate, Haroun-al-Raschid, she was wont to wander in disguise through the poor quarters of the city, seeking out misery, giving comfort to the stricken, and soothing the distressed. On one of these peregrinations, she chanced across a young Jewish scholar of whom his neighbors related incidents strange and interesting.

Oscar Stein was a student of natural science. He had been making his researches, and laboring unceasingly for years, upheld by that sacred love for truth, and that ardent zeal which distinguishes the Israelite in all intellectual work. No one knew how he lived. Perhaps, he had some second means of subsistence, like Spinoza, who polished lenses that he might develop his sublime system of philosophy, or like Adolph Caftan, who passed his nights making snuff, that during the day he might collect thousands of rubles for the poor.

At all events, whatever this secondary occupation of his might be, it brought him but a scanty means of support; for his tiny attic chamber was perched over other attic chambers, in the gloomy by-street where fate had pressed him, and many a day a morsel of bread and some fruit was all wherewith he had to nourish his restless, busy brain.

The Baroness wrote to young Stein, and begged he would grant her the pleasure of a visit. The lack of a frock-coat precluded the possibility of his acceding to her request; and the note in which he declined her invitation was as naive as it was touching.

It took more than this to discourage the good fairy. The dark, steep, narrow stairs were mounted, and a gentle knock roused the student from his labors. The knock was suspicious; though gentle, it was commanding. There was no convenient trap-door into which Stein might disappear, so, blushing like a school-girl, and wrapping his shabby dressing-gown about him, thus presenting Caesar in his toga defending himself from the conspirators, he opened the door.

The ready tact of the Baroness relieved the awkwardness of the situation. A charming explanation was made of the unexpected visit, and without wounding the young man's pride by an offer of alms, she begged that he would do her the favor of giving her children lessons in natural history.

The proposition was accepted with alacrity and gratitude; a tailor was found who was not alone willing, but anxious, to sell on credit, Stein's brilliant future being

an accomplished fact in the little man's head; and within a few days, the awkward, timid scholar was a daily guest at the magnificent house, the ancient trees in its spacious Parisian garden summoning before him a vision of the lordly cedars in Lebanon.

*

About the time of Stein's installation as tutor, the Baron had made the discovery of a promising young artist, and adopted her as one of his protégées. Of a well-to-do Lyons family, rich, pretty, knowing very well how to take her part in this hurrying, jostling world, thoroughly independent, and unconcerned by what people thought of her, oftentimes mistaken for a medical student, occasionally for a nihilist, Lazarine Decamps was as complete a contrast to the poor maladroit student, as it was possible to imagine. One evening at the Théâtre-Français the Baron whispered, half in jest, half in earnest, to his wife: "Your scholar and my artist seem created to make good each other's shortcomings; imperfect separately, together they would be perfect. What do you say to our marrying them?"

"Why not?" responded the Baroness, with a happy smile; "since marriages are made in heaven, we cannot go far astray in this work."

A few days after this conversation, Miss Decamps and Oscar Stein were invited to drink a cup of tea with the Baroness.

The Baron took this opportunity of ordering from the young artist two small genre pictures, in the style of Dutch paintings of family life. One was to represent a Jewish girl twining wreaths for Shevuos (Pentecost); the other, as pendant, to portray a young talmudist deep in thought over an ancient folio. "And by good luck," added the crafty diplomate, "I have the model for your talmudist here on the spot. Come, Stein, come out of your hole!"

The modest savant had betaken himself to the darkest corner of the room, and sought concealment as it were behind a group of portly members of the Chamber of Deputies. His little artifice was of no avail. He was presented to Lazarine, and, despite his awkward excuses, his protestations that his studies prevented him from acceding to her request, that he dare not take the time from researches upon which he had been engaged for years, and upon which all his hopes rested, the girl was not to be denied, his head interested her, she would have it.

"Since you will not come to my studio," she said with a smile, and in her smile lay her success, "I will come to your workshop and paint you just as you are before your books and manuscript." And so the thing was accomplished.

*

The following morning, Stein's labors were interrupted by the arrival of Miss Decamps' man-servant, a tall mulatto, who brought her easel, placed it in a good light, arranged her painting paraphernalia in order and silently left the room. An hour later, came the artist, made herself thoroughly at home, hung her hat on the window-fastening, threw her jacket over the back of the arm-chair, and began work.

While she was busy with her brushes, her model's eyes were fixed on his papers and books; his instruments and chemical preparations, on the table at his side, interesting him far more than his portrait-painter. Little by little, however, he began to notice his pretty *vis-a-vis*, occasional remarks were exchanged, and then Stein, remembering that he was the host, offered his guest such small attentions as lay in his power.

A week rolled round, Lazarine and Stein had become good comrades; and when the picture was finished, and the girl's comings and goings ceased, the young scholar found himself utterly wretched and forsaken. Accustomed as he was to examine everything minutely, he analyzed his sentiments with scientific scrupulousness, and, in the end, admitted to himself that he was in love with the little artist.

Indomitable perseverance Stein possessed in full measure; the courage to make an avowal he woefully lacked. There was nothing to be done but address his declaration of love through the Baroness; and the happy match-maker, proud of her delightful success, at once forwarded the tell-tale lines to their proper destination.

The next morning Stein could not work; the letters were blurred, the sentences meant nothing, he stood gazing at the chimney-tops through the window. Suddenly the door opened and the longed-for voice said softly: "Oscar, why did you not tell me at once that you loved me? You stupid fellow, here is my hand."

The hand was at once carried to the blushing lover's lips and kissed, and if those lips forthwith sought Lazarine's, surely the bird that brushed past the window-pane would tell no tales.

"Now let us sit down and talk seriously," said the girl, as she took her seat on the window-ledge. "The first thing to be considered is that you are to finish your work."

"Agreed, love."

"Then when your work comes out, your position will be established, and we can marry."

*

Stein's book made a sensation in the scientific world; a host of friends and patrons rose about him as by magic, and, a few months later, a professorship was offered him.

Lazarine, however, did not wait for the success of the book. She at once invested her savings in a pretty little house, protected by well-shaded gardens, near the Bois de Boulogne; and though the cosey nest was all an artist could desire, the room upon which she bestowed her dearest pains was the luxurious, sunny study where her lover was to live his life and see his dreams come true.

On the day of Pentecost, the young couple were invited to the Baroness's. The doors and staircases of the sumptuous house were tastefully ornamented with growing palms and floral decorations. On the afternoon of this festival, it is a Jewish custom for visits to be exchanged; and the Baron and Baroness received their guests under a tent in their magnificent garden. Those who came to pay their respects were among the most brilliant of the literary, scientific, and social world; and the peculiarly rich intellectual qualities of the Jewish people were reflected in this assemblage as in a burnished mirror. Almost every European country was represented. On either side of the learned rabbi of Paris sat the celebrated German philosopher and the famous geologist of Vienna. The new Rachel formed the centre of a brilliant group that was made conspicuous by the presence of the prince of Hungarian violinists and Holland's great painter. The well-known Austrian composer and the genial Russian pianist walked arm-in-arm, absorbed in their one delightful theme; and a circle of Jewish authors whose works call to mind every idiom of civilized Europe were clustered about the Baroness, whose tact, judgment,

sympathy, and ready comprehension formed the attraction and inspiration alike of the heterogeneous coterie.

After the luncheon, the Baron announced the engagement of his friends, Miss Decamps and Professor Stein, and expressions of congratulation were many and sincere.

The rabbi had taken a seat in a quiet corner, and was silently watching the guests, a happy smile on his placid face.

“Of what were you thinking when I intruded upon you?” asked his host, as he drew near.

“I was thinking, Baron,” said the rabbi, “that in spite of the calumny of our enemies, we are a chosen people: first, because we venerate intellect and talent as no other people do; and, secondly, because at a time when the old aristocracy is seeing its escutcheon defaced and blemished, we have created a new one, which has united nobility of mind and soul to nobility of birth. I was thinking of the words of the Koholet:⁴¹ When God has given to a man gifts and riches, and at the same time granted him the faculty of enjoying them, of putting himself into them and rejoicing in his work, then truly has he been endowed by God.”

THE END.

ENDNOTES:

¹ See Job xxviii. 17,18.

² Among the devout Jews evening prayers are customary.

³ The reading-desk in a synagogue serves the purpose of pulpit. It is customary each Sabbath to call up various male members of the congregation to read aloud the portion of the Law.

⁴ The author quotes the words and part of a sermon of his deceased friend, the celebrated Rabbi Stein.

⁵ One of the subdivisions of the Talmud.

⁶ A jargon word derived from the Russian, meaning a common, uneducated man.

⁷ The Chassidim are members of a religious sect inclined to cabalistic teachings, but remaining ostensibly within the province of rabbinical Judaism. They are chiefly remarkable for their wild mode of praying and their supreme contempt for any but mystical and religious science.

⁸ Zadick is not, properly speaking, a rabbi, but the high priest, as it were, of the Chassidim. He rules them unconditionally, and is supposed to be invested with divine powers. The grandeur and pomp by which he is surrounded contrasts strikingly with the simple mode of life of his flock.

⁹ The first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

¹⁰ A traditional and secret science among Jewish rabbis and learned writers supposed to have been delivered to the ancient Jews by revelation. Some of the rabbis say that the angel Raziel instructed Adam in it, the angel Japhiel instructed Shem, and the angel Zedekiel instructed Abraham; but the more usual belief is that God instructed Moses, Moses his brother Aaron, and so these mysterious laws and rules have been transmitted from father to son by oral tradition. The science interprets the hidden sense of Scripture; and every letter, word, number, and accent of the Law is supposed to be significant in a mysterious manner.

¹¹ Grammatical rules of methodology of the Holy Scripture.

¹² Sephirot is a mathematical rule in the Cabala for determining the fate of human beings.

¹³ Chiefs of the evil genii. Samaël, in Jewish demonology, is the prince of demons, who, in the guise of a serpent, tempted Eve. He is also called the Angel of Death. Ashmedai, or Asmodeus, is a chief power among the evil genii.

¹⁴ Lillith, according to rabbinical legend, is a nocturnal demon or vampire. She was also Adam's first wife, and flew away when Eve was created. It is also said she takes possession of the child until he has been circumcised.

¹⁵ A cabalistic, ethical book written by Joshua R. Sheftel, chief rabbi of Prague.

¹⁶ Many wondrous allegorical tales are connected with the leviathan in the Talmud and Midrash. This sea-monster is also occasionally used as a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh.

¹⁷ Kosher meats are those killed according to Jewish dietary laws. All such meat is marked with a certain prescribed formulary.

¹⁸ Lady's cloak.

¹⁹ An expression used among the Jews, signifying that a daughter is married.

²⁰ A tchina is a book of jargon prayers for women.

²¹ The fear of being counted dates from the time of the Egyptian bondage.

²² It was in the small town of Pintschew that Jacques Franck first made his appearance, and founded a religious sect that spread rapidly. He opposed the "chassidim," (fanatics) and was taken by many for the Messiah. Even now when members of this sect meet, the customary question is: "What is going on in Pintschew?" and the obligatory response is: "S'tougte!" That is, the Devil is claiming his own. But they are extremely angry when this question is addressed by another Jew or a Christian.

²³ Jewish tribunal of rabbis.

²⁴ Though not the oldest synagogue in Prague, it is next to it in age, having been built many hundreds of years ago.

²⁵ A gaulem is a humanlike earthen figure in the mouth of which the cabalist puts a parchment with a certain name of God known in the Cabala, in order to give him life. The gaulem then does every work, but cannot speak. On Friday afternoon, the parchment must be taken out of its mouth, that it may not work on the Sabbath. On the seventh day, the Sabbath, the master has no power over it. Nowadays, by gaulem is meant a fool.

²⁶ The men of the "Chebura Kdischa" have to care that the dying repeat their confession (Vidin). They recite their prayer the instant the dying man breathes his last, take charge of the body, and keep charge of it until after the funeral, receiving no compensation for their trouble.

²⁷ The hand is clenched into a fist, the Hebrew "sch" (שׁ), and a rod is put into it to be a prop to the deceased when rising from the dead.

²⁸ The second Jewish carnival, celebrated to-day only by the Jews of Poland.

²⁹ The great fast-day of the Jews.

³⁰ One who tells fortunes by palmistry.

³¹ One of the treatises of the Talmud.

³² A religious sect inclined to cabalistic teachings, remarkable for their supreme contempt for any but mystical and religious science.

³³ Zadick, the temporary chief of the Chassidim, supposed to stand in connection with God and his angels.

³⁴ Hairem means literally excommunication.

³⁵ Rabbinical court.

³⁶ Feast of Reconsecration; in commemoration of the reconquering of Jerusalem, the purification of the Temple, and reinauguration of holy service by the valiant Judas Maccabeus.

³⁷ The custom of giving money to children on the feast of Chanuka has no especial signification other than that the festival commemorates a joyful event in the history of the Jews, and the various observances of the occasion are intended to symbolize happiness.

³⁸ See Horace. Satire III.

³⁹ The exact translation of "rachmonni" is "merciful." It is used as a name of God, because the Jew does not pronounce the proper name of God except in his prayers.

⁴⁰ The prayer entitled "Kydusho" treats of the sanctification of God.

⁴¹ The Koholet is a collection of sermons ascribed to King Solomon.