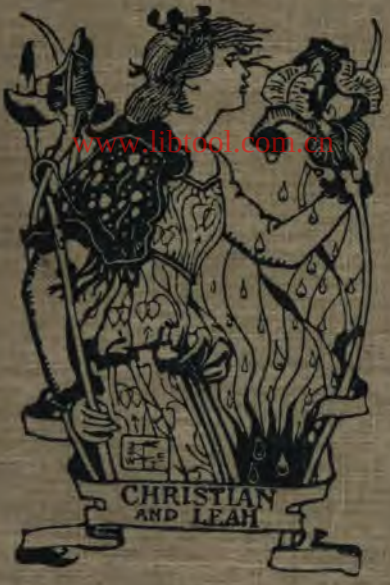
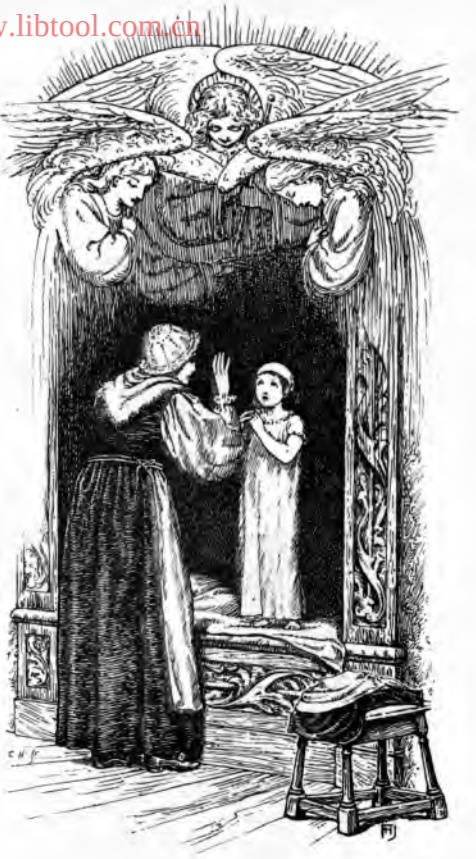


Belle C. Greene

Houston

CHRIS-
-TIAN·AND
LEAH.

"RAIN, RAIN, & SVN! A RAINBOW ON THE LEA!
AND TRVTH IS THIS TO ME, & THAT TO THEE;
AND TRVTH OR CLOTHED OR NAKED LET IT BE"

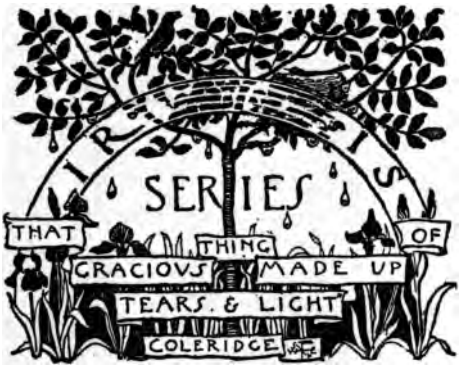


CHRISTIAN & LEAH

& OTHER GHETTO STORIES

BY LEOPOLD KOMPERT

TRANSLATED BY ALFRED S. ARNOLD



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY F. HAMILTON JACKSON

New York
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND LONDON
1895

THIS story of CHRISTIAN AND LEAH the translator desires to associate with the sacred memory of his dear young wife, LEAH GOLLANCZ, whose beautiful child-like being owned kinship with that of *Leah Ungar* of the story; her ready mind and active hands helped in the preparation of this little work; she passed suddenly to her rest before its publication.

"God's finger touched her."

November the twenty-seventh,
1895.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHRISTIAN AND LEAH

A GHETTO IDYLL

On mild and balmy afternoons, when the rays of the spring sunshine cast their brightening glow over the gloomy, unlovely little houses, an aged couple, a wrinkled, stooping little mother, and a grey-haired man, may be seen wending their way, with feeble, uncertain steps through the streets of the Ghetto. They hold each other's hands as they walk—a pathetic, albeit pleasant sight to the onlooker. The old man carries a stick, which he uses to good purpose, for with it he carefully removes every little stone, every obstacle, which meets his eye, and over which the halting foot of his companion might stumble. Nothing escapes his keen glance, and wherever a house of somewhat more imposing proportions than its fellows, throws a dark shadow across the street, he steps aside, and leads the old lady along a sunnier path. But when by chance

the hour of afternoon service peals forth from the church-steeple, he stops short in his walk. Then he withdraws his hand out of the old lady's in order to make the sign of the cross, whilst with the other hand, he holds his fur cap before his face. The little woman hobbles on. Is she afraid to disturb her companion in his devotions? Do not these brazen sounds, too, ring in *her* ears, urging *her* also to offer up a silent prayer . . . ? He has finished; with hurrying steps he has quickly overtaken her. Their hands have met again, and they resume their walk together. Arrived in front of a small, one-storied cottage, the last in the Gasse, they stop. They are at their own abode!

To us it almost seems little short of sacrilege to relate the story of Christian and Leah, for it is by these names that the old people are respectively known in the Ghetto. He who would not lightly wrench a flower from its stalk, preferring rather to let it rest in its native soil, delighting the eye with its beauty, and wafting its fragrance around, will understand us. Such is the story of Christian and Leah —a narrative which one should guard with jealousy, that it be not wantonly plucked up by the roots and cast to the winds of oblivion,

which might perchance carry it whither the full sweetness of its true significance would not be appreciated.

. . . . .

There had been a long succession of rainy days; these being followed by a long spell of mild spring winds, the snows on the Iser mountains had thawed with unusual rapidity. The little brook, which at other times flows gurgling so placidly along its course behind the Gasse that it barely moistens the knees of the children who love to wade in its peaceful waters, had suddenly developed all the characteristics of a raging torrent, a freak in which it had never, within living memory, been known to indulge before.

A turbid, seething mass of water was surging around and over the little wooden bridge, which at other times was an almost superfluous institution across this humble little stream.

In a little tumble-down cottage, standing on the bank of the brooklet, lived Wolf Ungar, the synagogue attendant, with his wife and child. Of this humble abode, small as it was, part was occupied by the master-shoemaker, Johannes Wurma, or, as he was known in the Gasse, Honza Schuster (Honza the shoemaker). He, too, had a wife and child. The man, however, was a heavy drinker, and he therefore did

not stand very high in Wolf Ungar's estimation. Oftentimes, before daybreak, when the stars were still flickering in the sky, and Wolf, armed with his wooden hammer was about to leave the warm shelter of his abode in order to summon the slumbering ghetto to the morning service, he would stumble on the stairs, against the form of his drunken lodger. Then it was that the beadle was filled with a haughty loathing, a sort of aristocratic disdain.

At such times, the fact impressed him with especial emphasis, that he belonged to a "chosen people," to whom it was an abomination to pass the nights in a tap room.

. . . . .

Wolf Ungar intended to rise betimes the next morning, for it was the "Fast of Esther" which commences at daybreak. In the middle of the night he awoke, much to his surprise, for, as he was wont to say, his hammer and his sleep were both punctual as a watch which kept true time. At the same moment his wife also awoke from her slumbers.

"Don't you hear something, Sarah?" he cried.

"I have just seen my dear mother, who is lying in the 'House of Life' yonder," she said, rising up in the bed.

An unaccountable impulse moved Wolf Ungar to leave his bed, and after many vain attempts he succeeded in lighting a candle. At the first flickering of the flame, little Leah, a four-year-old child which was lying in bed by the side of its mother, began to cry, in a strangely anxious voice, "Christian! Christian!" at the same time flinging her little arms wildly from side to side.

While her mother was doing her best to pacify the child, Wolf Ungar partly dressed himself, and then lit the candle in his lantern. He did not feel at all drowsy. On the contrary, all his faculties were unusually alert, and his movements were inspired by an unwonted, quick-witted determination. He walked to the window, and once again driven by the same unaccountable impulse, he proceeded to unbar the wooden shutter. In this seemingly easy task, however, he now succeeded only after repeated and energetic attempts. When at last he had accomplished it he started back terror-stricken. His hand was dripping with icy water.

"Sarah! take the child, quick! Get up! the water is coming," he shouted. He was answered by a piercing shriek; then all was still.

"What's to be done, now, Wolf?" at length came, in hoarse tones, from the bloodless lips of

his wife, who had meanwhile taken up the child and thrown a shawl round its shoulders.

Wolf walked in front with the lantern; they were about to pass through the corridor, when, lo, their feet plunged into a deep stream of water, which had forced its way into the house through a slit under the street-door. He cautiously opened the door an inch or two, but the cold water rushing in, forced him to step aside. Wolf Ungar was a plucky fellow; not in vain had he served his time in the army. He called to his wife to follow him fearlessly, meanwhile holding his lantern aloft so that she should not miss her footing.

Again the child Leah cried out, this time in tones of unmistakable terror: "Christian! Christian!"

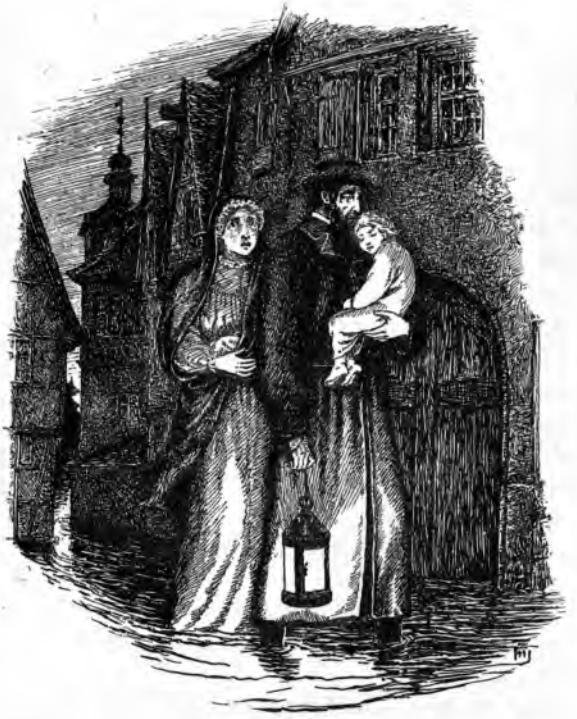
It was a cry that deeply touched the hearts of both: *now* they understood its import.

"Wake them, Wolf," Sarah cried, "wake them, or they'll perish."

"I can't, Sarah," he shouted in reply, "our lives are at stake."

"I won't go," she retorted, "even if I lose my own life."

Thereupon Wolf Ungar began shouting with frantic energy the name of "Honza, Honza," in



the meantime kicking with all his force against the door of the cobbler's room. But not a sound came in reply. What had become of the luckless people? Were they asleep or already drowned?

At length the door yielded to Wolf's furious onslaughts; holding his lantern aloft, he entered the room in which the water stood ankle deep. A single glance sufficed to convince him that here all attempts at an awakening would be in vain. Honza Schuster and his wife were both plunged in a stupor-like sleep from which no shaking could rouse them. Wolf Ungar hesitated no longer, and with a hurried movement he snatched from the bed a fair-haired little lad, whose big blue eyes were fixed on him with an astonished gaze. With the child on one arm, and with the other hand holding his lantern, Wolf Ungar made his way out of the room.

"Have you got the child, Wolf?"

"Yes; and now may God help us!" gasped Wolf.

And so they passed out into the night, and into the icy torrent, which raged and surged around them, and in which they waded nearly up to their knees. Wolf went in front, Sarah

following close behind him. All at once, loud cries of terror penetrated to them from the adjacent houses. Like a thief in the night, the insidious waters had entered the sanctuary of sleep.

"Have no fear, Sarah, my precious one!" cried Wolf, "the memory of your pious mother will protect us."

"Yes, Wolf, my life," she faltered, her teeth chattering with cold; "she will protect us."

And slowly, painfully they went, or rather waded, their way, their hearts burdened with terror, their lips muttering words of trustful hope. The water surged round about them, at times reaching up to their necks. But they succeeded in struggling through it; before long it was only at their ankles that they still felt the chilling waves. At last they reached the hilly ground upon which stood the synagogue, and thither the water could not penetrate.

They glanced behind them. How the angry waters raged and roared. Night was giving way to the grey of morning. A pale glimmer fell across the wide expanse of water; now they could distinctly see the little house from which they had so lately made their escape. In the next moment it was gone. A muffled crash, as

of splintering rafters, a brief gruesome chorus of death-shrieks, then stillness.

The birthplace of their child, the dwelling wherein but so recently six human beings had drawn breath, had vanished; the humble little house, together with John Schuster and his wife, had found a common grave in the waters which had engulphed them.

"Have you the child, Wolf?" Sarah asked, with a sudden impulse.

"Yes! What do you want to do with it?"

"Give me the boy," she cried.

"Haven't you our Leah already?"

"I can take two children," she exclaimed, excitedly, and she wrapped the child which Wolf handed her in the folds of the shawl, which also covered her little daughter.

It was now almost daylight. Sarah, with the two children slumbering at her bosom, and shivering from head to foot, had seated herself upon one of the steps leading up to the women's gallery.

"No need to-day to knock the folks up," Wolf Ungar remarked, with a bitter smile, "my hammer is at the bottom of the Iser." Then a sigh, deep-drawn and heavy, as though wrung forth from his inmost soul, escaped him.

"Nothing, nothing but bare life!" he murmured.

"Don't speak, Wolf," Sarah urged, with a deprecatory movement of the hand, "or you'll wake the children."

After a while Wolf cried:

"Fool that I am, to let you freeze out here! Why, I have got the key of the 'Schul' with me. The living God alone knows why I should just have taken the key, when I forgot my hammer."

Within the synagogue a death-like stillness reigned, and the footsteps of the couple as they passed by the pews re-echoed hollow and dismal through the empty building. Wolf led his wife up the steps of the *Almemar*,[1] and after wrapping the heavy altar-cloth, which he took from the lectern, about her shoulders, bade her be seated on one of the benches.

Notwithstanding his woful plight, the man's sense of humour took in the grotesqueness of the situation, and with a faint smile, he said:—"There is one thing you will be able to boast of, Sarah, the like of which has never fallen to the lot of any woman in the *Gasse*, that is, that you have a seat in the men's-schul."

[1] Dais erected in the centre of a synagogue, from which the precentor recites the prayers.

But the jest was lost on Sarah, who sat plunged deep in thought. Suddenly, however, she rose from her recumbent attitude ; the light of dawn, which was now shining in pale slanting rays through the synagogue windows, helped her to fully grasp her surroundings, to collect her thoughts, and to concentrate them upon the issues of the moment.

"Why don't the people come?" she asked, "it is daylight."

"They won't come to-day," Wolf replied, in a sombre monotone.

"Then let *us* hold Schul, Wolf!" Sarah cried, with a strange impetuosity.

Wolf Ungar feared at first that the fright had turned the poor woman's brain, and in a voice hoarse with terror, he asked :—"What is it you are talking about, Sarah?"

"I want both of us to hold *Schul*[1] together," she cried, and even in that doubtful twilight Wolf could see how her eyes burned and sparkled as with unnatural fires. "I want you to take the *Torah*[2] out of the Ark, Wolf, we

[1] The German for school, applied by the Askenaz section of Jews when speaking of a synagogue, the synagogue being originally intended as much for the purposes of study as for public worship.

[2] Scrolls of the Pentateuch.

are alone here, alone before God and the world!"

"Sarah!" Wolf Ungar cried, frantic with terror.

"You think I am out of my senses?" she resumed, this time in calmer tones. "Do as I ask you, Wolf, and take a *Torah* from the Ark. It isn't a sin surely?"

Hearing her talk so rationally, he too grew calmer.

He ascended the steps leading to the Ark, in which the *Torah* scrolls were standing in a row beside one another, drew back the heavy curtain, and took one of the scrolls in his arms.

"Give it to me, and let me kiss it," cried Sarah.

Wolf handed her the purple velvet-clad *Torah* scrolls, upon which she several times pressed her lips.

"And now, Wolf, unwrap it, and open the *Torah*, as they do when they are about to *leinen*."[1]

Wolf did as she desired.

"What is it you want now, Sarah?" he asked, after a painful interval.

"Now, I want you to swear something to

[1] Corruption of the German *lesen*, to read.

me on the *Torah*, Wolf," she cried, raising her voice. "Will you?"

"I will."

"Then swear to me that this boy, now sleeping at my breast, shall find in me a mother, for he has none, and that you will be as a father to him, as his is lying dead in the water. Swear that you will not object if I nurture him and bring him up as my own child. Swear that you will keep your word, and even if the whole world rise up against you to prove that you have done wrong, that you will never reproach me with having taken this poor child to my bosom. Swear it me, upon the sacred *Torah!*"

In speaking Sarah had risen from her seat, and now she stood close beside her husband.

"Are you forgetting, Sarah," he cried, with a feeble attempt at resistance, "that this child's father was John Schuster?"

With uplifted voice, in almost solemn tones, which stirred her husband's inmost soul with a nameless emotion, she resumed:

"The child shall be mine, as though I myself had given it birth . . . and now swear!"

"I swear, Sarah!" he softly said.

"Now I am relieved, Wolf," she answered, as she stooped down and kissed the *Torah*.

Then once more she sat down upon the bench and relapsed into her former silence.

Peacefully the two children slumbered under their warm covering. That very day ample provision was made for Wolf Ungar, who was now without food or shelter. Wherever he turned pitying hands were held out to him. At the expense of the community, a dwelling-place—a communal property—was assigned him, whilst on their part, the women of the *Gasse* vied with each other in providing Sarah with clothing and household utensils. Of all the gifts offered her, however, the poor woman would only accept such things as she, who had lost all, felt to be indispensable. Everything that seemed to her to be out of harmony with her present circumstances, she firmly declined, and to many a rich woman in the *Gasse* it savoured of ill-advised pride on the part of the Schulklopfer's wife to refuse a gaily worked Sabbath cap, or some such bit of feminine finery.

"I will not make capital out of my misfortune," she said, "I am not enough of a *Schnorrerin*[1] for that."

But where "her orphan" was concerned,

[1] Female cadger or beggar.

verily, it seemed as though she could not get enough clothing and nourishment, and what she declined for her own daughter, she took with eagerness, nay with greed even, for the adopted child. "An orphan child has a large mouth," she was fond of declaring, "which requires a deal of filling. Where a child that has its parents eats one spoonful, an orphan child needs two, and that is, because a child that has its parents already feels satisfied at the thought that it is sitting at table, while to an orphan the daintiest morsel tastes as though they had forgotten the salt."

This woman, usually so reserved, became quite talkative whenever the subject of conversation was her "orphan child"; it was then that her overflowing heart found relief in words, which at other times were never too ready to come to her lips. Whenever she spoke on Christian's behalf, her eyes would glisten with such unwonted fire, the words flow from her lips with such eloquence, that folks could hardly believe that they had to deal with the same woman.

When, during that eventful night, Wolf Ungar took that oath before his wife, with his finger upon the holy scroll, he felt inwardly

prompted by the thought that her heart's rash deed would be followed by a period of sober reflection. He began to look forward to that time of re-awakening on Sarah's part, basing his hopes on his experience of the charitable promptings of other people, whose momentary enthusiasm was but too apt to evaporate when obstacles more or less serious came betwixt them and their benevolent aspirations. But in the present case Wolf Ungar was wofully mistaken, for very soon he perceived that Sarah in reality considered herself, in the eyes of God and man, as Christian's second mother.

Nevertheless, the sanctity of his oath was impressed too deeply upon Wolf's soul for him to venture to offer any positive resistance to Sarah's action. He allowed her to have her way, and during the first few months, whilst his mind was still under the influence of recent events, neither by word nor deed did he betray his inward chafing at the responsibilities he had incurred.

Certain voices, however, soon began to assert themselves within Sarah's hearing, insidious whisperings that she had acted unwisely, that she had taken upon herself a burden entirely out of keeping with her circumstances as the wife

of a synagogue attendant. Here and there the advice was tendered her—and often with the best of intentions—that the sooner she could manage to rid herself of the strange child which did not concern her in the least, the better it would be for her. For the present—so they reasoned—it mattered very little, but what would she do as the boy grew into boyhood, and she, may be, had other children of her own? To all this, Sarah shook her head, nor did she betray by any sign that her mind had been influenced in the slightest possible degree even by this chorus of reasoning and counsel.

One day her *Babe*[1] Breindel came to visit her. That was a very unusual event, for the old woman, owing to her excessively arrogant demeanour, was in Sarah's eyes a being to be approached only with feelings of deepest awe.

Babe lived on her means, that is, on a few hundred gulden left her by her husband; she was thus independent of anyone in the *Gasse*. Her pallid, stern features were expressive of egoism and haughty disdain, while of her acrid severity of character many a striking instance was on record. She seldom or never left her two rooms—also a legacy bequeathed her by her

[1] Grandmother.

husband—and it was only on the Sabbath that her children and grandchildren were permitted to call upon her, so that she might *bensch*[1] them. Then she was seated in state in her arm-chair, a heavy necklace of garnets encircling her throat, a gold-embroidered cap on her head, and clad entirely in white, and thus she would receive the good wishes and salutations of her kindred, much as a queen accepts the homage of her subjects.

Sarah was busy altering, for Christian's use, an article of clothing given her by a neighbour, when the *Babe* entered. A faint cry came from Sarah's lips.

"What are you frightened about?" said the *Babe*, whose eye and ear nothing escaped. "Do I look such a fright then, that people should cry out when they see me? I didn't always look as I do now, I can tell you."

From past experience Sarah knew that the grandmother's cutting observations were only to be met with silent indifference. She said nothing, therefore, and respectfully conducted the old lady to a chair. It nevertheless grieved her bitterly that the *Babe* did not bestow a glance even upon her little daughter, her only

[1] Bless.

living grandchild, who was sitting close by. That was a sure sign of annoyance on the part of the old lady, the cause of which Sarah could but too well divine.

After a while the *Babe*, fixing her cold grey eyes upon Sarah, asked:

"Where is your husband, Sarah?"

"He has gone to the village, Babe. A farmer, who has an old copper kettle for sale, asked him to call."

"Is there still any need then for your husband to go to the village and buy up old copper kettles?" asked the Babe, forcing her thin lips into a smile, "why, the whole Ghetto is talking about it, about Wolf Ungar's coming resignation of his post as synagogue attendant. He has had a windfall, and now he is going to live the life of a millionaire. So the whole world says in fact."

"I know nothing about it, Babe," said Sarah, in all the innocence of her heart.

"It must be true, all the same," the *Babe* continued, with merciless persistency, "for the Gasse isn't mad. Wolf Ungar gets his living from that Gasse, his food and drink . . . how comes it then that this same Wolf Ungar, whom God has already given a child, is not satisfied,

but burdens himself with another, and one that isn't even of his own flesh and blood?"

So great, so unquestioning was the reverence with which, at that time, a grandchild regarded its grandparent, though the latter might overwhelm her with words of reproach, that it is not surprising that Sarah received the bitter remarks of her grandmother with unremonstrating silence.

"Why don't you speak?" the *Babe* cried, after an oppressive silence.

"*Babe*," Sarah at length ventured to remark, "my husband is fond of me, and he only did as I asked him."

"It is *you* then! *You* are the millionaire?" the *Babe* exclaimed, with withering ridicule. "Where do you keep your pearls then, and your golden necklaces? and why don't you turn out of these rooms, where you live at the cost of the community? She who adopts strange children should have a house of her own. Why don't you build yourselves one?"

Not a single word of protest escaped Sarah's lips. She knew well enough that the old dame had not yet said her say, the bitterest of all had still to come, and she had not long to wait.

"I have heard," the *Babe* resumed, "the

child you have adopted has a name . . . Won't you tell me the boy's name?"

"His name is Christian," Sarah said hesitatingly.

"And you want to be as a mother to the child?"

"Yes, *Babe*," Sarah answered, in a toneless voice.

The Babe rose to her feet. At that moment her pale, thin face assumed a remarkable expression, a brave man even might well have been cowed by it. Tall and haggard as she was, she now seemed to tower taller still, whilst the lines about her mouth grew strangely hard and cruel.

"As long as our family has been in existence that name has never been heard in our dwellings," she said. "Do you remember after whom your own child, little Leah, is named? Perhaps you've forgotten?"

"After whom she is named? After my dear mother, who is lying in the Good Place yonder," Sarah faltered.

"And this holy name, this beautiful name, once borne in honour and respect by your mother—and the Almighty alone knows what you have lost in her—*that* name you want to hear spoken in your house with that of John

Schuster's child? *My* daughter's child to have the son of a drunkard sitting on her lap! And a boy with such . . . such a name too!"

"*Babe!*" Sarah cried, shaken with emotion, whilst the tears gushed from her eyes.

"What am I staying any longer in your room for?" the old dame mercilessly continued, "you don't expect me to *bensch* John Schuster's whelp as well, do you?"

With that she turned towards the door. Sarah stood sobbing piteously, and this appeared to make some impression upon the old lady's feelings. Like all haughty souls with an unshakable confidence in their own sense of right, she loved to contemplate the tokens of a yielding humility. Turning round at the half-open door, she said to Sarah, who had unconsciously followed her:

"Sarah, my life! you see these handsome garnets round my throat. They were really intended for another on the day when they will carry me yonder, but they shall be yours tomorrow, the day after, at any time you like—only the name of John Schuster's child must be heard no more in your house. Do you understand?"

The *Babe* went, leaving the wife of the synagogue-attendant a prey to the most painful

emotions. With her unapproachable hauteur and repellantly independent attitude, old Frau Breindel had, in Sarah's eyes, always ranked as a personality whose opinions called for unquestioning reverence. The *Babe* must be right—how otherwise could she be the *Babe*? And yet! An extraordinary tumult was raging in Sarah's being. What was this? That which, in that eventful hour, when it was with her bare life only that she had escaped the all-engulfing waters, had come upon her like an inspiration from on high, that, to fulfil which her husband had sworn an oath on the holy *Torah*, could that be a sin to carry out? Why was it that her own child had been saved from the peril. Was not that distinctly a sign, a guiding light in the darkness?

How the poor woman longed for a word of friendly counsel! It seemed to her, now that her grandmother had gone, as though the world had assumed an altogether different, an intensely sombre, aspect. What once was bright and clear seemed now so gloomy, so dark; that which, in her own innocence of heart, she had thought so easily attainable, was now transformed into an unfathomable abyss, in whose sullen depths there raged and stormed her old grandmother's

anger. And that was not all! Her face grew burning red and ghastly white in turns. What if her husband were to forget his oath? Out yonder in the little courtyard, beneath the shade of the spreading walnut tree, the two children were playing. With the watchful eye of a mother Sarah followed their every movement. What a picture they made, what a pretty contrast between the fair-haired lad and her own dark little Leah! Her heart throbbed with emotion; she must have the children near her. First she called her little daughter, then she was about to call the other child. But the name died in her throat. She could not utter a sound.

Had not Frau Breindel said that the name dare not be mentioned in a Jewish house?

An unspeakable anguish overwhelmed her inmost being. This much was certain; if her grandmother were to have that obedience shown her which she had a right to demand, then the adopted child must go, and quickly!

Was she perchance thinking of the gleaming rows of the garnet necklace? No, not the faintest thought did she bestow upon the trinket. One moment her determination was fixed; she would do the *Babe's* bidding—then

again doubts, misgivings assailed her. The grandmother had in the most determined fashion denounced her plan, might there not be found voices in the community which would speak with equal determination in approval of her action? Sarah pondered and pondered whither she might turn for counsel; for *some* counsel she must have, for the language of her own heart could no longer give her any guidance. Then it was, she knew not why, that her thoughts repeatedly strayed to a little man, widely known in the *Gasse* as "Klein-Mendelsohn."

In reality his name was Kalmann Wurzburg. He was a shrivelled, weazened little figure, to whom nature had been, as in the case of the great Berlin philosopher, sufficiently liberal to allow of an outgrowth on his back. But that was merely one reason why Kalmann Wurzburg rejoiced in the name of "Little Mendelsohn."

For this Kalmann was suspected of being somewhat imbued with those "enlightened ideas" which at that time had certainly not found their way—even as the merest stray seedlings—into any part of the *Gasse*. He was generally credited with a prodigious store of learning, he was reputed to have been the brightest pupil of

the Talmudic School at Prague, and at the time of which we are speaking—after a period of thirty years—the fame of his scholarly exploits had become a tradition in every Bohemian and Moravian Ghetto. He owned a goodly-sized house in the *Gasse*, in which he lived the life of a bachelor. Nor did his neighbours seem over anxious for his society, although whenever and wherever a helping hand was needed, Kalmann was never far behind. Many a hawker in fact owed his subsistence to him; to *him* they came, as soon as Sunday morning came round, in order to borrow a few gulden with which to start on their precarious weekly rounds; on the following Friday they came to repay the money, for the loan of which never a penny were they charged. It was on these occasions, particularly, that he was wont to give utterance to expressions which had gone far to earn him the soubriquet of "Klein-Mendelsohn." In handing them the money he never refrained from indulging in sundry sarcastic allusions to the occupation of the hawkers, to whom, he was wont to say, he lent the money most unwillingly. Every Sunday and Friday they were constrained to hear him storm about their "Rabbit-skins and Cotton-cloths," and talk about the blessing of

"manly labour in the open field," words which generally failed to convey the remotest meaning to his hearers. When sometimes he was in a really bad humour, he was fond of telling them that a single peasant was worth more in his eyes than all the hawkers and pedlars in Bohemia and Moravia. These and similar utterances, no less than the numerous German books which were seen at his house, had contrived to throw around "Klein-Mendelsohn" a peculiar halo so that none of the Ghetto dwellers cared to approach him save those who needed his help. Whether he was quite as orthodox as a "good Jew" should be was a moot question in the *Gasse*. Nobody, 'tis true, had ever found him out in anything wrong—but neither would anyone of them—had he been asked—have consented to swear to it!

To this Kalmann Wurzburg the wife of the synagogue-attendant felt herself strangely impelled to apply for counsel. Why it was that she wanted to go to that man, in preference to anyone else, she knew not. She went to him simply because she was anxious to hear a voice other than that of her grandmother.

"Have you come for money?" snarled Klein-Mendelsohn, raising his velvet-capped head from

the open folio in front of him. "Has your husband gone in for hares this time?" he growled again, as he opened the drawer of his writing table in which a quantity of silver and copper coins could be seen. "How much is it to be?"

With an intensity of feeling, of which one would scarcely have expected the poor woman capable, Sarah retorted with a spasmodic grip of his hand in which he already held a couple of silver coins, "I haven't come for money, Herr Kalmann."

"Your husband does not go in for hare-skins then? Is it a copper kettle perhaps?" Klein-Mendelsohn asked, mockingly.

Then all grew dark and blurred before Sarah's eyes, and all the pent-up grief within her suddenly burst forth in the vehemence of her answer.

"Herr Kalmann," she said, bursting into tears, "I come to you for advice and counsel, and you insult me."

Klein-Mendelsohn grew serious.

"Is that how it is?" he asked, as he closed the table-drawer again, "what can I do for you then? But, first of all, sit down."

It took Kalmann Wurzburg some considerable time before he could thoroughly grasp the

details of the strange case, from the tearful, disjointed narrative which fell haltingly from Sarah's trembling lips. When, having concluded, she looked at him with her moist, glistening eyes, which said a great deal more than her mouth had yet uttered, Klein-Mendelsohn began to turn uneasily in his arm-chair, nervously shifting his velvet cap backwards and forwards on his head. Then again his gaze became rivetted upon the open volume in front of him, but it was evident that his thoughts were not with the subject. His features, usually so crabbed and sour, had undergone a remarkable transfiguration.

"So the *Babe* has told you that you may not keep such a child with you, that it's name must not be mentioned?"

Sarah could only shake her head in reply.

"And do you want to do as the Babe tells you?"

"Must I?" Sarah asked.

A sunny little smile flitted over Klein-Mendelsohn's features. In his heart he admired the finesse of this poor woman, whose single question in no way trespassed upon her inherent respect for her grandparent, while, at the same time, it was an undoubted expression of her wavering state of mind.

"But now I want to ask you something else," he commenced, after a while. "If to-day or to-morrow the Burgomaster and the clergy should come to you and say:—'Give us the child, it is ours! Give it up!' Wouldn't you have to part with it? For you don't know these people, I tell you. Amongst *them* there are even more Babe Breindels than we have among our own people. Wouldn't it be better, therefore, if you did at once that which perhaps afterwards you'll be forced to do?"

Kalmann Wurzburg paused, so that Sarah's train of thought might have free play. With an intensity of expression, however, which moved Klein-Mendelsohn to an extraordinary degree, she cried:

"But until then I surely may retain the child? My own child plays with it, and it takes its food at my table. Is that a sin? And why? Because John Schuster's child is left alone in the world, and no one has come nigh him to offer him a drink of water? Because I have taken an oath, and so has my husband, on the holy Torah, that I would be a mother to him, out of gratitude to the Almighty—who rescued my own child from the waters——"

"Say no more!" interrupted Kalmann Wurz-

burg, as he shifted about restlessly in his chair, "I understand you thoroughly, as though you were a vessel of clearest water, in which one can see to the bottom."

Then, as if moved by a sudden angry impulse, he flung his cap to the ground and sprang up from his chair. He appeared to be quite oblivious of the fact that he was standing bareheaded before a woman of the *Gasse*.

The shrivelled, stooping little man commenced pacing to and fro with rapid strides; rarely indeed had he been a prey to such intense agitation. Nervously he kept muttering to himself all kinds of unintelligible sounds, while all the time he was swinging his ludicrously long, thin arms about in a manner that made Sarah fear that Klein-Mendelsohn had suddenly been bereft of his senses.

"Always those Babes! Wherever you go there are the *Babes!*" he cried. "The moment one ventures to take a step out of the old groove, the *Babe* appears on the scene!"

With this, he shut the volume before him with a bang that made Sarah tremble.

"I won't have anything said about my Babe," Sarah ventured mildly to observe. "She is fond of me, and means well."

"And why is it, then, that you come to me?" cried Klein-Mendelsohn, angrily, staring hard at Sarah with his great grey eyes.

"I hardly know why myself," she stammered. "I think it was about the child."

Thereupon, Klein-Mendelsohn grew calm again. He slackened his pace up and down the room, and at length he stopped short in front of an open book-case. Mechanically he stretched out his hand towards a small volume on the top shelf; he had to stand on tip-toe in order to get it. He opened it and glanced at the page, Sarah the whilst anxiously watching his every movement. All at once, his features beamed with joy; the book trembled in his hand. "You want my advice," he said.

"Well, if I were to think and ponder over it for a month, there is nothing that could occur to me, better than what this book says."

Sarah looked at him with wide-opened eyes.

"Is the book—written in the sacred tongue?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"Of that you may be sure," Klein-Mendelsohn smilingly replied, "it is the Proverbs of Solomon which I have got in my hand."

"And what have they to do with me?"

"Wait, and I'll explain. As you are aware,

King Solomon was a very wise man, from whom we can still learn a great deal. The book I am holding in my hand contains some remarkable things, and in it you can find an answer to every question. There's one there for you too."

At that moment a faint blush suffused Sarah's features—a blush which reflected, in its delicate glow, the innermost workings of her beautiful soul. At Kalmann's words a feeling had come over her as though she were absorbed in her devotions—as though the prayer she was uttering was in the book that now lay open in Kalmann Wurzburg's hand.

"Listen then to what it says there," he resumed, "but pay attention, so that you can grasp the meaning of the proverb."

"I am listening," she whispered softly.

"*Be not righteous overmuch*,"—Kalmann read, "*neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou "destroy thyself?* Have you understood that?"

For a considerable time Sarah remained speechless with inward agitation, and neither by word nor sign did she betray that she had really grasped the true significance of the words. But from her widely opened eyes there streamed forth a light so radiant and bright, such as Klein-Mendelsohn had never yet beheld

upon a human countenance during the whole period of his joyless existence.

"Have you understood me?" he asked once more.

"*Be not righteous overmuch*," the words fell slowly and in almost solemn tones from her lips. "That refers to my *Babe*, doesn't it? and '*Neither make thyself overwise*.' That is written specially for me, eh? And as for the last, *that* concerns John Schuster's child. The poor destitute orphan! For who else could be 'destroyed' but John Schuster's child?"

"You have more in your head, Sarah, than I,—than any such as I."

A happy little smile played about her mouth. "*Neither make thyself overwise*," she repeated half-audibly.

"Is it well with you now, Sarah Ungar?" asked Klein-Mendelsohn.

"Better than it has been all my life," she replied, with a radiant glance. "Now I know what I've got to do!"

Long after Sarah had gone, Kalmann Wurzburg remained seated with the open folio in front of him, gazing fixedly at the closely printed pages without so much as the meaning of a single sentence finding its way to his brain.

Had some hidden secret been revealed to him during that brief interview, a secret, the existence of which had only been made clear to him since that poor woman had left him?

Feeling strangely strengthened by her interview with Klein-Mendelsohn, the wife of the synagogue attendant now faced the future with a lighter heart. It seemed to her as though her path lay bathed in bright sunshine, whilst the good counsel she had gathered from the words of "Ecclesiastes" left their soothing echo behind to quicken and solace her troubled soul.

Nevertheless there remained Klein-Mendelsohn's allusion to those who might one day claim their natural right to the custody of the child. On this point, too, Sarah felt that she stood in need of being assured. The next day, accordingly, she donned her handsome Sabbath cap, and having dressed Christian in his best, she repaired with him to the Burgomaster.

The worthy Burgomaster, a potter by trade, raised his eyes in astonishment, when Sarah, 'mid much hesitation and stammering, asked him if she might retain her charge of the child.

"Why not?" he asked. "What are *we* to do with that child? The war-tax has consumed

everything, and now the rats and mice are scampering about in our empty coffers. They take away our money, and deprive us of our children to turn them into soldiers. Where then are we to find the means to support orphans?"

The rough callousness underlying this reasoning pained the poor woman, and she timorously observed:—

"But won't any one else object?"

"Who can object?" the Burgomaster retorted, with a jeering laugh.

"I mean—the Dean, perhaps!" whispered Sarah, almost inaudibly.

"He?" laughed the Burgomaster; "*he* won't trouble you, you need not fear. He's glad that the dead cobbler's child doesn't come begging at his door. For the right reverend gentleman has nothing left either."

Autres temps, autres mœurs! As yet the "Church Militant" had not posted her pickets at every corner, with orders to keep a lynx-eyed watch, lest any should stray from the fold; as yet the grim spectres had not cast their darkening shadows across the broad light of day, the phantoms of gloom before whose advent, Peace, Concord, and Tolerance would

one day flee as a flight of frightened doves. As yet neither pulpit nor tap-room had been affected by the eloquence of those who, with lowering brows and clenched fists, denounce the liberty of the subject as "unholy license," and brotherly peace among men as the "base depravity" of a wanton age! Sarah, therefore, might keep the child. The State, as represented by the Herr Burgomaster, sanctioned it, and the Church, too, raised no objection.

On her way home Sarah's mind was filled with many thoughts.

"It is very strange," she mused, "that *they* don't care more about the child. *They* thrust it from them, and don't even know what I intend to do with it. Who knows? Perhaps the child will yet grow up in my house to be a thief or a bad man. And what am I to do *then?* And if what has happened to John Schuster's son had occurred to a Jewish child, which God forbid, would his own flesh and blood have denied him shelter? What guarantee have they, after all, that the boy will receive proper bringing up in my cottage, and that his future life won't be ruined?"

These thoughts caused the tenderest chord of Sarah's being to quiver with anxiety. To

think that that poor child might yet be destined for a life of degradation and infamy, that he might, notwithstanding her own poor efforts, turn out a human wreck, a woful ruin, and that upon her would rest the responsibility! Suppose that after all she had done wrong in meddling with the course of a human life? What if that were to be her punishment, to be forced to see the child going to destruction under her very eyes?

And again the wisdom of the Royal Preacher recurred to her, to comfort and strengthen her wavering spirit:—*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* And with a gladsome recollection the consciousness of her self-imposed responsibility returned to her. "I shall love the child as though it were my own,"—thus her long-endured anxiety found its vent,—"and can a mother do more for her child than love it? And a child nurtured and cared for like that *must* thrive and prosper, I think. For how can a child grow into an upright, God-fearing man, if the sunshine of a mother's love is withheld from him?"

Sarah's educational scheme was now formed, and it was one not based upon mental convic-

tions so much as upon the impulses of the heart; in this respect putting to shame the much vaunted book-schooling of the present day.

Up to now we have spoken but little of the children.

But who is there that can boast of the rare gift of being able to find an open pathway in that strangely fascinating world, that charmed forest, the strangely interwoven web of two children's lives? To all appearances well-kept avenues, roomy and bright, lead gently onward, the sunlight glistens on every leaf, and one almost fancies the ear can detect the growth of the young saplings. But not hearing the rustling of the foliage, one is too prone to arrive at the erroneous conclusion that all is still within these roomy bowers, and yet it may be accepted as certain that the soundless development of mankind's young plants is frequently disturbed by storms as violent, if not more so, than those which rudely strike the full-grown tree, over whose lofty crown the raging elements of nature exercise their power at their own wild will.

It was remarkable how very ill at ease the adopted child seemed in its unaccustomed sur-

roundings, despite the loving attentions which were lavished upon it. Little removed as was his birthplace from the flood-swept abode of Wolf Ungar, Christian appeared to feel himself strangely out of place under the roof of his foster-parents; he was taciturn and gloomy, whilst towards Sarah, particularly, he evinced a stubbornness, which for a long time refused to yield even to the influence of *her* gentle being. For hours at a stretch he would mope sullen and silent in a corner, and thither little Leah, his playmate, had perforce to turn whenever she needed his boyish assistance in the evolution of the doll species. What was it that was passing through the child's mind? Could it be a vain, pathetic longing for the drowned father? Was it the strange air he daily breathed that disturbed it? Or was it the effect of the peculiar jargon, which fell, with all its unintelligible uncouthness, so constantly upon his ear?

But the person most keenly affected by the almost defiant attitude of the child was, strange to say, not Sarah, but her husband. Wolf Ungar loved his wife with a deep-seated affection; he had sworn on the *Torah* that he would in no way attempt to shirk the obligation which, on that dread night, he had taken upon himself

before the sacred Ark. And now, what had come of it? Apart from the slanderous tongues of the Gasse, which denounced this step on Sarah's part as an act of unpardonable impropriety, the child had become a burden to him, a constant obstacle in his path, often arousing his jealousy when he saw what trouble Sarah took to win the affections of this stubborn lad.

One day it happened that Christian rushed at Sarah, with his little fists tightly clenched. That was too much for Wolf. His long pent-up rage found vent in an angry torrent.

"Now you see what comes of it," he shouted, bringing his fist down with violence upon the table, "when you take any of 'theirs' to your shelter. It's in the blood, I tell you; and blood can't lie; neither can you make of John Schuster's child what my little Leah will be. Such is God's will, and Unlike must not mix with Unlike. You will yet see, Sarah, that the child who now clenches his fists at you will one day, when he has grown up . . ."

"Do not say such sinful things," Sarah cried, fixing her big, frightened eyes upon her husband's face, "think rather of your oath."

Then turning to the child, she cried in that

tone in which we often put to children the most unintelligible questions, only to receive equally unintelligible replies :—

"Is that true . . . Christian?"

A sudden spasm of anguish disturbed the lad's features; his haughty, defiant demeanour vanished; his bosom heaved with emotion, and the next moment he had rushed towards Sarah, and with his little head buried in her bosom, broke forth into a violent paroxysm of passionate sobs.

"What is it, Christian?" cried Sarah, bending lovingly over him, stroking his fair hair, and repeatedly calling him by name. But her gentle efforts to calm him were for a long time of no avail, for every now and then the child burst into a fresh fit of grief. At length, however, exhausted with weeping, he fell asleep in her arms.

What did that mysterious cry of pain mean? Wolf Ungar, who felt inwardly chafed at his wife's indiscreet act, saw in it a fresh testimony to the correctness of his opinion. The child felt that it was out of place in these "unfamiliar" surroundings, which were foreign to his nature, and like an imprisoned bird he was making frantic efforts to escape from his cage,

But Sarah thought otherwise. With that prescience peculiar to women, and especially to those who are mothers, she guessed, rather than knew, that something of quite an unusual nature must have been going on in the child's mind, with such suddenness had the change been effected; and yet, between Christian's former sullen obstinacy and his loud, agonised, almost irrepressible sobbing, there was such a great difference, that Sarah had not much difficulty in finding, within the depths of her own feelings, the key to the external influence which had brought about this remarkable transformation.

Had the child understood the rough words of her husband? That seemed scarcely possible. And granting even that he had understood them, why then had he rushed crying towards her, and buried his sobbing face in her bosom?

In the night Sarah rose; she lit a candle, and with it she approached Christian's bed. To her surprise she found the child awake, and looking at her with his big blue eyes.

"Why arn't you asleep, Christian?" she asked; and thinking the child might be feverish, she laid her hand softly on his forehead.

And again the child was unable to reply for

sobbing, and again he could find no rest, until overcome with weeping, and soothed by Sarah's tender words, his eyes closed in slumber. Wondering in her simple way over the strange workings of this childish soul, which she was now contemplating, Sarah was conscious of something hovering in her mind, which looked like a solution of the problem. But was it the correct one? Was she not mistaken? Was she on the right track or not? Strange! whenever her thoughts reverted to the child, and to the suddenness with which he had been transplanted from his native soil, his *name* became interwoven, as it were, with her mental soliloquy—the next instant, the long sought for truth stood revealed as in letters of fire before her soul. The *name!* Yes, that was it! Ever since that memorable afternoon, when the *Babe* Breindel had declared with such imperious emphasis that the child's name must not be uttered in Wolf Ungar's dwelling, it had frozen, as it were, upon Sarah's lips. Although she had so far resisted her grandmother as to retain the lad in her home, that *one* command had kept its hold upon her, even as the wee seedling of a foreign weed preserves its vitality to shoot forth at last amid the surrounding sheaves of growing corn. A

nameless child—that much she admitted—had no home! Of the sole remaining inheritance that Christian's parents had bequeathed him, she, in her unreasoning fear of an old woman, had ruthlessly robbed him. Now at last she knew the meaning of that unaccountable reserve which she, in her ignorance, had put down as sullen obstinacy on the child's part; and when, at an unwary moment, she had called him by his name, the fact had suddenly been brought home to him, that all the time his sojourn in that house had been as that of an alien, an interloper —one whose presence there was tolerated out of pity alone. How would her *own* child, her roguish little Leah, have felt, had she been placed in similar circumstances?

In this way the guileless soul of this simple woman gradually struggled out of the veil of mists which had so long obscured the clearness of her vision; little by little she gathered within her being the power to grasp the characteristics of the strange child, to bring them into harmony with her plans for his future, and with that array of day-dreams and visions which were now crowding to her mind and assuming more and more tangible shapes, until at last they should form a permanent indissoluble part of her

very being. There is in man a power, a potent force, which seems to draw its being from a hidden source, and often accomplishes the hardest tasks: it is the power to preserve an unwavering fearlessness before the phantoms of the future. Where would be the enthusiasm for a Cause, for which man sheds his heart's blood, but for this mysteriously working gift which is able, unheeding and undaunted, to pass by the present terrors that keep guard over the uncertainties of the future? A will o' the wisp it is, in the midst of a marshy swamp—a long winter day with a night of gloom to follow! 'Tis but to few that this gift of unfathomable strength has been vouchsafed, and they who possess it are not among the happy ones of this earth. . . . For it enfolds a depth of anguish as old as humanity itself: the anguish of having one's eyes open to the light, of imbibing its quickening rays with gasps of lingering well-being, whilst in the eyes of others it is naught but a gleaming ray of wrath, a lurid rod of chastisement, to be shunned with cowardly servility and self-abasement.

Sarah, too, was one of those upon whom this gift had been bestowed; but within *her* the light *never* failed; on the contrary, it braced

her up to higher and higher things. She knew that as yet she had achieved nothing; the object was yet so distant; ever more and more difficult grew the task, and no sooner had she removed one obstacle, than another took its place, to make even greater demands upon her exhausted energies. To the ordinary hindrances in her path she gave not a thought—such, for instance, as the silently reproachful attitude of her husband, or the open enmity on the part of her relatives. All regard for these trivialities she had long since plucked from her bosom. There was yet a severer struggle for her to fight, a struggle which she would all too soon have to face.

One winter evening Sarah had put the children to bed somewhat earlier than usual. Wolf Ungar, her husband, was away on his rounds to the neighbouring villages, whence he was not expected to return home until the Friday. As was her wont, she recited the Hebrew night-prayer at the bedside of her little daughter Leah, whilst Christian, as she thought, was already sunk in restful slumber. First she uttered the sublime formula: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," which little Leah repeated word for word after her.

This was followed by that quaint exorcism against the terrors of the night:—

"On my Right stands Michael, on my Left stands Gabriel, behind me stands Uriel, and over my head is the glory of the Almighty," and before the last words had been spoken the child's tired eyelids closed in slumber.

"I wish you would say it with me too,—what you've been saying with Leah," she suddenly heard Christian, who was sitting up in his bed, ask.

"Why arn't you asleep, Christian?" she enquired severely.

"I have been thinking what it can be that you're always repeating with Leah. I can't understand it, so I wish you would come every night to me too, and say with me what you say with Leah."

"That can't be, Christian," Sarah faltered.

"Why not?"

"Because, what I say with Leah, doesn't concern you."

This explanation did not satisfy him.

"But Leah isn't as big as I am," he resumed after a while. "Why have you so much to say to her, and nothing at all to me? Does she understand more than I do?"

"I don't know, Christian," said Sarah reflecting, "but Leah *has* to say it, and *you* haven't."

Christian thought for a while, then he lay down again, and gave a deep sigh.

"Christian!" cried Sarah.

The child raised his head.

"Don't you remember anything at all of what your mother used to do when she put you to bed? She *must* have said something with you at the time, and if you try you'll remember what it was. Don't you recollect at all?"

She sat down by the bedside of the child, and stroked his fair hair.

"My mother? You say she is long since dead?"

"So she is, if she were *not* you wouldn't be here with me. But don't you remember at all what she looked like, and what she used to say to you at night before you went to sleep?"

"No!" was the child's determined answer.

"Your mother never . . . prayed with you then?"

"Is *that* what you mean?" said Christian, and before Sarah could stop him, the child had made the sign which she had so often witnessed the country people making when they passed

through the *Gasse*, as the noon-day hour chimed from the church clock.

Sarah was deeply moved; her heart gave a horror-stricken bound. In *her* home! just after reciting the "Hear, O Israel" with her own child! Before *her*, the grandchild of the *Babe* Breindel, and the wife of the synagogue attendant, Wolf Ungar! And completely overcome with intense agitation, she sank down on her chair, in a kind of stupor, unable to give utterance to a single sound.

Certain it was, Sarah had been plunged for the moment into a very abyss of anguish. It was not only the intrusion of alien religious emblems into the hitherto uncontaminated world of her inborn faith that had shocked and terrified her. She shuddered with horror too, at the thought that the child, to whom she had vowed to stand as a mother, had already stayed a year in her house, . . . and during all that time he had not once uttered a prayer!

Sarah, a prey to the most painful emotions, for a long time remained seated at the bedside of Christian, who had in the meantime fallen asleep.

"What will they think of you," a voice she could not silence re-echoed within her, "for

allowing such a thing to occur in your house? Is it for *that* that you are your mother's daughter? Is it for *that* that you have become the wife of Wolf Ungar? Is such a thing right or proper for the grandchild of the pious *Babe* Breindel? Is it not enough that you give the child food and drink, and a bed to lie on? Must you also sacrifice for *him* your share in the next world?"

Then again she glanced at the slumbering child, and listened to its breathing.

"Would *they* tolerate it?" yet another voice whispered. "Would *they*, if my Leah were in Christian's place, which God forbid, and John Schuster's wife had adopted her, as I have adopted this child, would *they* permit *my* child to do what I have permitted in this abandoned boy? Don't I see, as it is, how intolerant they are? When a procession passes by, I have to hurry back into the house lest my presence should offend them, and when a priest, with his little bell, is on his way to a dying person, and all kneel down, I must hide myself, as I may not and will not kneel."

As she sat there, this wife of the synagogue-attendant Wolf Ungar, her mind in a painful state of perturbation, questions began to throb within

her pulses, questions, the solution of which would not be ripe until the birth of a happier and freer generation.

It was late at night, but still her unstrung, agitated being could not be calmed. Sarah's was not a character to loosely dismiss any subject from her mind merely for the sake of obtaining rest. What, was she to give herself over to sleep while she did not know how she should act in that question of Christian's devotions?

At length she said to herself—and the Eye of the Supreme Being alone witnessed the radiant light which at that moment illumined Sarah's soul—

"I have taken the child in trust from God, who has saved my own darling from destruction. And if God has permitted that I should stand as mother to the lad, what can men have to say against it? Besides, didn't I know from the first what I was undertaking with John Schuster's child? May I jest then with God in Heaven, and dare I say to myself:—'Forgive me, Father and King, I did not know that Christian prays to you in a different way than Leah does.' Wouldn't God be justly angry with me, and one day say to me: 'Do *you* call yourself a mother,

you, who do not understand a mother's duties. If *that* is your way of doing things, it is better that you take the child into the wood, and leave it there to starve. But if you *won't* do this, you must keep Christian as he is.' Henceforth, therefore, whatever happens, I am his mother!"

With this resolution Sarah fell asleep; with it she awoke again. Still nothing approaching complete harmony prevailed in her mind. One thing only was clear;—she could not let the child grow up like an untrained weed. Very slowly, indeed, did her plans for Christian begin to assume tangible shape. The child—thus it began to dawn within her, like unto the young day when, after his triumphant struggle with the twilight, he rises up over the mountain tops—the child must learn to pray, and remain true to his parents' faith, but at the same time he was not to disturb the harmony of her home. Whenever Leah should be saying her "Hear, O Israel," Christian should recite, undisturbed, the prayers of his religion, and no one would interfere with him. On the other hand, however, Christian would have to respect the usages of her house, and conform to their ways. And why shouldn't it all come right yet?

Early next morning, Sarah proceeded to old widow Bozena, who had once been her nurse, and who still came every Friday evening and Sabbath day to light Sarah's lamps, and, in the winter, to heat the oven.

"Bozena," she said, "you must do me a great favour."

"Certainly, my child, what is it?" the old woman answered.

"You know, I have got John Schuster's child with me," Sarah said, with some hesitation, as her glance wandered hither and thither around the room, "and . . . you've got a sacred picture hanging there. Now when one day the child should come to you, and you should ask: what is the meaning of the picture there over my mantel-piece? he won't know what to answer. With me, the boy can't learn it; I don't know how to go about these things. And how shall I ever be able to forgive myself, when I think that Christian does not even know, when morning or night time comes . . . how to commune with his God?"

"And what then can *I* do in the matter?" asked old Bozena.

"You teach him to pray," said Sarah, upon whose features the memory of the severe struggle

of the previous evening suddenly called forth a spasm of anguish, "for the rest *I'll* provide."

"That favour I'll grant you. *You* send the child to me. I have enough prayers in my head to last a person from here up to the Mother of God on the Przibramer mountains. I'll soon teach him some."

Sarah thanked her gratefully, promising her a warm winter shawl for her trouble, "even if I have to deny myself some comforts to get it," she added.

"Only see," she said, finally, with her hand on the door-knob, "that . . . Christian doesn't laugh at us. *We* won't laugh at *him*."

"The old widow also promised this, although the meaning of the words was not quite clear to her. After this Sarah sent the boy daily to her old nurse, and each time he returned home, the child had to tell her all that he had learnt.

She also called upon the local schoolmaster, and begged him to receive the child in his school. He was, however, to keep a sharp eye upon the poor orphan, and to see that Christian learnt not only reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also how to practise his religion, so that he should not grow up a bad man.

From that moment she determined to put aside half a gulden every month. Half of this was destined for Christian's school fees, while with the other half, Leah's education was to be paid, for she also was to be sent to school as soon as possible, so that she might learn "where God dwells."

Full as she was of these schemes, it was with a certain timidity that she went forward to welcome her husband when, on Thursday as usual, he returned home from his rounds. She was in an almost solemn frame of mind; she had, during that week passed through the severest struggles; how was she now to justify herself in the eyes of her husband, and how could she go into explanations about all those things which were now over and past, and which appeared to her to have been brought about by God Himself? Yet, she felt it was not enough that *she* should think so; she wished Wolf, too, to approve of what she had done, and true to his oath on the *Torah*, to stand by her, and assist her in her undertaking.

That evening, as usual, she repeated the night-prayers with Leah. When she had finished, leaving the "presence of God" to keep guard over her child's head, Christian in

his cot began, with clasped hands, and half-closed eyes, to say the prayer which old Bozena had taught him.

Sarah sat listening with intense emotion.

"What's that?" cried Wolf Ungar, rising quickly from his chair.

"Hush! Wolf," whispered Sarah.

"I want to know what is going on in my house?" he retorted, whilst his features became clouded with menacing anger.

"Don't you see . . . that he's praying?"

Wolf said not a word. Was he thinking of his oath on the *Torah*, and the great responsibility it involved, or were there gathering within him the lurid clouds of a storm which would one day shatter to its foundation the whole fabric of his domestic peace?

Two years have passed. Once again let us enter the house of the synagogue attendant and his wife. What has become of the seeds strewn by Sarah's hands! Has an evil wind-gust carried them away and embedded them in some barren rock, where but a poor and starved fruition awaits them? Or have they ripened and shot forth their golden stems into the glorious sunshine? Glance around! Beneath the wide-spreading, fruit-laden walnut tree, which lends

so grateful a shade to the synagogue courtyard, two neatly, if poorly dressed children, are seated; they are our dark-haired, bright-eyed Leah, and her companion, fair, curly-locked Christian. The golden sun-rays glisten upon the green foliage, and ever and anon, the ripe fruit, bursting away from its dark-hued prison, falls with a rebounding thud at the children's feet. But neither Christian nor Leah have the time to trouble themselves much about the sun, or about falling nuts. Christian is reading aloud from a well-worn booklet, which contains some very important matter, for it is the "Little Catechism," upon which, in school to-morrow, the reverend Herr Chaplain will examine him, and word for word will he have to know it. Leah, pencil in hand, is scribbling on a slate a set of big, straggling characters, bearing some distant resemblance to the writing still in use among the more conservative denizens of the *Gasse*, and which is universally known as *Yiddish*. Thump! Down comes a fresh, yellow nut upon Christian's catechism; he starts up in a fright, and flings the ripe fruit across to his little playmate.

"Christian!" Leah cried, indignantly. "Just when I've written such a beautiful *Lamed*,"[1]

[1] The twelfth letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

she continued with a pout, "and now you've spoilt it with that nut."

To this reproach Christian vouchsafed no reply, but Leah sprang up in anger, and the next moment she had thrown down the slate, which broke into two pieces as it fell clattering at his feet.

Now it was Christian's turn to spring up.

"Leah, what have you done?" he cried in alarm.

"Why did you fling the nut at me, then?" she replied, wringing her little hands, and sobbing bitterly.

At the sight of the tears flowing down his playmate's cheeks, Christian's heart grows tender, and for some minutes the two children stand silently regarding each other.

At length Christian picked up the broken slate; attentively he looked at the jagged pieces, and holding them together, he joyfully cried:—"Don't cry, Leah, the slate can be mended again."

Leah shook her little dark head. "What is broken is broken," she said decisively, full of sadness, her eyes glancing at the slate.

"Never mind, Leah," Christian went on soothingly, "and don't cry. To-morrow

perhaps the wire-worker will come, and he'll bore four holes in the slate, and bind the two pieces with wire; then it will be whole again."

"I don't know how you can talk like that, Christian. How can the wire-worker make whole what is broken? What is broken remains broken."

To argue against this philosophical reasoning on the part of his little playmate was no business of Christian's, so he took up his Catechism once more, and sat down in his former seat. Leah, on the other hand, contented herself with one half of the slate, and after wiping her eyes, she continued, with deft hand, the writing of the difficult characters.

Sarah was a frequent witness of such scenes as this. She carefully avoided any interference on her part, yea, even the slightest remark, for like all delicate natures, she had a horror of laying a rough hand upon the childish buds. At such times her heart welled over with gratitude; the strange child showed himself keenly appreciative of her loving care, and had adapted himself so readily to his surroundings, that no one would have suspected him to have been an alien in her household, whilst as far as Leah was concerned, the relationship between

the two children was of such a nature as to show that her little daughter had no suspicion that she and the young lad had not been born of one mother.

What more could Sarah desire? She saw how the children thrived, and she had reason to be satisfied with the results. Of all the evil which the *Babe*, and others too, had prophesied against her house, nothing whatever had come to pass, yet her mind was often perturbed, and filled with strange misgivings which she sought in vain to overcome.

'Tis true, Wolf had gradually come to be habituated to the boy's presence, but in this toleration there was no love; not even did there exist the germ of anything like a tender feeling. So far as he was bound by his oath, he kept it, but whenever the opportunity presented itself, he made no secret of the fact that his obligation was pressing heavily upon him.

The child did nothing to offend him; his demeanour towards him was submissive and docile, but that which Sarah characterised as overflowing gratitude on the boy's part, was irksome and offensive in her husband's eyes. On the other hand, did Christian prove himself guilty of the slightest indiscretion, Wolf would

be most severe in his censure. "There you have John Schuster's nature," he would angrily exclaim, "and *that* you can't drive out of him. He is born with it, and it will remain with him to the end." And when Sarah gently ventured to remark that all children, Leah included, had their failings, he would not be convinced. "How can you compare those failings to *her* failings," he would then retort in bitter tones, "why, their very blood is different to ours, and the blood is the mainspring to all a man's actions. Why is it that you don't find any drunkards and spendthrifts amongst *our* people? It is the blood that does it. John Schuster's blood was no good."

Strange inconsistency of human nature! At home, within the four walls of his room, Wolf Ungar could say all these things, *there* he could level the wildest charges at his wife, and reproach her with what she did for John Schuster's child. But once outside the house, if anyone dared to utter one word of blame against anything that Sarah had done, his indignation knew no bounds. Then he could not find words to give expression to his praise and admiration, then his heart welled over with honest love, then he would gladly have hurled

the charge in any man's face that no one understood his wife, and that another such woman as his Sarah was not to be found the whole world over.

And it was especially when he happened to be in the presence of old *Babe* Breindel that he dwelt with the greater emphasis upon these points. For the old lady, ever since her last visit to Sarah, had forbidden the latter to show herself in her "Jewish house." When Sarah wanted the *Babe* to *bensch* her, she had sent word to her by the malicious mouth of another grand-daughter, that she had better go with John Schuster's child to church, if she wanted a blessing. It was only on the evening of the New Year, and on the eve of the Day of Atonement, that she permitted Sarah to approach her, and in the conventional way, ask her for her forgiveness. Then, however, as the stern old dame sat there grim and stately all could plainly see that although she *accepted* her grandchild's prayer for forgiveness, she did not grant it.

Wolf Ungar felt bitterly grieved, when on Sabbaths and Festivals, he had to go, without Sarah, to Babe Breindel for her blessing. Once or twice he had taken Leah with him, but that

too he had left off doing since the *Babe* had made the child also feel her rancour. For it happened that one Sabbath, when he had come to be *bensched*, that the *Babe*, as she laid her hands on Leah's head, said to the child:—"Why doesn't your mother send her son also?" This she had said with such grim, biting sarcasm, that Wolf Ungar, whose blood was boiling, could no longer restrain himself, and in an uncontrollable burst of anger, he cried:—"*Babe*, this is too much! What has my wife done that you should insult her in the presence of my child? Do you know anything wrong about her? Does she cook pork in my house? And if all the pious women in the world came together, and my Sarah were not amongst them, I should say all is lies and deceit."

"Indeed!" said the *Babe*, and as she spoke her wrinkled face assumed a truly terrible expression. "I was only saying, *Babe*," . . . Wolf went on, fearing that he had given offence to the old lady. But she interrupted him. "And I tell you, Wolf Ungar," she cried, with uplifted voice, "I tell you that as long as our family has been known, so long as the world itself has been in existence, such a thing has never been heard of! But I shall yet live to see the

consequences, even though I should live to be as old as my great-grandmother Selde, who died at the age of a hundred-and-twenty. Sarah would not accept the garnet necklace when I came to her and begged of her, that she should remove the shame from amongst us; but red as the garnets shall be the tears which one day she will shed at her ruin and disaster, and then it will be found that the old Babe was right, but it will be too late. *This* you hear from *my* lips, Wolf Ungar, and you can impress it on your mind like a verse from the Holy Prophets. What is contrary to nature is contrary to God, and what is contrary to God is a sin, and brings disaster. *That* much says Breindel, who has turned seventy-seven, and who has never known otherwise than to be a good Jewess. For the rest, you can tell your wife," she concluded, as though to pacify the intensely agitated man, "the garnet necklace is still round my throat, and if Sarah likes, my name is not Breindel if I don't take it off on the spot, and hang it round her neck. Thus much, Wolf Ungar, you can say to your wife!"

Wolf Ungar was a courageous man, as he had on occasions proved himself when others were struck with terror. But this dark prophecy

about those red tears, which would glisten like garnets, unmanned him as nothing had yet done.

That gloomy Sabbath Wolf Ungar returned home, his features bearing all the traces of his inward agitation. At table he sat silent and sullen, his gaze rivetted upon his wife. For the first time since he had taken Christian under his roof, the thought that John Schuster's boy was sitting at his Sabbath table seemed to press with a leaden weight upon his conscience. But so great was the man's awe for his pledged word, that not even by the merest sign or movement did he betray the presence of the evil spirits which were struggling within his breast.

It was late at night; the Sabbath had terminated. Evening service over, Wolf, returning from synagogue, was about to make *Havdala*,[1] as the prayer is called, which every paterfamilias is bound to recite on the termination of the day of rest. For this ceremony he requires a lighted wax taper, in order to emphasize the inseparability of "Light, Joy, and Gladness," a cup of wine, for "the Lord is a Beaker of Salvation,"

[1] Hebrew for distinction, or difference; thus to make *Havdala*, signifies to draw distinction as between Sabbath and week-days.

and a box filled with spices, the latter being emblematic of the fact that "the Sabbath is more precious than the odours of the most fragrant herbs;" and over all these he has to pronounce the prescribed blessings. As a rule Leah handed her father the lighted taper, but as she did not happen to be in the room at that moment, Christian opened the table-drawer wherein the various articles were kept, and placed them before Wolf on the table. At first Wolf simply stared at the lad, with a stony glare in his eyes; then he raised his hand, and with his clenched fist he dealt him a blow of such violence, that it sent him staggering into the corner of the room. "Wolf, what in Heaven's name are you doing?" cried Sarah, rushing forward to shield the child from further assault.

"From *him*, from *him!*" Wolf cried, in a frenzy of passion, "I am to take the *Havdala* from *his* hands? Such a thing as that to take place in *my* house!"

It was *then* that Sarah guessed the cause of her husband's agitation; it was due, she felt certain, to his visit to the *Babe*. She told Christian to go out of the room, as she wanted to speak to her husband.

"First make *Havdala*," she said, as calmly as though nothing had happened; "afterwards we will talk."

Wolf took up the wax taper, and poured wine into the cup which was placed before him, but his hands trembled so violently, that whilst he was pronouncing the customary blessing the glass shook so that the wine was spilt upon the table. At the conclusion of the prayer, after sipping a little of the wine, he poured the rest of it upon a plate, and then, dipping the lighted taper into the ruddy stream, its flame was quenched with a hissing sound.

"A good week, and a good year!" said Sarah, giving expression to the form of salutation indulged in by Jews on the termination of the Sabbath.

But Wolf Ungar retorted.

"Don't wish *me* anything, and don't wish *yourself* anything! No good can come of all this. How can I expect a good week, and a good year, when John Schuster's son hands me the holy *Havdala* light? One of us ought never to have been born, either he or I!"

Sarah gazed at her husband with sad, reproachful eyes, but this in no way disarmed him.

"Do you know what I said to myself only

this evening?" he exclaimed once more. "To you women we must come Scripture in hand, for you won't believe your husbands. There, there," he shouted, as he took the prayer-book from the table, and with hasty fingers began to turn its pages. "There you are, I'll translate it to you word for word."

And he read out—

"Blessed art Thou, Our God, Lord of the Universe, who maketh a distinction between that which is sacred and that which is profane, between Light and Darkness, between Israel and the Nations, between the Seventh Day and the Days of Labour."

"Have you followed that, Sarah?"

"Word for word!"

"And does it not burn as a drop of molten lead upon your soul?"

"What is written there," Sarah said, almost with her normal calmness, "is holy. Is it for me to argue with you? You know more than I do, for I am but an ignorant woman."

"And now, John Schuster's son——" Wolf shouted wrathfully.

"Don't excite yourself so," Sarah interrupted, "the child hasn't done anything wicked."

"But 'tis *I* who am wicked," cried Wolf,

beating his breast as for some heinous sin, "*I* am wicked to have allowed such a thing to be done, and disaster is sure to overwhelm us, for God does not permit us to do as we like with Him, and to violate and desecrate His holy Sabbath."

At this a faint blush spread over Sarah's features.

"Wolf," she said, with solemn earnestness, "if there is anyone who can see the finger of God in this affair of John Schuster's child, it is I. From the moment when we carried him out of reach of the waters, until now, until your *Havdala*, I have seen it. And you have done very wrong—I tell you—because I know it is the hand of God which has brought these things about—to raise your hand against the poor orphan child—and to strike him!"

Her voice faded away in convulsive sobbing; she could not utter another word.

"The boy irritated me," said Wolf, in faltering tones, "and anger overmastered me when I saw the audacity——"

"And do you call it audacity?" cried Sarah, "when Christian hands you the spice-box for *Havdala*, and wants to light your taper! Did you notice the child laugh or appear in any

way as if he were making fun of our ceremonies? Have you ever noticed that the child has laughed when he has observed anything here, to which, as John Schuster's son, he has not been born? No, you have not, and I'll tell you, Wolf, my husband, why. Because the child sees that *we* don't laugh at what is holy to *him*. And *I* think, many things which now occur in the world would never happen, and peace and happiness would reign everywhere, if all people were to see things in that light. Wherein lies my pride and my joy in Christian? Because I see that he has grown up as I wanted him to be. And when one day he will go forth into the world, and they attempt to contaminate him with their hatred and their scoffing, he will say: 'I once knew a certain Wolf Ungar, and his wife Sarah, and they impressed upon me that I should not laugh at them, whilst at the same time they did not laugh at *me*.' And as God has, as by a miracle, given that child into my keeping, there can be no difference before Him, the Almighty, between that which is profane and that which is holy; for everything is holy, or everything is profane, just as men themselves interpret it."

Exhausted by her lengthy speech Sarah sank down upon a seat. Wolf Ungar felt strangely moved. Never, as long as he had known her, had he heard such words fall from Sarah's lips. He was drifting along powerless, entirely carried away by the stream of her eloquence, the sound of which enthralled his ear, and yet he felt that he *must* find an anchorage somehow.

"Are you then so certain, Sarah?" he asked, after a brief pause, during which he stood trembling with emotion, "that John Schuster's child will grow up as you think he will?"

Sarah shook her head.

"I don't know yet," she said, softly.

"And yet you would have me pour out my love upon John Schuster's child?"

"I have made myself a mother to him," said Sarah, "and so I can only hope that the child will grow up to be good."

Wolf was silent; the cold sweat gathered on his brow. In vain he sought for a way out of this maelstrom of conflicting thoughts and emotions. Then all at once the words of *Babe* Breindel recurred to him.

"It is contrary to Nature!" he cried, as

though suddenly relieved from a heavy burden, "it is contrary to Nature! God does not intend that the lamb should graze beside the wolf, nor that the lion should lie down with the dove. It is contrary to Nature, and contrary to the blood, and such things will never agree; you might as well pour vinegar into milk, and expect it to mix. And what is against Nature is an abomination to God, and must bring bad luck."

And seeing that Sarah appeared awe-stricken at his words, he took courage once more, and in his loudest tones, he shouted—

"Yes, bad luck, I say . . . and may the Living God save us from its coming too soon. But that disaster will come, I am certain, quickly too, and when you least expect it, as a flash of lightning; and *then*, when you will weep and wring your hands in terror, *then* it will be too late."

Sarah was silent; big tears rolled down her cheeks. Suddenly she raised herself.

"Would you like me to turn the child out at once?" she cried, with wildly rolling eyes. "Would you?"

"Sarah, in Heaven's name, calm yourself!" shouted Wolf.

"Shall I turn the child out this instant? Say but one word, and should the storm-wind blow, should the rain pour down in torrents, I'll send him forth," she cried, beside herself with violent agitation.

"Dare I break my oath?" said Wolf Ungar, deeply moved.

"Wolf! as long as I live, I shall never forget this day!" Sarah exclaimed, and shaken with sobs, she fell back in her chair.

Wolf Ungar, the synagogue attendant, and Sarah, were both personalities of too little importance in the Ghetto for anything like lasting attention to be bestowed upon such trifling incidents as could occur in their humble abode. To most of them the arrival of Christian in Wolf's house was a fact about which they troubled their heads no further. They looked upon the lad as being in Wolf Ungar's service, and they had nothing to say against the synagogue attendant providing himself with a helper, who on Friday evenings lit the candles in the synagogue, and extinguished them when service was concluded. Only very few among them had even the faintest suspicion that this simple, little-noticed woman was devoting the whole strength of her life to a task which,

the nearer it approached its development, the greater grew the struggles it called forth; very few indeed had any idea that this orphaned, abandoned child weighed down, with such a heavy burden, the domestic peace of Wolf Ungar and his wife!

There is a mysterious spirit of isolation which surrounds, as with a grim halo, the being of every one who would champion the cause of the heart, or defend the truth of a great idea. From that brow there radiates a light, before which the majority of mankind flee, as before an evil-boding fire. And Sarah was one of those forsaken champions!

This much, however, must be confessed, that ever since that memorable Sabbath evening, not another angry word on the subject of Christian had been exchanged between the couple. From that moment Wolf silently accepted the inevitable; not, however, that he felt in any way resigned to it. He did not oppose Sarah 'tis true, but neither did he support her. He admired her patience and endurance, but he also took credit to himself for his faith in keeping his oath. For the rest, he clung with unshaken tenacity to

the idea that what Sarah was doing was opposed to Nature, and would never have a good ending.

It was only at the death of the old *Babe* that the voices of the evil spirits of that Sabbath once more found utterance within him; the old dame had, without suffering any previous illness, peacefully fallen asleep. But a few days before her death, she had evidently felt that her hours were numbered, and had accordingly made her final dispositions. And it was only when she lay at rest in the cold earth, that it was discovered that the six-fold garnet necklace, which in her eyes had ever been more precious than a royal diadem, had been bequeathed to another grandchild, the daughter of her long-deceased son. Sarah had been ignored.

When, on the very next Sabbath, Wolf saw the coveted necklace gleaming on the throat of its new owner, his blood boiled within him, and he felt a wild desire to wrench the necklace which by rights, both human and Divine, belonged to Sarah, from her relative's neck. It was not envy which filled his bosom, but the dark thought that those garnets if worn by another, would always remind him of the

Babe's significant prophecy. Had his wife come into possession of these red-gleaming gems, it would have been altogether different.

In the meantime Christian had arrived at the age of twelve, while Leah was only a year younger. The lad had regularly attended school, he had learnt all that he could learn there, and the schoolmaster advised Sarah to look out for some occupation for him.

In her solicitude for the child's welfare Sarah had for some time foreseen such an emergency; yet she found it hard to take the step which would land the boy amid strangers. Christian was *only* twelve years of age—how easily some rough hand could destroy, in one moment, that at which she had so long, so untiringly laboured, to which she had devoted her heart's blood?

One day when she was alone with the children, she asked:—

"Christian, have you ever thought what you would like to be?"

Before Christian had time to reply, Leah cried eagerly:—

"Would you like to know what Christian would like to be, mother? *I* have known a long time."

"And you have said nothing to me?" said Sarah, with a sad little smile, and her eyes rested for a while penetratingly upon the boy.

"You won't guess it, mother!" resumed Leah, as she laid her hand upon the lad's bashful, reddening face, "but Christian has no secrets from me, and to-day, while father was building the *Sucah*,[1] and Christian and I were helping him, he said to me—'Do you know, Leah, what I should most like to be?' And what do you think, mother, Christian wants to be?—a builder!"

"A builder!" Sarah exclaimed in astonishment. "Why? Then he will have to build high steeples, and always be in danger of his life."

"Christian knows very well why he wants to be a builder, and nothing else," Leah said, mysteriously.

"Let Christian speak," said Sarah, gently drawing the boy towards her. "Tell me," she said, as she bent over him coaxingly, "how did you get *that* idea into your head?" Thereupon little Leah approached and whispered into Sarah's ear—

[1] Tabernacle.

"Do you know why? Christian has promised me that one day, when he is big, he'll build a house, only for me and him, and there we will live together, and nobody else shall live there but me and him. And shall I tell you something else? The house which Christian will build he wants to build just by the side of the brook where his father was drowned, and when the water comes again it won't be able to reach us, for Christian will also build a big, high staircase, and down it we'll go, and the water will flow away behind us. And that is why he wants to be a builder."

Like lightning a sudden thought flashed through Sarah's mind—but it passed away again, and, with her customary gentle smile, she said—

"Is it right, Christian, that you tell me nothing? And won't you allow me to live in your house?"

And when the lad, at a loss for a reply, cast his eyes hither and thither in his perplexity, Sarah asked him, this time seriously, "Do you really want to be a builder, Christian!"

"Yes," he replied, without hesitation.

"A real, clever builder," Sarah asked, drawing the lad closer to her, "one who climbs steeples, and is not afraid?"

"Yes," said Christian.

"Very well, you shall be a builder!" cried Sarah, with determination, "and I shall see that you get a good master."

Leah clapped her little hands for joy.

"Eh, Christian?" she said, "as soon as you have learnt to build, you'll build a house for you and me?"

When Sarah acquainted her husband with the lad's decision, a peculiar little smile of satisfaction played about the corners of his mouth. He did not betray in words what thoughts were in his mind, but Sarah's sharp eyes did not mislead her, when she read the words, "I am glad of it," as though they were written on his features.

Wolf eagerly promised that he would look out for a master for Christian. Within a very few days he announced that he had found one, but, he added, with some hesitation, Christian would have a long way to go, for the master-mason lived in the neighbouring town—a distance which a rapid walker could scarcely cover in four hours.

On the following Monday Sarah took the lad to town. Christian carried a little bundle, containing his clothing and underlinen — the remnants of the gifts bestowed upon Sarah after

the inundation. Leah did not show the slightest sign of grief; she accompanied her playmate to the end of the synagogue yard, and then, blithely singing to herself, she tripped back into the house. But Wolf Ungar laid his hand upon the lad's head—although it was hard to say what he wanted to express by it—and then let him go.

Christian, too, did not show nearly so much emotion as Sarah had expected. Was the young bird glad to find its wings at last? Had its prison become too irksome? These and similar thoughts came rushing into Sarah's brain, but she quickly smothered them in their very birth, and buried them deeply within her being. It was early morning. From the belfry resounded the call to early mass. Sarah and the boy had arrived at the end of the *Gasse*, when she stopped outside a little cottage which formed the boundary between the *Gasse* and the Ring-platz. There dwelt old Bozena.

"Wouldn't you like to go and see old Bozena once more?"

"What am I to do *there?*"

"Perhaps she'll tell you what one has to do on starting upon a long journey, or on an important undertaking. You go and ask her. I'll wait here for you."

Christian entered the little house, and did not again come out until fully a quarter of an hour had passed.

"Well, what did old Bozena say?" Sarah asked.

"She said you were the very best woman in the world, and then she prayed with me," the lad answered.

"And now let us get on, Christian. We have a long way to go yet."

It was late in the afternoon when they arrived in sight of the town where Christian's future master lived. Before Sarah turned into the road which led to his house she opened the little hamper with which she had provided herself, and gave Christian the largest portion of the bread and meat, "for," said she, "you must not come to your master with an empty stomach, lest he think he has to feed you before you have done any work for him." After their meal she sought out the master-mason, and having found him, the matter was speedily settled, Wolf having already made all preliminary arrangements. The mason gave her the positive assurance that he would further Christian's advancement in every possible way, whilst she, on *her* part, assured him that the child would

prove willing and docile, for he had never occasioned her any trouble, and if one treated him kindly, he would allow himself to be led like a lamb.

It was now time for Sarah to turn homewards. Her heart was heaving, and full to overflowing. She restrained herself, however, lest she should unnerve the lad. But Christian was remarkably calm and self-possessed.

"Are you pleased to stay here, Christian?" she asked him, in a choking voice.

"Yes," said the boy, seating himself on the bench, upon which he had placed his little bundle.

Then she embraced him, and left. But when once she was in the street a painful idea entered her mind. There was *she*, with *her* eyes still moist—and yonder sat the child—the object of all her struggles and anxieties, without even as much as offering to escort her part of the way. Was her husband right after all? Did one drop of blood really not resemble another, and could none but persons of the same kith and kin feel drawn to one another? Were all her struggles against this irrevocable law but as so many cuts in the air?

quickened her steps, as though she were anxious to escape from some pursuing foe.

Suddenly she heard close behind her the sound of hurrying footsteps, and, turning round, she beheld Christian.

"Christian, is it you?" she asked, half-glad, half in fear. "What do you want?"

"I have still something to say to you," Christian replied, quite out of breath with running. "If Leah asks about me, tell her I will not forget her; and as soon as I've served my apprenticeship, I'll be sure to build that house for me and her. Will you tell her?"

Sarah promised him she would, and proceeded on her way.

The evening shades were falling, when Sarah, sad at heart and very weary, returned to the village.

Her little Leah stood awaiting her at the gate of the synagogue yard. On seeing her mother, she cried—

"And Christian? Where is Christian?"

"I haven't brought Christian with me," said Sarah. "Don't you know where he has gone?"

"To the mason. But why can't he come home?"

"Christian won't come home any more."

"Not come home any more—*not any more?*"

Such an agonized cry Sarah had never yet heard from her child's lips; it touched her to the quick. Tremblingly she grasped Leah's hand; it was cold as ice.

"When I say no more, I mean not very soon," Sarah said, soothingly. "You must know well enough, that when one has houses and lofty steeples to build, one can't run away from work at any minute, and the apprentice must bide his time, until his master says—'the house is finished.'"

Why did she hesitate to deliver Christian's parting message to Leah?

That evening was a sad one, and the night that followed it was sadder still. In the little room adjoining Sarah's, given over to wildest anguish, lay a childish heart, a prey to the first real sorrow its young life had ever known.

Sarah could hear her little daughter, at one moment lightly sobbing, at another giving vent to her grief in piteous moans; but she deemed it best not to go and talk to the child, but to leave her to recover herself in her own way. Nor was it very long before Leah fell asleep, and all was still.

Then Sarah, too, gave herself over to slumber.

Suddenly she was awakened by terror-stricken cries of "Christian! Christian!" which came from Leah's room. Then all was again silent.

In Sarah's brain a strange play of imagination had once more quickened into life the long past pictures of other days. Those terror-stricken cries of "Christian! Christian!" were so real, that it seemed to her as though the terrors of that night of peril were being re-enacted, and then she reflected that it was really Leah who was the cause of Christian's rescue. For if her little daughter had not called so loudly upon her playmate's name, would it ever have entered her or her husband's brain to trouble about John Schuster's child?

Next morning, strange to say, Leah awoke bright-eyed and happy. She took her prayer-book, as usual, but seemed somewhat more attentive to her devotions than at other times. As for Christian, his name was not even mentioned, either on that day, or during the whole week. It was as though such a boy had never existed in that house; and yet he had played so significant a part in the lives of the three beings who now dwelt there! In her own mind, however, Sarah could not help making certain

reflections on Leah's behaviour, which were not altogether in the child's favour. How was it that she had so quickly forgotten her playmate? Was that, too, the outcome of alien blood, and was her Leah also a living testimony to the truth of the principle that what was alien in blood must also be alien in sympathies.

Friday had come round once more.

It was on Fridays that Wolf Ungar felt particularly conscious of the importance of his office as synagogue attendant. It was on that day that he was ceaselessly occupied from early morning until the evening, in cleaning and beautifying the synagogue, and in preparing it for the festive reception of the "gracious bride," as the Sabbath is called in the fervid Jewish Friday evening hymn. But to-day Wolf sadly felt the absence of Christian, for the boy had shown a remarkable aptitude in the work of burnishing the brazen candelabra in front of the Reader's lectern. And suddenly the furtive thought shot through his brain—what a good thing it might have been if "John Schuster's boy" had come to be as a *real* son to him! But Sarah had denied him that blessing, because the love which she had shown to the child was unnatural, stronger even than the love of a mother.

Do what he might, the idea occupied his mind the whole day; at the same time, at every turn he felt the want of Christian's aiding hands, and his work made but slow headway. Towards four o'clock Wolf's work was finished. He had just fixed the last taper into one of the big brass chandeliers, when, through the open door, he heard a joyous shout: "Christian! Christian!" And when Wolf, in order to see what was the meaning of this exclamation, climbed down from the ladder upon which he was standing, Leah came running towards him, dragging Christian, who was covered from head to foot with dust, along with her. The features of both children were radiant with exultation and joy; never had Wolf seen so beautiful a face as his child's appeared at that moment; it seemed no longer the face of a child, but of a young girl in the first flush of her budding womanhood.

"What brings *you* here," he asked the boy, not unkindly. Christian pointed to the chandeliers.

"Who was to have lit *them*?" he said. Then he went on to explain how, after worrying all the week over it, and puzzling his brain how he was to manage it, he had at last summed up courage, and begged his master to allow him to go home every Friday, so that he might continue to do

his accustomed work in the synagogue, and his master had given him permission.

Wolf stared at the lad as though he had arisen like a sudden apparition in the midst of the black gloom of night. How did he once receive the offer of a similar service at the lad's hands? His thoughts began to surge wildly in his brain, and all was turmoil and confusion. . . .

In the meantime Sarah, attracted by Leah's cry of joy, entered the synagogue.

"What do you think of the child?" Wolf asked, approaching her. "He has come to light the Sabbath candles."

"There, do you see, Wolf?" More than this Sarah could not say, but her thoughts were set in a halo of light which at that moment was filling all her being with its radiance. She stooped down and kissed the lad's face, which was flushed with excitement and fatigue.

"And I," cried Leah, "I knew all along that he'd come." But Wolf Ungar shook his head.

"It is against nature," he murmured to himself, unconsciously quoting the words of the long departed *Babe*.

Henceforth, not a Friday, nor an eve of a Festival came round, but Christian was there to

light the candles in the synagogue. He searched his calendar to make sure of the dates of the various Jewish holy-days, and never failed to present himself at the right time at the synagogue door.

In this, however, no one in the Ghetto saw anything strange, for the son of the cobbler was morally compelled to make some sort of return for the benefits which Wolf and Sarah had conferred upon him. Neither did anybody take heed of the fact that the fair-haired, retiring lad had, in the meantime, developed into a tall, muscular youth, although they were not unmindful of the wonderful change which had come over Wolf Ungar's Leah. For she was beginning to show a remarkable resemblance to her mother, as she had been in her youth, in the days when all the Ghetto raved about her beauty, and young men vied with one another for a friendly glance from those bright eyes.

One day Christian brought a paper with him, stating that he had been enrolled amongst the journeymen-builders. He was now seventeen years old, his period of apprenticeship was at an end, and he handed Sarah his first week's wages.

"Why don't you keep the money for your-

self, Christian ? " she asked him, " You'll want it."

Christian shook his head.

" What should I want it for ? " said he.

" Haven't you any companions ? One day you'll want to join them in the tavern, and then you won't have the money for a glass of beer, or you may wish to buy yourself a new pipe, and then you'll find your pocket empty. So you'd better take the money."

And again he shook his head.

" I shall not need any money for all those things," he said, in a mysteriously emphatic tone. " Keep it until it has grown to a respectable sum, and then tell me."

For days and days Sarah pondered, trying to discover what could be Christian's object in putting away his weekly wages. Was it simply a habit of thriftiness which he had learned in her house ? And as that idea formed itself in her mind, Sarah again saw a " wonderful dispensation " of Providence in entrusting *her* with the care of the child. " What would have become of him had John Schuster, his father, lived ? " she often thought. " What example would *he* have set before him ? An habitual drunkard, ready to forfeit his wife and child for a pot of

beer. Has he seen anything like that in *our* house?"

Leah, however, only smiled when her mother gave utterance to such thoughts. Did *she* know more about Christian's intentions?

But then Leah had arrived at that wondrous period of girlhood when a mother can no longer explain the smile of her child. Like a will-o'-the-wisp it flickers hither and thither, and when a mother attempts to follow its light she generally lands herself in a hopelessly inextricable quagmire. Upon the lips it blossoms, that strangely mysterious smile — it glistens in the eyes with a moist refulgence, and when you attempt to grasp the blossom, you find there is nothing—that there never has been anything but a lifeless shadow,—less even than that, for a shadow accompanies a substance.

'Tis not the rain-laden storm which rages over the earth and thaws the winter snows that brings the spring-tide. When some day the tender buds shoot forth into flower, the work has been done by an unknown spirit-hand, a spirit which neither storms nor rages. That is the time when a mother suddenly finds that the child of her cares and anguish has become estranged from her; upon her question follows

no answer, and even when there does, 'tis nothing but a dream-born smile, of which the mother cannot grasp the hidden meaning.

Spring-time had again returned to the land, and two human hearts were filled with the fragrance of her budding splendour. Neither Christian nor Leah gave any sign of what was passing in their minds, but deep within those hidden depths, whose heat is fiercer than a fire of burning coal, there blazed and flared, with an uncontrollable force, that magic passion which leads either to destruction or to intoxicating, all-absorbing bliss. . . .

One day Wolf happened to meet that niece of his wife to whom the *Babbe* Breindel had bequeathed the six-stringed garnet necklace.

She engaged him in conversation, and after a while Rebecca abruptly said—"Well, Wolf, how is Sarah getting on with Leah's trousseau?"

"What has put *that* into your head? The child is only sixteen."

"A girl of sixteen can sometimes be more in love than another of five-and-twenty. Such a case I could name you," said Rebecca, with a boisterous laugh.

"Well, what case is it?" said Wolf, quite casually.

"What case is it, Wolf? Would you like to see a girl who stands at the door every Friday waiting until a certain person comes, and do you want to see how the pair squeeze each other's hands and look at one another as though the next day is to see them under the *Chupa*." [1]

"Who can *that* be?" said Wolf, with indifference.

"Wolf! Wolf!" cried Rebecca, "don't you begin to play the hypocrite after all these years. The whole world isn't blind; then why should *you* be? Go and make others believe it, if you like, but you can't make me. Rebecca Krakauer wasn't born yesterday."

"Really, I don't understand you, Rebecca," Wolf rejoined, quite unsuspectingly.

"Then you'd better ask Christian and Leah!" the evil-tongued woman cried, and immediately sped away.

For a while Wolf stood as one completely dazed, and when he had somewhat recovered from his stupor, it was too late to shout after the shameless slanderer that she lied. He turned down the *Gasse*, and walked homewards as in a dream, his mind an utter blank. But

[1] Marriage canopy used at weddings.

strange! on approaching the synagogue court-yard, he grew calmer; the peace of home had come over him. What! *That* child, whose eyes were scarcely yet opened to the life of the world, was he to couple *her* name with that of the lad who had eaten the bread of charity at his table! *He* to talk in one breath of Wolf Ungar's daughter and of the son of John Schuster! Impossible!

A calmness had come over him. The sight of his humble abode, of Sarah's peaceful activity, of the unrestrained demeanour of his child, of the wooden hammer even, with which he summoned the folks to prayer, all these things greeted and welcomed him with the charm of long accustomed familiarity. An unwonted feeling of soothing restfulness pervaded him, a benumbing sensation such as often precedes the outbreak of a dangerous illness, the stupefying germs of which have long lain dormant in the system.

And Friday had come round once more. Wolf was in the synagogue hard at work, dusting and polishing with an energy as though it were destined to be the last time that he should be occupied by such a task. The perspiration stood on his face, but he heeded it

not. As the day wore on, Wolf proceeded to furnish the chandeliers and wall-brackets with candles. For this purpose he had placed a ladder against the wall, and he was standing on one of its topmost rungs, when, close behind him, he heard a faint whispering.

He glanced over his shoulder, and there, on the threshold of the synagogue, stood Christian and Leah, hand in hand.

The blood rushed to his head; before his eyes glittered fiery red, the *Babe's* garnet necklace, which now adorned the neck of that wicked Rebecca. . . . She was right then, the wearer of this portentous heirloom?

"Come here!" he cried, in a voice that reverberated through the building. "Come here!"

Unsuspectingly they both approached, Christian laying his hand on a rung of the ladder in order to support it.

"It does not stand firm," said he.

"Let go, let go . . . you devil!" shouted Wolf, as he clenched his fist for a terrific blow which was intended for Christian's head.

But the full weight of the blow rebounded upon himself. In stooping he lost his balance, and with a heavy thud he fell headlong to the

ground. The terrified shrieks of the two young people quickly brought Sarah on the scene. She turned deadly pale on seeing her husband lying, as if lifeless, on the stone flooring. Leah ran to procure medical aid, whilst Christian lifted Wolf on to his shoulders, and staggering under the heavy burden, carried him across the courtyard into the house.

From all sides the neighbours came flocking to the synagogue, for Leah's shriek of terror had spread the news through the whole *Gasse*.

The doctor quickly arrived, but it was only with the greatest difficulty that he succeeded in recalling the injured man to life. The pulse began to beat again, and a faint red suffused the ashen features. With glassy eyes he stared around him, and he presented a truly awful spectacle. Christian stood at the foot of the bed on which Wolf had been laid. All at once Wolf screamed, as he clenched his fists—

"Away . . . away with it . . . the disaster . . . away with the garnets . . . there stands the disaster . . . away with it!"

Another fainting fit put an end to any further outburst. When he awoke again he was quite calm. The doctor considered that, for the

moment, the danger was past, and withdrew. Sarah followed him, wringing her hands in despair. "Will he live?" she asked, when they had reached the street door.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "There is a difference," he said, in smothered tones, "between living and living, and for some it were far better never to wake again."

Many days elapsed, days of deep sadness full of nameless pain for Sarah and Leah, and still the doctor was unable to say definitely that the Angel of Death had departed from Wolf Ungar's bedside. And what filled Sarah with the deepest dismay was the fact that, during the whole period of his illness, there was not one moment in which Wolf's mind had recovered its full consciousness. Most of the time he lay there as in a stupor, recognising no one; for days and days not a word escaped his lips, and when he did open them, he gave utterance to sounds which were unintelligible to any human ear. It was only with the greatest difficulty that Sarah could now and again gather a coherent sentence from those hoarse, disjointed ejaculations; and each time they were the words which she had heard on the day of her terrible misfortune—

"There is the disaster foretold by the *Babe*: . . . the garnet necklace . . . away, away with the disaster. . . . It is against Nature! . . ."

From these broken phrases Sarah could but too easily discover the hidden fires from which his burning fever obtained its constant fuel. Her sufferings were indescribable, and there were moments when, amid the gloom into which her mind and soul had been plunged, she heard nothing but a voice within her cursing the hour in which she was born.

One morning, the doctor called her aside. "Your husband," he said, "has, so far as medical aid is concerned, quite recovered. But I fear my prophecy will be but too well verified; eat, drink, and sleep he *will*, but I doubt whether he will ever regain his full consciousness. It is his brain which has suffered. I think it is best to tell you this now, as I know you are a brave woman . . . there are sad days in store for you."

Sarah heard these terrible tidings with a sort of dull wonder; she did not weep, she meekly bent her weary head under this latest blow, for ever since that day of disaster she had lost all power of resistance.

The sad days which the doctor had foretold

came sooner than she had expected. One day Wolf was able to leave his bed; he had quite recovered; he ate and drank, but his mind had degenerated into that of a child, to less even than that. For the mind of a child has a glorious period of development before it, whilst Wolf Ungar's childishness was accompanied by the grey hairs of premature old age.

Before long, Sarah was summoned before the Communal Board. The President informed her that, owing to her husband's disablement, they were compelled to provide themselves with another attendant at the synagogue. But that should not be to *her* disadvantage. She and her husband were free to occupy the communal house as long as they pleased, while the salary would continue to be paid them, without any reduction whatever, "for," said the President, "the community does not wish to take any advantage of your misfortune, and as long as your husband is alive, he shall not want."

As long as he is alive! Sarah did not even thank the President, and was about to leave when the old gentleman prevented her.

"Sarah," he said, with sudden severity, "you see how well disposed the community is towards

you; but now it is for *you* to take care that things be once more conducted as they should, in your house. You are a woman, Sarah, of whom, we must admit, not a tittle of evil can be spoken. But in your house certain things are done which ought not to be in a Jewish house. This much I am bound to say."

"What is done there, then?" Sarah asked, in a toneless voice.

"Need I tell you?" replied the President. "I should think you would know that better than I."

Sarah left, after thanking the President, although she scarcely realised what for.

It is one of the saddest features of every catastrophe that others are always but too eager, though often with the best of motives, to thrust their undesirable counsel upon, and dictate terms to the sufferers. It is at such a time that rousing themselves from their lethargy they hasten to the victim of disaster, armed with reproaches, which at other times they would never have taken upon themselves the right to make. There are but few amongst us who reflect that compassion should pour forth in quickening rays of light from the soul, and not insinuate itself as a secret thief into the house, to lay a rough hand upon aught belonging to the sufferer.

What was it after all that people wanted of her? At home her husband lay stricken with an incurable illness, and now they tormented her with all sorts of reproachful problems, the meaning of which failed to penetrate into her mind. To whom had Christian given any offence? Did he not show himself grateful for the benefits conferred upon him by a woman of the *Gasse*, and did he not thereby honour the *Gasse* itself? What then did they all want of Christian?

Despite it all, however, Sarah would ere long have risen superior to all the accusations levelled against her, for hers was a nature to which that that was vulgar could never cling. But the spectacle which daily, nay, hourly, met her eyes, the sight of her stricken, suffering husband, paralysed all her energies, and when she *did*, for a moment, raise herself out of her hopeless despondency, it was as with the anxious fluttering of a bird, timidly awaiting the return, with renewed violence, of the storm which has driven it from its warm nest.

No change had taken place in Wolf's condition. He lived through the days in a hopeless, numbed stupor, and it was but seldom that a word passed his lips. There was no one to whom he showed any particular partiality, nor against whom he

manifested any strong dislike, not even against Christian, whom he generally failed to recognize.

"There is the *Babe* with her garnets . . . the disaster . . . away with the disaster!"

During the last few weeks a fresh sentence had been added to these ejaculations, to which he clung with the tenacity of a child which refuses to part with its toy. He first gave utterance to it one morning, when, amid repeated violent blows upon the table, with his clenched fists, he shouted in a thundering voice: "Tear them asunder! Tear them asunder, bit by bit!" and those words he repeated again and again with a passionate persistence until he was exhausted, by turns blending them with the other ejaculations about the *Babe*, the garnets, and the disaster.

One Friday Christian came again. He had journeyed many miles in order to inquire about his adopted father. But when Wolf Ungar caught sight of him, a momentary gleam of consciousness seemed to penetrate his brain; shaking his fist threateningly at Christian he shouted:

"Tear them asunder, tear them bit by bit . . . the disaster has come . . . asunder tear them . . . away, away!"

Sarah could think of no means to pacify him, except by making signs to Christian to hurry out of the room.

When, a quarter of an hour later, she walked into the corridor, she found him, with his head leaning against the door-post, weeping bitterly.

"What ails you, my good Christian," she asked, "and why are you crying?"

"What have I done to him," he cried, amidst his sobs, "that he can't bear the sight of me?"

"He is very ill," said Sarah, resting her hand on Christian's shoulder; "would you reason with a man in such a condition? But you must do me one favour."

"What is it?"

"You must not come again for some time. . . . You must stay away at least as long as he is ill. When you may come again I will let you know." And without waiting for his reply, she returned to the room.

Night had fallen when Christian left the house; but into two human hearts, whose hour of parting had come, the darkness of night could not penetrate. There, brightness stronger than the light of day reigned supreme. Who is it that, behind the synagogue door, tears herself away from Christian, and then

speeds lightly away into the darkness? Four lips have met to tell the story, which, old as Creation itself, still burns with a fire that is hotter than coal, that grand undying pæon, the mystic burden of which is as unfathomable as the ocean itself.

For some time past a spirit of loneliness and desolation had rested upon the house in which three human beings were destined to spend many more days in nameless woe. Men love not to tarry in the abode of misery, and it was only those that felt themselves in duty bound to do so, who made an occasional call at the dwelling of the former synagogue attendant. There is a sorrow which is loth to associate itself with the light of day, and shrinks timidly away from the prying eyes of men. It was with no pleased eye that Sarah welcomed the people who came now and again to inquire after her suffering husband, and she shunned their presence whenever she could.

And yet her brave heart did not for one single moment tremble under the heavy burden entailed by that voluntary act of hers, which, with Christian's reception into her house, had conjured up against her an almost unending battle-field of struggles and tears. So far indeed from

meekly bowing her head under the blows of destiny, and giving herself over to useless self-reproach, her spirit gradually rose once more, and never, in fact, did she contemplate her position with a clearer eye at that moment. In her loneliness her thoughts readily sped heavenward; fervently she prayed for her husband's recovery, and for strength for herself to continue her task to the end, and to keep her feet from straying from the path she had chosen to tread.

"Why has not the blow fallen upon me, why was *he* made to suffer, the good, upright man?" she often said to herself. "What has *he* done? It was *I* who adopted the child, and brought it up; how could he help my forcing *him* to take an oath on the holy *Torah*? *Was* it wrong of me, after all, to have made him swear on the *Torah*?"

But from these humiliating reflections her spirit rose again to a broad survey of the field that lay before her.

"Did not Kalman Wurzburg advise me not to be wise overmuch, and to do that to which my heart moved me? and do they not all call him Klein-Mendelsohn? Well, I have tried not to make myself overwise, and I have gone the way to which my God has guided me. Is it not

with me as with Hagar in the wilderness? When her child became an outcast, and lay abandoned under the tree, the voice of an angel cried to her from heaven—'Arise, lift up the child.' . . . Can it then be a sin in God's eyes that *I* have lifted up the child of John Schuster out of its desolation and misery, and have been as a mother to him?" And then, with a tumultuous rush, her thoughts would soar to ever loftier heights.

"Everlasting God," she would think, "Thou knowest best for what reason Thou hast brought this grievous visitation upon me. I will not murmur, but I will resign myself to Thy will, for I know that when a heart is full to overflowing with sorrow Thy rescuing Hand is near. Thou hast bestowed upon me a twofold happiness. . . . Thou hast not only granted me a child of my own, Thou hast also permitted me to be as a mother to another. It cannot be Thy will that *that* should be reckoned against me as a sin and a transgression. For if *that* were so, Thou wouldst not have put it in my heart to do as I *have* done. Thou hast caused the child to grow up good and upright as any youth in the *Gasse*. Is *that* not a token from Thee that I have acted rightly? Thou knowest I have not

estranged him from the creed of his fathers, even as *I* could never have borne to see anyone attempt to turn *my* child—whom Thou, I pray Thee, shield and protect—from *her* holy religion. I have brought him up and nurtured him in virtue, and in the fear of Thee; I have watched over him, and he has grown up a good, upright man. A flower lying in the roadway one takes up, so that it be not trodden under foot. A little bird one takes to one's bosom, so that it be not frozen to death in the cold air. Should *I* not then take compassion on a *child*, a human being, an image of *Thee*, a reflection of *Thy* splendour and glory?"

Thus prayed the brave-souled woman in the hour of her affliction, and the fervour of her supplications was as balm upon her painfully overstrung heart. Yet whilst day by day, and hour by hour, she contemplated, with hollow eyes, the hopeless suffering of her beloved husband, her thoughts were constantly with the poor orphan, who, in obedience to her uttered wishes, had, without hesitation, gone into the wide world, *whither* she knew not. Why had she allowed him to go?

Then her memory would lingeringly dwell upon that evening, when she recited the night-

prayers with Leah, and Christian lay weeping in his bed, and when she formed the resolution of taking him to old Bozena. Even now the thought brought a radiant glow to her pallid features, she felt proud that she had taken that step. What otherwise would have become of Christian? What conception would he have formed of the religion in which he was born, and what would ultimately have been his opinion of that other creed with the ceremonies of which he came into daily contact, and which selfishly ousted him from the solace of its own tenets, whilst denying him the spiritual benefits of his ancestral faith.

Again two years had elapsed. To Sarah and Leah that period had been but as one long day of suffering, unrelieved by one single gleam of light, without one ray of hope. Whilst the one, sitting by the bedside of her afflicted husband, forgot that outside the narrow walls of her humble abode there throbbed yet another, a brighter life, the other, with pale, wan face, knew well enough of its existence, but *he* who alone could cause her to take *her* part in it was far away, and all her anguish, all her longing could not bring him to her!

One summer night, while Wolf was asleep

in the adjoining room, mother and daughter were seated, by the light of a solitary candle, occupied in sewing the grave-clothes for a woman of the *Gasse*, who had died two days since, and whose funeral was to take place on the following day. The two were very silent; each busy weaving her own web of thought, and the weft was of no brilliant colouring.

All at once Sarah said—

"One thing surprises me very much. It is that after Hannah Klattauer's death—peace be to her soul—no *Tachrichim* (grave-clothes) were found by her; I can't believe, just because she happened to be a rich woman, and had plenty of everything, that she forgot to think of her last hours?"

"That's a custom met with only amongst us Jews," said Leah, laying aside her work, "always to be thinking about death, ugh! 'tis horrible. Amongst his people, Christian has told me, it's very different."

"Every one does as he thinks fit," Sarah interrupted, with an unusual severity in her tone. "We Jews, as it happens, are a much tried people, and not an hour passes but that thousands of us are made to suffer all sorts of tortures. It is meet, therefore, that we

should ever have the Angel of Death before our eyes, for we cannot escape him. Have you not noticed that your poor father, when he was still well and strong, used to sit at table on the Eve of Passover dressed in his death-shroud? And yet that is the time when our hearts are gladdened, and we drink red wine! Do you think our sages knew not what they were about, when they laid down these precepts for our guidance?"

In answer to this admonition, Leah merely shook her head, as though unconvinced.

After a long silence, Leah again laid her work aside.

"I wonder whether he has built a big house yet," she said, speaking as one in a dream.

"Who?"

"Christian."

"How come you to be thinking of him all at once?"

"I can't help thinking of him, for, when he was but a child, he promised me that when he grew up, and was his own master, he would build a house for himself and me."

"How *can* you be thinking of such rubbish?" Sarah said severely, "and just when you're busy with Hannah Klattauer's grave-clothes too."

A gentle tapping at the window-pane startled them both.

"Mother, 'tis he," Leah cried, in a loudly jubilant tone, as she rushed forward to the window.

"Who, in heaven's name?"

"Christian!"

Why did a sudden paralysing tremor run through Sarah's limbs? why did the sound of that name agitate her to her inmost soul?

"Go into the courtyard," she said, after a pause, "and see if it is he. If it is Christian, bring him in here quickly, before your father awakes."

And he it was who entered the room, hand-in-hand with Leah.

"Christian!" Sarah said, in a muffled voice, as she pointed to the room where her husband lay sleeping, "you haven't kept your word."

"Mother!" answered Christian.

It was the first time that he had thus called her, and in that one word there lay such a wealth of melting endearment, that Sarah felt completely unnerved.

"Yes, Christian!" she said with an effort, "I have always looked upon you as my son, but why then don't you obey me as a son *should* obey his mother?"

"Is he asleep?" he asked, casting a furtive glance in the direction of the adjoining room. Sarah nodded her head.

"I'll tell you, mother," Christian began, in a faltering whisper. "I could stand it no longer."

Then only did Sarah regard him with somewhat closer attention. His clothes were terribly torn and tattered, his features bore the traces of profound emotion, his cheeks were pale and haggard, and he seemed as one thoroughly worn out with sleepless nights or lingering illness. He was still holding Leah's hand pressed in his own.

"And *I* don't understand why you must just come at night," she rejoined; "if one wants to give people a pleasant surprise, one mustn't frighten them."

"Did I frighten you, Leah?" Christian cried.

"Let her go, leave her alone," cried Sarah, whose suspicions would not be allayed.

"I don't like the look of you, Christian."

"Why should I leave go of her?" Christian cried with a burning glance at Leah.

"Great Heavens above!" Sarah could not find utterance for anything more, but shuddering, she covered her face with both hands. The lightning which had at one time flashed before

her eyes as out of a distant thunder-cloud, and which she had since forgotten, had now returned with a blinding glare, devouring everything at which she had so long laboured, and scattering its destroying fires into the very sanctum of her existence. At that moment she lived again the history of many years that had fled, and its episodes were crowded one upon another, and concentrated within her into the one poignant cry of anguish—

"'Tis *I* who am wrong, and the world was right after all!"

When Sarah removed her hands from her face, she presented a truly alarming appearance. Her eyes were glassy and staring, and about the corners of her mouth lurked that expression of horror which is, as it were, borrowed from Death, and yet belongs to the fulness of Life. Leah flung her arms round her neck, and anxiously cried—

"Why are you so frightened, mother! Calm yourself, do!"

With an almost superhuman strength, Sarah clasped her daughter to her bosom; with every nerve in her being she clung to her child, as though it were only in *her* arms that she was safe from danger.

"Go away, Christian!" she shrieked, "go away! You have no right at all here!"

Christian, with his arms folded on his bosom, regarded her intently, an expression of deepest pity playing around his lips.

"Why are you so frightened, mother?" he too asked, "I have never seen you like this before. You were always so kind and gentle towards me; you treated me as nobody else in the wide world would have done, and now all at once you act so strangely and are frightened of me, as though I had broken into your house like a thief."

"You *are* a thief!" cried Sarah, beside herself with agitation, "and far better had it been if I had left you to drown in the Iser, with your father and mother."

"Is it my mother Sarah who speaks like that?" said Christian, in a trembling voice. "These aren't the words of the woman who carried me in her arms, who shed such bitter tears of anguish when her husband raised his hand against me. Do you think I didn't hear you sobbing that day? I took very careful note of it; and all that you have done for me I have inscribed here, where no one can efface it. Do you think I don't know what you have

suffered for my sake? Often, when I was far away, my thoughts have dwelt with you, mother. Often my mates would jeer at me, and call me 'Jew-brood,' for they knew that it was *you* who brought me up, but I was never ashamed, and proudly did I say to them—

'Not one of you have had a mother like my mother Sarah!' And nowhere have I eaten with such grateful satisfaction as I have at *your* table, and nowhere have I slept as I have slept in *your* house, and nowhere has it been so well with me as under *your* roof. Never have I spoken to you of these things, for I did not want to agitate or distress you, and now you throw reproaches at me, and tell me that I have broken into your house like a thief, and you hide your dear sweet face from my eyes!"

His voice sounded as the voice of one weeping, and it affected Sarah strangely. Her eyes lost their glassy stare, vanished was the terror-stricken expression around her mouth.

"Oh! how you pain me, Christian!" she said, her lips twitching nervously.

"Listen, mother!" Christian continued. "I was in a good situation yonder in a town on the German frontier. They wanted to take me for a soldier, for the whole world is at war just

now. When I heard that they were after me, I hurried away. Then I felt such a longing to see you, I couldn't suppress it. How can you go to the war, I said to myself, when you haven't seen Leah, and don't know what has become of her—for Leah is mine, and it is not for nothing that *you* are her mother. You see, when all these things came to my mind, I could rest no longer; I felt I *must* know what had become of Leah, or I could neither live nor die."

"Enough, enough, Christian!" cried Sarah, his passionate utterances again plunging her into the wildest alarm.

"But I *won't* be a soldier; I'll chop off one of my fingers, then they'll see if I can load a gun. In *your* house, mother, is my place, and Leah belongs to *me*. I *won't* allow anyone to rob me of her, and I shall remain here, and won't be a soldier."

Sarah sat there completely shattered; she could hear the terrific tempest raging above her house . . . another moment, and all under its roof might be buried beneath its ruins.

"And all this," a thousand voices re-echoed within her, "you could have avoided if you had followed the world's advice, and *not* your own counsel. Now all is lost."

A heavy sigh escaped her.

"This is indeed the most terrible hour of my life! God help me through it!" she whispered.

At the same moment, Leah, pointing to the door, softly said—"Hush, father is awake!"

And from the room in which Wolf Ungar was sleeping, came the oft-repeated words—

"Tear them asunder—it is against nature—there's the disaster—the *Babe's* disaster—and her garnets."

Never before had those disjointed sentences, which had always sounded to her ears so senseless and devoid of meaning, seemed to Sarah to be fraught with such significance! As under the influence of a vivifying draught, her soul raised itself out of its despondency, and no longer was she the broken-spirited woman who a moment before had bowed her head in timid resignation before the approaching storm. She raised herself upright, a dauntless courage sparkled in her eyes, and about her mouth there lurked an expression of pride which spoke of an inflexible resolution.

"Yes, my poor husband!" she cried, her glance fixed upon the door of the bedroom, "you shall soon be at peace again. You shall not have to regret your oath."

And when Christian looked at her in surprise, she said, curtly and resolutely—

"You can't stay here, Christian, go outside and sit down on the seat under the walnut-tree. I'll come out to you later on, and then we'll talk together."

"May I go with him?" asked Leah.

"Yes, my child, you may," she said, after some reflection.

She was alone at last! First, walking on tip-toe, she stealthily approached the door of the inner room and listened. Her husband was asleep again, she could hear his peaceful breathing. Then she extinguished the lamp, and sat down in her old armchair, alone with her reflections, and the all-surrounding darkness. What was it that was passing in her mind? Who is there rash enough to attempt to probe the thoughts of this lonely soul, whose nameless woe was hidden from all eyes save that of the Omniscient Ruler of the Universe? There sits Sarah, the humble woman of the Ghetto, the wife of a menial synagogue servant, but the subject of her contemplations is inscribed in letters of flame, in the history of humanity. Blood, torrents of blood follow in its path, and the death-shrieks of murdered, tortured

generations. Happier days were destined to rise, but their dawn was not yet near. Here and there a promising bud would shoot forth its sweet young head, but still men heeded them not, and ruthlessly trampled them down wherever their feet encountered them. After a while, Sarah rose again and lit the candle. Then, after listening once more at the door of her husband's apartment, she noiselessly stole out of the room.

Outside, on the seat under the walnut-tree, they sat, Christian and Leah. Absorbed in each other, they had not noticed Sarah's presence until she stood right in front of them. She sat down at the end of the bench. The stillness of night reigned around them unbroken.

"Christian," Sarah commenced, after a long silence, "have you any recollection at all of your mother?"

"No!"

"What do you think, suppose your mother were still alive, and you came to her, and said to her what you have said to me—I mean that about Leah—what do you think she would have answered you? Reflect well before you speak."

"I don't know, mother."

"Then I will tell you, Christian! Your mother would have but *one* wish, and that would have been, that you should tie a stone round your neck, and throw yourself into the Iser yonder, by the thatched cottage where the stream is deepest."

"Jesus! Maria!" cried Christian.

"The terror with which you call upon these two names," said Sarah, "tells me how right I am. Your own mother would have given you no other answer."

She laid her hand upon Christian's shoulder, and in gentler, almost whispered tone, she continued:

"Christian, my good son, you must away from here, and journey many many miles until so great a distance lies between you and us that not a sound can reach to you from us, or to us from you. You must journey and journey, without looking back for one moment, without even the briefest rest. Then shall it be well with you—and also with us—my son, my son Christian, you must away.

"I *cannot*, mother!" cried Christian. "I *cannot* and I *will* not! I will not be driven away a second time."

"Is *that* the way to speak to your mother, Christian?"

After a while Sarah spoke again—

"Listen! It is all still as vivid before my eyes, as though it had happened only yesterday. When you were children, you were both seated one day under this tree on the very spot upon which we are now sitting. You, Christian, were learning something from a little school-book, and Leah was writing on a slate, and I stood watching at the window. And Leah broke her slate, and when she cried, you tried to soothe her, telling her that the wire-worker would make the slate whole again. But Leah cried: 'what is broken, remains broken'—do you hear me, Leah?"

"Yes, mother!" the girl softly answered.

"Well, this time, *I* say it: 'what is broken, remains broken,'" Sarah resumed. "It can never be made whole again, for the broken part will always be visible. Why is it that I have taken such note of what Leah said at the time? I will tell you, Christian. Childish though the matter was it is full of significance, as we shall see. That which *you* believe, Christian, and that which *I* believe,—I mean how we are to pray to Almighty God in Heaven, that, too, is formed of two broken slates, two parts of what was once one piece. *Who* it was that broke them, or whether

it was right that they should be broken, *I* can't decide, for I am but an unlearned woman. All I can say, my good Christian, is, that since the old slate was broken, much strife and heart-breaking has come into the world, each clings to *his* portion, and in this way hundreds and thousands of years have passed. But upon each of the two pieces God has written something, and to that everyone clings with all his might, and God Almighty alone is able to put the broken slate together again, so that what is written on one piece will fit in with what is written on the other. The day when *that* happens, neither you nor I will live to see. But in our holy prayers we daily say: 'God shall be Lord over the whole Earth, on that Day God shall be One and His name shall be One!' But for the present the slate remains broken . . .!"

A deep silence, which lasted several minutes, followed upon Sarah's words. In the scent-laden summer night, thousands of young buds were opening into their sweet lives, kissed into being by the fragrant breezes of the night. A million eyes were closed in peaceful slumber, but upon these three human hearts pressed the heavy weight of deepest grief.

"Oh! I understand you, mother, I understand you but too well!" came softly from Leah's lips.

"And *you*, my good Christian?" asked Sarah, laying her hand upon his heated forehead.

"I wish you had dropped me into the Iser, mother, there where the stream is deepest," he said, in a dull despairing voice.

"Don't say that, Christian, don't say that. God does not like to hear such words. Think rather of the broken slate, and remember that from this moment all must be at an end . . . do you hear me Christian, *all?*"

Christian made an effort to rise, but the soft pressure of Sarah's hand upon his shoulder held him down.

"Christian!" Sarah cried, the long restrained tears at length gushing from her eyes, "won't you listen to your mother? I have tended you, and watched over you, and when you were ill I sat at your bedside, and when my husband wanted to strike you, I defended and shielded you. And now must I regret it all? Must you be a living example to the world, a lesson teaching others to steel their hearts against all compassion for the poor and forsaken? In that room yonder lies my husband, a helpless,

stricken man. One day, perchance, he may regain his senses, and then if he asks me: where is my daughter Leah? must I then say to him: the child that I took under my protection, the child to whom you gave a place at your table, has robbed you of your daughter, whom you may no longer call your child! Shall I have to say *that* to him, Christian?"

"Enough, enough, mother!" gasped Christian, amid loud sobs. "I understand you; what is broken, remains broken."

"And now go, my son Christian, and follow the advice which your mother gives you. Go, journey as far as your feet will take you, and cast not a glance behind. Miles, nay lands and mountains must lie between you and us. Then God shall shield you and bless you, in all your undertakings—and . . . and . . . think no more of us."

She laid her hand upon his head, and from her lips, in gentlest accents, came the old world-worn Hebrew blessing: "The Lord bless thee and preserve thee: the Lord cause His face to shine upon thee, and give thee peace!"

Christian had risen to his feet, his bosom heaving with violent emotion.

"Leah!" he cried.

"Christian!"

Long, long, the two remained locked in each other's arms; they could not part.

At last Sarah cried: "Come, Leah, my child. You know we haven't finished Hannah Klattauer's grave-clothes yet . . . and the dead must not be kept waiting. Come!"

Out into the stillness of the night resounded the grating noise of a heavy bolt being drawn inside the synagogue-house door.

Through the courtyard a tall figure dragged its way heavily along.

Out in the slumbering Ghetto re-echoed the steps as of one fleeing from some grim pursuer.

The world could boast of two more shattered human hearts!

. . . . .

On mild and balmy afternoons, when the rays of the spring sunshine cast their brightening glow over the gloomy, unlovely little houses, an aged couple, a wrinkled, stooping little mother, and a grey-haired man, may be seen wending their way with feeble uncertain steps through the streets of the Ghetto. They hold

each other's hands as they walk—a pathetic, albeit pleasant sight to the onlooker. The old man carries a stick, which he uses to good purpose, for with it he carefully removes every little stone, every obstacle which meets his eye, and over which the halting foot of his companion might stumble. Nothing escapes his keen glance, and wherever a house of somewhat more imposing proportions than its fellows throws a dark shadow across the street, he steps aside, and leads the old lady along a sunnier path. But when, by chance, the hour of afternoon service peals forth from the church-steeple, he stops short in his walk. Then he withdraws his hand out of the old lady's, in order to make the sign of the cross, while, with the other hand, he holds his fur cap before his face.

The little woman hobbles on. Is she afraid to disturb her companion in his devotions? Do not these brazen sounds, too, ring in *her* ears, urging *her* also to offer up a silent prayer . . .?

He has finished; with hurrying steps he has quickly overtaken her. Their hands have met again, and they resume their walk together. Arrived in front of a small, one-storied cottage, the last in the Ghetto, they stop. They are at their own abode!

. . . . . .

They are Christian and Leah.

With trembling fingers, and age-saddened eyes, with grey hair, with wrinkled brows and furrowed cheeks, these two, whose ways had been parted in the spring-time of their youth, have come together again in the hoary winter of their lonely lives.

Within the space of a few years Leah had lost both father and mother. Then she went into service among strangers, and put by every penny she earned. When her savings had accumulated sufficiently, she returned to her old home. . . .

One day a little old woman arrived in the Ghetto, who announced herself as the daughter of Wolf and Sarah Ungar, but there were few people left in the Ghetto old enough to remember her.

Strangely enough, but a few days had elapsed when an old man arrived, who showed a passport which described him as Christian, the son of the shoemaker, Johannes Wurma, known in the Ghetto as "John Schuster."

A few weeks later, workmen were busy erecting a little house on the very brink of the brook. When the house was built and fur-

nished, the two old people took up their abode therein.

Laugh not at them, reader, rather bow your head in awe, when on Sabbaths and Festivals, your mind's eye sees grey-haired Christian, carrying Leah's heavy *Sidur* (prayer-book) to the synagogue door. Laugh not, but rather let your eyes drink in the radiance of the God-like nimbus which surrounds these two hoary heads, when on Sundays you see old Christian wending his way to church, wearing around his neck a white muffler, which Leah's own hands have washed for him and wrapt round his throat.

Between the pages of an old volume, which once formed part of the library belonging to Kalmann Wurzburg, also known as *Klein-Mendelsohn*, there was found, many years after his death, a scrap of paper, yellow with age, upon which was written in faded characters:—

"At long and rare intervals this earth has produced a living example of a one-souled love, which is mightier than that of which Solomon the King sings in his Song of Songs. Such an example I have met with in the person of Sarah, wife of Wolf Ungar, the synagogue-attendant. In the heart of this poor Jewish woman there throbs *that* Love, which will one day restore to

the world its long lost universal peace and concord. For how can the wolf lie down with the lamb, and the viper sleep beside the innocent dove, if God provide not the world with more such women as Sarah Ungar?"

A GHETTO VIOLET

THROUGH the open window came the clear trill of a canary singing blithely in its cage. Within the tidy, homely little room a pale-faced girl and a youth of slender frame listened intently while the bird sang its song. The girl was the first to break the silence.

"Ephraim, my brother!" she said.

"What is it, dear Viola?"

"I wonder does the birdie know that it is the Sabbath to-day?"

"What a child you are!" answered Ephraim.

"Yes, that's always the way; when you clever men can't explain a thing, you simply dismiss the question by calling it childish," Viola exclaimed, as though quite angry. "And, pray, why shouldn't the bird know? The whole week it scarcely sang a note: to-day it warbles and warbles so that it makes my head ache. And what's the reason? Every Sabbath it's just the same, I notice it regularly. Shall I tell you what my idea is?"

"The whole week long the little bird looks into our room and sees nothing but the hum-drum of work-a-day life. To-day it sees the bright rays of the Sabbath lamp and the white Sabbath cloth upon the table. Don't you think I'm right, Ephraim?"

"Wait, dear Viola," said Ephraim, and he went to the cage.

The bird's song suddenly ceased.

"Now you've spoilt its Sabbath?" cried the girl, and she was so excited that the book which had been lying upon her lap fell to the ground.

Ephraim turned towards her; he looked at her solemnly, and said quietly—

"Pick up your prayer-book first, and then I'll answer. A holy book should not be on the ground like that. Had our mother dropped her prayer-book she would have kissed it. . . . Kiss it, Viola, my child!"

Viola did so.

"And now I'll tell you, dear Viola, what I think is the reason why the bird sings so blithely to-day. . . . Of course, I don't say I'm right."

Viola's brown eyes were fixed enquiringly upon her brother's face.

"How seriously you talk to-day," she said, making a feeble attempt at a smile. "I was only joking. Mustn't I ask if the bird knows anything about the Sabbath?"

"There are subjects it is sinful to joke about, and this may be one of them, Viola."

"You really quite frighten me, Ephraim."

"You little goose, I don't want to frighten you," said Ephraim, while a faint flush suffused his features. "I'll tell you my opinion about the singing of the bird. I think, dear Viola, that our little canary knows . . . that before long it will change its quarters."

"You're surely not going to sell it or give it away?" cried the girl, in great alarm; and springing to her feet, she quickly drew her brother away from the cage.

"No, I'm not going to sell it nor give it away," said Ephraim, whose quiet bearing contrasted strongly with his sister's excitement. "Is it likely that I should do anything that would give you pain? And yet, I have but to say one word . . . and I'll wager that you will be the first to open the cage and say to the bird, "Fly, fly away, birdie, fly away home!"

"Never, never!" cried the girl.

"Viola," said Ephraim, beseechingly, "I have

taken a vow. Surely you would not have me break it?"

"A vow?" asked his sister.

"Viola," Ephraim continued, as he bent his head down to the girl's face, "I have vowed to myself that whenever he . . . our father . . . should return, I would give our little bird its freedom. It shall be free, free as he will be."

"Ephraim!"

"He is coming—he is already on his way home."

Viola flung her arms round her brother's neck. For a long time brother and sister remained locked in a close embrace.

Meanwhile the bird resumed its jubilant song.

"Do you hear how it sings again," said Ephraim, and he gently stroked his sister's hair. "It knows that it will soon be free."

"A father out of gaol!" sobbed Viola, as she released herself from her brother's arms.

"He has had his punishment, dear Viola!" said Ephraim softly.

Viola turned away. There was a painful silence, and then she looked up at her brother again. Her face was aglow, her eyes sparkled with a strange fire; she was trembling with

agitation. Never before had Ephraim seen her thus.

"Ephraim, my brother," she commenced, in that measured monotone so peculiar to intense emotion, "with the bird you can do as you please. You can set it free, or, if you like, you can wring its neck. But as for him, I'll never look in his face again, from me he shall not have a word of welcome. He broke our mother's heart . . . our good, good mother; he has dishonoured himself and us. And I can never forget it."

"Is it right for a child to talk like that of her own father?" said Ephraim in a tremulous voice.

"When a child has good cause to be ashamed of her own father!" cried Viola.

"Oh, my Viola, you must have forgotten dear mother's dying words. Don't you remember, as she opened her eyes for the last time, how she gathered up her failing strength, and raising herself in her bed, 'Children,' she said, 'my memory will protect you both, yea, and your father too.' Viola, have you forgotten?"

Had you entered that little room an hour later, a touching sight would have met your eyes. Viola was seated on her brother's knee, her arms round his neck, whilst Ephraim with

the gentle love of a brother for a younger sister, was stroking her hair, and whispering in her ear sweet words of solace.

The bird-cage was empty. . . . That evening Ephraim sat up till midnight. Outside in the Ghetto reigned the stillness of night.

All at once, Ephraim rose from his chair, walked to the old bureau which stood near the door, opened it, and took from it a bulky volume, which he laid upon the table in front of him. But he did not seem at all bent upon reading. He began fingering the pages, until he came upon a bundle of bank notes, and these he proceeded to count, with a whispering movement of his lips. He had but three or four more notes still to count, when his sharp ear detected the sound of stealthy footsteps, in the little courtyard in front of the house. Closing the book, and hastily putting it back again in the old bureau, Ephraim sprang to the window and opened it.

"Is that you, father?" he cried.

There was no answer.

Ephraim repeated his question.

He strained his eyes, peering into the dense darkness, but no living thing could he see. Then quite close to him a voice cried: "Make no noise . . . and first put out the light."

"Heavens! Father, it is you then . . .!" Ephraim exclaimed.

"Hush!" came in a whisper from without, "first put out the light."

Ephraim closed the window, and extinguished the light. Then, with almost inaudible step, he walked out of the room into the dark passage; noiselessly he proceeded to unbolt the street-door. Almost at the same moment a heavy hand clasped his own.

"Father, father!" Ephraim cried, trying to raise his parent's hand to his lips.

"Make no noise," the man repeated in a somewhat commanding tone.

With his father's hand in his, cautiously feeling his way, Ephraim led him into the room. In the room adjoining lay Viola, sleeping peacefully. . . .

Time was when "Wild" Ascher's welcome home had been far otherwise. Eighteen years before, upon that very threshold which he now crossed with halting, stealthy steps, as of a thief in the night, stood a fair and loving wife, holding a sturdy lad aloft in her arms, so that the father might at once see as he turned the street corner, that wife and child were well and happy.

Not another Ghetto in all Bohemia could show a handsomer and happier couple than Ascher and his wife. "Wild" Ascher was one of those intrepid, venturesome spirits, to whom no obstacle is so great that it cannot be surmounted. And the success which crowned his long, persistent wooing was often cited as striking testimony to his indomitable will. Gudule was famous throughout the Ghetto as "the girl with the wonderful eyes," eyes—so the saying ran—into which no man could look and think of evil. During the earlier years of their married life those unfathomable brown eyes exercised on Ascher the full power of their fascination. A time came, however, when he alleged that those very eyes had been the cause of all his ruin.

Gudule's birthplace was far removed from the Ghetto, where Ascher had first seen the light. Her father was a wealthy farmer in a secluded village in Lower Bohemia. But distant though it was from the nearest town of any importance, the solitary grange became the centre of attraction to all the young swains far and near. But there was none who found favour in Gudule's eyes save "Wild Ascher," in spite of many a friendly warning to beware of him. One day, just before the betrothal of the young people,

an anonymous letter was delivered at the grange. The writer, who called himself an old friend, entreated the farmer to prevent his dear child from becoming the wife of one who was suspected of being a gambler. The farmer was of an easy-going, indulgent nature, shunning care and anxiety as a very plague. Accordingly, no sooner had he read the anonymous missive than he handed it to his daughter, as though its contents were no concern of his.

When Gudule had read the letter to the end, she merely remarked—"Father, this concerns me, and nobody else."

And so the matter dropped.

Not until the wedding-day, half-an-hour before the ceremony, when the marriage canopy had already been erected in the courtyard, did the farmer sum up courage to revert to the warning of the unknown letter-writer. Taking his future son-in-law aside, he said—

"Ascher, is it true that you gamble?"

"Father," Ascher answered with equal firmness, "Gudule's eyes will save me!" Ascher had uttered no untruth when he gave his father-in-law this assurance. He spoke in all earnestness, for like everyone else he knew the magnetic power of Gudule's eyes.

Nowhere, probably, does the grim, consuming pestilence of gaming claim more victims than in the Ghetto. The ravages of drink and debauchery are slight indeed: but the tortuous streets can show too many a humble home haunted by the spectres of ruin and misery which stalked across the threshold when the *first card-game* was played.

It was with almost feverish anxiety that the eyes of the Ghetto were fixed upon the development of a character like Ascher's; they followed his every step with the closest attention. Long experience had taught the Ghetto that no gambler could be trusted.

As though conscious that all eyes were upon him, Ascher showed himself most punctilious in the discharge of even the minutest of communal duties which devolved upon him as a denizen of the Ghetto, and his habits of life were almost ostentatiously regular and decorous. His business had prospered, and Gudule had borne him a son.

"Well, Gudule, my child," the farmer asked his daughter on the day when his grandson was received into the covenant of Abraham, "well, Gudule, was the letter right?"

"What letter?" asked Gudule.

"That in which your husband was called a gambler."

"And can you still give a thought to such a letter?" was Gudule's significant reply.

Three years later, Gudule's father came to visit her. This time she showed him his second grandchild, her little Viola. He kissed the children, and round little Viola's neck clasped three rows of pearls, "that the child may know it had a grandfather once."

"And where are your pearls, Gudule?" he asked, "those left you by your mother,—may she rest in peace? She always set such store by them."

"Those, father?" Gudule replied, turning pale; "oh, my husband has taken them to a goldsmith in Prague. They require a new clasp."

"I see," remarked her father. Notwithstanding his limited powers of observation, it did not escape the old man's eyes that Gudule looked alarmingly wan and emaciated. He saw it, and it grieved his very soul. He said nothing however: only, when leaving, and after he had kissed the *Mezuza*,[1] he said to Gudule

[1] Small cylinder enclosing a roll of parchment inscribed with the Hebrew word *Shadai* (Almighty) and with other texts, which is affixed to the lintel of every Jewish house.

(who, with little Viola in her arms, went with him to the door), in a voice quivering with suppressed emotion—"Gudule, my child, the pearl necklet which I have given your little Viola has a clasp strong enough to last a hundred years . . . you need never, therefore, give it to your husband to have a new clasp made for it." And without bestowing another glance upon his child the easy-going man left the house. It was his last visit. Within the year Gudule received a letter from her eldest brother telling her that their father was dead, and that she would have to keep the week of mourning for him. Ever since his last visit to her—her brother wrote—the old man had been somewhat ailing, but knowing his vigorous constitution, they had paid little heed to his complaints. It was only during the last few weeks that a marked loss of strength had been noticed. This was followed by fever and delirium. Whenever he was asked whether he would not like to see Gudule, his only answer was: "She must not give away the clasp of little Viola's necklet." And but an hour before his death, he raised his voice, and loudly called for "the letter." Nobody knew what letter. "Gudule knows where it is," he said, with a gentle shake

of his head. Those were the last words he spoke.

Had the old man's eyes deceived him on the occasion of his last visit to his son-in-law's house? No! For, setting aside the incident of the missing pearls, the whole Ghetto could long since have told him that the warning of the anonymous letter was not unfounded—for Gudule was the wife of a gambler.

With the resistless impetuosity of a torrent released from its prison of ice and snow, the old invincible disease had again overwhelmed its victim. Gudule noticed the first signs of it when one day her husband returned home from one of his business journeys earlier than he had arranged. Gudule had not expected him.

"Why did you not come to meet me with the children," he cried peevishly; "do you begrudge me even that pleasure?"

"*I* begrudge you a pleasure?" Gudule ventured to remark, as she raised her swimming eyes to his face.

"Why do you look at me so tearfully?" he almost shouted.

Ascher loved his wife, and when he saw the effect his rough words had produced, he

tenderly embraced her. "Am I not right, Gudule?" he said, "after a man has been working and slaving the livelong week, don't you think he looks forward with longing eyes for his dear children to welcome him at his door?"

At that moment Gudule felt the long latent suspicion revive in her that her husband was not speaking the truth. As if written in characters of fire, the words of that letter now came back to her memory; she knew now what was the fate that awaited her and her children.

Thenceforward, all the characteristic tokens of a gambler's life, all the vicissitudes which attend his unholy calling, followed close upon each other in grim succession. Most marked was the disturbance which his mental equilibrium was undergoing. Fits of gloomy despondency were succeeded, with alarming rapidity, by periods of tumultuous exaltation. One moment it would seem as though Gudule and the children were to him the living embodiment of all that was precious and lovable, whilst at other times he would regard them with sullen indifference. It soon became evident to Gudule that her husband's affairs were in a very bad way, for her housekeeping allowance

no longer came to her with its wonted regularity. But what grieved and alarmed her most, was the fact that Ascher was openly neglecting every one of his religious duties. To return home late on Friday night, long after sunset had ushered in the Sabbath, was now a common practice. Once even it happened that, with his clothes covered with dust, he came home from one of his business tours on a Sabbath morning, when the people in holiday attire were wending their way to the synagogue.

Nevertheless, not a sound of complaint escaped Gudule's lips. Hers was one of those proud sensitive natures, such as are to be met with among all classes and amid all circumstances of life, in Ghetto and in secluded village, no less than among the most favoured ones of the earth. Had she not cast to the winds the well-intentioned counsel given her in that unsigned letter? Why then should she complain and lament, now that the seed had borne fruit? She shrank from alluding before her husband to the passion which day by day, nay, hour by hour, tightened its hold upon him. She would have died sooner than permit the word "gambler" to pass her lips. Besides, did not her eyes tell Ascher what she suffered?

Those very eyes were, according to Ascher, the cause of his rapid journey along the road to ruin.

"Why do you look at me so, Gudule?" he would testily ask her, at the slightest provocation.

Often when, as he explained, he had had "a specially good week," he would bring home the costliest gifts for his children. Gudule, however, made no use whatever of these trinkets, neither for herself nor for the children. She put the things away in drawers and cupboards, and never looked at them, more especially as she observed that, under some pretext or another, Ascher generally took those glittering things away again, "in order to exchange them for others," he said: as often as not never replacing them at all.

"Gudule!" he said one day, when he happened to be in a particularly good humour, "why do you let the key remain in the door of that bureau where you keep so many valuables?"

And again Gudule regarded him with those unfathomable eyes.

"There, you're . . . looking at me again!" he exclaimed with sudden vehemence.

"They're safe enough in the cupboard," Gudule said, smiling, "why should I lock it?"

"Gudule, do you mean to say . . ." he cried, raising his hand as for a blow. Then he fell back in his chair, and his frame was shaken with sobs.

"Gudule, my heart's love," he cried, "I am not worthy that your eyes should rest on me. Everywhere, wherever I go, they look at me, those eyes . . . and that is my ruin. If business is bad, your eyes ask me, 'Why did you mix yourself up with these things, without a thought of wife or children?' . . . Then I feel as if some evil spirit possessed me and tortured my soul. Oh, why can't you look at me again as you did when you were my bride?—then you looked so happy, so lovely! At other times I think: I shall yet grasp fortune with both hands . . . and then I can face my Gudule's eyes again. But now, now . . . oh, don't look at me, Gudule!"

There spoke the self-reproaching voice, which sometimes burst forth unbidden from a suffering soul.

As for Gudule, she already knew how to appreciate this cry of her husband's conscience at its true value. It was not that she felt one

moment's doubt as to its sincerity, but she knew that so far as it affected the future, it was a mere cry and nothing more.

The years rolled on. The children were growing up. Ephraim had entered his fifteenth year. Viola was a little pale girl of twelve. In the opinion of the Ghetto they were the most extraordinary children in the world. In the midst of the harassing life to which her marriage with the gambler had brought her, Gudule so reared them that they grew to be living reflections of her own inmost being. People wondered when they beheld the strange development of "Wild" Ascher's children.

Their natures were as proud and reserved as that of their mother. They did not associate with the youth of the Ghetto; it seemed as though they were not of their kind, as though an insurmountable barrier divided them. And many a bitter sneer was hurled at Gudule's head.

"Does she imagine," she often heard people whisper, "that because her father was a farmer her children are princes? Let her remember that her husband is but a common gambler."

How different would have been their thoughts had they known that the children were Gudule's

sole comfort. What their father had never heard from her, she poured into their youthful souls. No tear their mother shed was unobserved by them; they knew when their father had lost, and when he had won; they knew, too, all the varying moods of his unhinged mind; and in this terrible school of misery they acquired an instinctive intelligence, which in the eyes of strangers seemed mere precocity.

The two children, however, had early given evidence of a marked difference in disposition. Ephraim's nature was one of an almost feminine gentleness, whilst Viola was strong-willed and proudly reserved.

"Mother," she said one day, "do you think he will continue to play much longer?"

"Viola, how can you talk like that?" Ephraim cried, greatly disturbed.

Thereupon Viola impetuously flung her arms round her mother's neck, and for some moments she clung to her with all the strength of her passionate nature. It was as though in that wild embrace she would fain pour forth the long pent-up sorrows of her blighted childhood.

"Mother!" she cried, "you are so good to him. Never, never shall he have such kindness from me!"

"Ephraim," said Gudule, "speak to your sister. In her sinful anger Viola would revenge herself upon her own father. Does it so beseem a Jewish child?"

"Why does he treat you so cruelly, then?" Viola almost hissed the words.

Soon after fell the final crushing blow. Ascher had been away from home for some weeks, when one day Gudule received a letter, dated from a prison in the neighbourhood of Vienna. In words of genuine sympathy the writer explained that Ascher had been unfortunate enough to forge the signature to a bill. She would not see him again for the next five years. God comfort her! The letter was signed:—"A fellow sufferer with your husband."

As it had been with her old father, after he had bidden her a last farewell, so it was now with Gudule. From that moment her days were numbered, and although not a murmur escaped her lips, hour by hour she wasted away.

One Friday evening, shortly after the seven-branched Sabbath lamp had been lit, Gudule, seated in her arm-chair, out of which she had not moved all day, called the two children to

her. A bright smile hovered around her lips, an unwonted fire burned in her still beautiful eyes, her bosom heaved . . . in the eyes of her children she seemed strangely changed. "Children," said she, "come and stand by me. Ephraim, you stand here on my right, and you, dear Viola, on my left. I would like to tell you a little story, such as they tell little children to soothe them to sleep. Shall I?"

"Mother!" they both cried, as they bent towards her.

"You must not interrupt me, children," she observed, still with that strange smile on her lips, "but leave me to tell my little story in my own way."

"Listen, children," she resumed, after a brief pause. "Every human being—be he ever so wicked—if he have done but a single good deed on earth, will, when he arrives above, in the seventh Heaven, get his *Sechûs*, that is to say, the memory of the good he has done here below will be remembered and rewarded bountifully by the Almighty." Gudule ceased speaking. Suddenly a change came over her features; her breath came and went in laboured gasps; but her brown eyes still gleamed brightly.

In tones well-nigh inaudible she continued:—

"When Jerusalem, the Holy City, was destroyed, the dead rose up out of their graves . . . the holy Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . and also Moses, and Aaron his brother . . . and David, the King . . . and prostrating themselves before God's throne they sobbed: 'Dost Thou not remember the deeds we have done? . . . Wouldst Thou now utterly destroy all these our children, even to the innocent babe at the breast?' But the Almighty was inexorable.

"Then Sarah, our Mother, approached the Throne . . . When God beheld her, He covered His face, and wept. 'Go,' said He, 'I cannot listen to thee.' . . . But she exclaimed . . . 'Dost Thou no longer remember the tears I shed before I gave birth to my Joseph and Benjamin . . . and dost Thou not remember the day when they buried me yonder, on the borders of the Promised Land . . . and now, must mine eyes behold the slaughter of my children, their disgrace, and their captivity?' . . . Then God cried — 'For *thy* sake will I remember thy children and spare them.' . . ."

"Would you like to know," Gudule suddenly cried, with uplifted voice, "what this *Sechûs* is like? It has the form of an Angel, and it

stands near the Throne of the Almighty. . . . But, since the days of Rachel, our Mother, it is the *Sechûs* of a mother that finds most favour in God's eyes. When a mother dies, her soul straightway soars Heavenward, and there it takes its place amid the others.

"'Who art thou?' asks God. 'I am the *Sechûs* of a mother,' is the answer, 'of a mother who has left children behind her on earth.' 'Then do thou stand here and keep guard over them!' says God. And when it is well with the children, it is the *Sechûs* of a mother which has caused them to prosper, and when evil days befall them . . . it is again the Angel who stands before God and pleads:—'Dost Thou forget that these children no longer have a mother?" . . . and the evil is averted.' . . ."

Gudule's voice had sunk to a mere whisper. Her eyes closed, her head fell back, her breathing became slower and more laboured. "Are you still there, children?" she softly whispered.

Anxiously they bent over her. Then once again she opened her eyes.

"I see you still" . . . the words came with difficulty from her blanched lips . . . "you Ephraim, and you, my little Viola . . . I am sure my *Sechûs* will plead for you . . . for you

and your father." They were Gudule's last words. When her children, whose eyes had never as yet been confronted with Death, called her by her name, covering her icy hands with burning kisses, their mother was no more. . . .

. . . . . .

Who can tell what influence causes the down-trodden blade to raise itself once more! Is it the vivifying breath of the west wind, or a mysterious power sent forth from the bosom of Mother Earth? It was a touching sight to see how those two children, crushed as they were beneath the weight of a twofold blow, raised their heads again, and in their very desolation found new-born strength. And it filled the Ghetto with wonder. For what were they but the offspring of a gambler? Or was it the spirit of Gudule, their mother, that lived in them?

After Gudule's death, her eldest brother, the then owner of the grange, came over to discuss the future of his sister's children. He wished Ephraim and Viola to go with him to his home in Lower Bohemia, where he could find them occupation. The children, however, were opposed to the idea. They had taken no previous counsel together, yet, upon this point,

both were in perfect accord,—they would prefer to be left in their old home.

"When father comes back again," said Ephraim, "he must know where to find us. But to you, Uncle Gabriel, he would never come."

The uncle then insisted that Viola at least should accompany him, for he had daughters at home whom she could assist in their duties in the house and on the farm. But the child clung to Ephraim, and with flaming eyes, and in a voice of proud disdain, which filled the simple farmer with something like terror, she cried:—

"Uncle, you have enough to do to provide for your own daughters; don't let *me* be an additional burden upon you; besides, sooner would I wander destitute through the world than be separated from my brother."

"And what do you propose to do then?" exclaimed the uncle, after he had somewhat recovered from his astonishment at Viola's vehemence.

"You see, Uncle Gabriel," said Ephraim, a sudden flush overspreading his grief-stricken features, "you see I have thought about it, and I have come to the conclusion that this is the

best plan. Viola shall keep house, and I . . . I'll start a business."

"*You* start a business?" cried the uncle with a loud laugh. "Perhaps you can tell me what price I'll get for my oats next market day? A business! . . . and *what* business, my lad?"

"Uncle," said Ephraim, "if I dispose of all that is left us, I shall have enough money to buy a small business. Others in our position have done the same . . . and then . . ."

"Well, and then?" the uncle cried, eagerly anticipating his answer.

"Then the *Sechûs* of our mother will come to our aid," Ephraim said softly.

The farmer's eyes grew dim with moisture; his sister had been very dear to him.

"As I live!" he cried, brushing his hand across his eyes, "you are true children of my sister Gudule. That's all *I* can say."

Then, as though moved by a sudden impulse, he quickly produced, from the depths of his overcoat, a heavy pocket-book. "There!" . . . he cried, well nigh out of breath, "there are a hundred gulden for you, Ephraim. With that you can, at all events, make a start; and then you needn't sell the few things you still have. There . . . put the money away . . . oats

haven't fetched any price at all to-day, 'tis true; but for the sake of Gudule's children, I don't mind what I do . . . Come, put it away, Ephraim . . . and may God bless you, and make you prosper."

"Uncle!" cried Ephraim, as he raised the farmer's hand to his lips, "is all this to be mine? All this?"

"Yes, my boy, yes; it *is* a deal of money, isn't it?" . . . said Gudule's brother, accompanying his words with a sounding slap on his massive thigh. "I should rather think it is. With that you can do something, at all events . . . and shall I tell you something? In Bohemia the oat crop is, unfortunately, very bad this season. But in Moravia it's splendid, and is two groats cheaper. . . . So there's your chance, Ephraim, my child; you've got the money, buy!" All at once a dark cloud overspread his smiling face.

"It's a lot of money, Ephraim, that I am giving you . . . many a merchant can't lay his hands on it," he said, hesitatingly; "but if . . . you were to . . . gam——"

The word remained unfinished, for upon his arm he suddenly felt a sensation as of a sharp, pricking needle.

"Uncle Gabriel!" cried Viola—for it was she who had gripped his arm—and the child's cheeks were flaming, whilst her lips curled with scorn, and her white teeth gleamed like those of a beast of prey. "Uncle Gabriel!" she almost shrieked, "if you don't trust Ephraim, then take your money back again . . . it's only because you are our mother's brother that we accept it from you at all. . . . Ephraim shall repay you to the last farthing. . . . Ephraim doesn't gamble . . . you shan't lose a single penny of it."

With a shake of his head the farmer regarded the strange child. He felt something like annoyance rise within him; an angry word rose to the lips of the usually good-tempered man. But it remained unsaid; he was unable to remove his eyes from the child's face.

"As I live," he muttered, "she has Gudule's very eyes."

And with another thumping slap on his leg, he merrily exclaimed:—

"All right, we'll leave it so then. . . . If Ephraim doesn't repay me, I'll take *you*, you wild thing . . . for you've stood surety for your brother, and then I'll take you away, and keep you with me at home. Do you agree . . . you little spit-fire, eh?"

"Yes, uncle!" cried Viola.

"Then give me a kiss, Viola."

The child hesitated for a moment, then she laid her cheek upon her uncle's face.

"Ah, now I've got you, you little spit-fire," he cried, kissing her again and again. "Aren't you ashamed now to have snapped your uncle up like that?"

Then after giving Ephraim some further information about the present price of oats, and the future prospects of the crops, with a side-shot at the chances of wool, skins, and other merchandise, he took his leave.

There was great surprise in the Ghetto when the barely fifteen-year-old lad made his first start in business. Many made merry over "the great merchant," but before the year was ended, the sharp-seeing eyes of the Ghetto saw that Ephraim had "a lucky hand." Whatever he undertook he followed up with a calmness and tact, which often baffled the restless activity of many a big dealer, with all his cuteness and trickery. Whenever Ephraim, with his pale, sad face, made his appearance at a farmstead, to negotiate for the purchase of wool, or some such matter, it seemed as though some invisible messenger had gone before him to soften the hearts

of the farmers. "No one ever gets things as cheap as you do," he was assured by many a farmer's wife, who had been won by the unconscious eloquence of his dark eyes. No longer did people laugh at "the little merchant," for nothing so quickly kills ridicule as success.

When, two years later, his uncle Gabriel came again to see how the children were getting on, Ephraim was enabled to repay, in hard cash, the money he had lent him.

"Oho!" cried Gudule's brother, with big, staring eyes, as he clutched his legs with both hands, "how have you managed in so short a time to save so much? D'ye know that that's a great deal of money?"

"I've had good luck, uncle," said Ephraim, modestly.

"You've been . . . playing, perhaps?"

The words fell bluntly from the rough countryman, but hardly had they been uttered, when Viola sprang from her chair, as though an adder had stung her. "Uncle," she cried, and a small fist hovered before Gabriel's eyes in such a threatening manner that he involuntarily closed them. But the child, whose features reminded him so strongly of his dead sister, could not make him angry.

"Ephraim," he exclaimed, in a jocund tone, warding off Viola with his hands, "you take my advice. Take this little spit-fire with you into the village one day . . . they may want a young she-wolf there." Then he pocketed the money.

"Well, Ephraim," said he, "may God bless you, and grant you further luck. But you won't blame me if I take the money,—I can do with it, and in oats, as you know, there's some chance of good business just now. But I am glad to see that you're so prompt at paying. Never give too much credit! That's always my motto; trust means ruin, and eats up a man's business, as rats devour the contents of a corn-barn."

There was but one thing that constantly threw its dark shadow across these two budding lives,—it was the dark figure in a distant prison. This it was that saddened the souls of the two children with a gloom which no sunshine could dispel. When on Fridays Ephraim returned, fatigued and weary from his work, to the home over which Viola presided with such pathetic housewifely care, no smile of welcome was on her face, no greeting on his. Ephraim, 'tis true, told his sister where he had been, and what he had done, but in the simplest words there

vibrated that tone of unutterable sadness which has its constant dwelling-place in such sorely-tried hearts.

Meanwhile, a great change had come over Viola. Nature continues her processes of growth and development 'mid the tempests of human grief, and often the fiercer the storm the more beautiful the after effects. Viola was no longer the pale child, "the little spit-fire," by whom her uncle Gabriel's arm had been seized in such a violent grip. A womanly gentleness had come over her whole being, and already voices were heard in the *Ghetto* praising her grace and beauty, which surpassed even the loveliness of her dead mother in her happiest days. Many an admiring eye dwelt upon the beautiful girl, many a longing glance was cast in the direction of the little house, where she dwelt with her brother. But the daughter of a "gambler," the child of a man who was undergoing imprisonment for the indulgence of his shameful vice! That was a picture from which many an admirer shrank with horror! . . .

One day Ephraim brought home a young canary for his sister. When he handed her the bird in its little gilt cage, her joy knew no bounds, and showering kisses by turns upon her

brother, and on the wire-work of the cage, her eyes sparkling with animation :—

"You shall see, Ephraim, how I'll teach the little bird to speak," she cried.

The softening influence which had, during the last few months, come over his sister's nature was truly a matter of wonder to Ephraim. Humbly and submissively she accepted the slightest suggestion on his part, as though it were a command. He was to her a father and mother, and never were parents more implicitly obeyed by a child than this brother by a sister but three years his junior.

There was one subject, however, upon which Ephraim found his sister implacable and firm—their absent father, the mere mention of whose name made her tremble. Then there returned that haughty curl of the lips, and all the other symptoms of a proud inflexible spirit. It was evident that Viola hated the man to whom she owed her existence.

Thus had it come about that Ephraim was almost afraid to pronounce his father's name. Neither did he care to allude to their mother before Viola, for the memory of her death was too closely bound up with that dark form behind the distant prison walls. . . .

Let us now return to the night on which Ephraim opened the door to his father. How had it come about? A thousand times Ephraim had thought about his father's return—and now he durst not even kindle a light, to look upon the long-estranged face. As silent as when he had come, Ascher remained during the rest of the night; he had seated himself at the window, and his arm was resting upon the very spot where formerly the cage had stood. The bird had obtained its freedom, and was, no doubt, by this time asleep, nestling amid the breeze-swept foliage of some wooded glen. *He* too had regained his liberty, but no sleep closed his eyes, and yet he was in safe shelter, in the house of his children.

At length the day began to break. The sun was still hiding behind the mountain-tops, but its earliest rays were already reflected upon the window-panes. In the *Ghetto* footsteps became audible; here and there the grating noise of an opening street-door was heard, while from round the corner resounded, ever and anon, the hammer of the watchman, calling the people to morning service; for it was a Fast-day, which commenced at sunrise.

At that moment Ascher raised himself from

his chair, and quickly turned away from the window. Ephraim was already by his side. "Father, dear father!" he cried from the inmost depths of his heart, as he tried to grasp the hand of the convict.

"Don't make such a noise," said the latter, casting a furtive glance in the direction of the window, and speaking in the same mysterious whisper in which he had asked for admittance into the house.

What a strange awakening it was to his son, when, in the grey twilight of the breaking day, he looked at Ascher more closely. In his imagination Ephraim had pictured a wan, grief-worn figure, and now he saw before him a strong, well-built man, who certainly did not present the appearance of a person who had just emerged from the dank atmosphere of a prison! On the contrary, he seemed stronger and more vigorous than he had appeared in his best days.

"Has he had such a good time of it . . .?" Ephraim felt compelled to ask himself . . . "how different our poor mother looked!"

With a violent effort he repressed the feelings which swelled his bosom. "Dear father," he said with tears in his eyes, "make yourself quite comfortable; you haven't closed your eyes

the whole night, you must be worn out. You are at home, remember . . . father!"

"It's all right," said Ascher, with a deprecating gesture, "*we* fellows know other ways of spending the night."

"*We fellows!*" The words cut Ephraim to the heart.

"But you may be taken ill, father," he timidly observed.

"I taken ill! What do you take me for?" Ascher laughed, boisterously. "I haven't the slightest intention of falling ill."

At that moment the watchman was heard hammering at the door of the next house. The reverberating blows seemed to have a strangely disquieting effect upon the strong man; a violent tremor seized him; he cast one of the frightened glances which Ephraim had noticed before in the direction of the window, then with one bound he was at the door, and swiftly turned the knob.

"Father, what's the matter?" Ephraim cried, much alarmed.

"Does the watchman look into the room when he passes by?" asked Ascher, while his eyes almost burst from their sockets, with the intentness of their gaze.

"Never," Ephraim assured him.

"Let me see, wait . . ." whispered Ascher.

The three well-known knocks now resounded upon their own door, then the shadow of a passing figure was thrown upon the opposite wall. With a sigh of relief, the words escaped Ascher's bosom—

"He did not look inside . . ." he muttered to himself.

Then he removed his hand from the door-knob, came back into the centre of the room, and approaching the table, rested his hand upon it.

"Ephraim . . ." he said after a while, in that suppressed tone which seemed to be peculiar to him, "aren't you going to synagogue?"

"No, father," replied Ephraim, "I'm not going to-day."

"But they'll want to know," Ascher observed, and at the words an ugly sneer curled the corners of his lip; "they'll want to know who your guest is. Why don't you go and tell them?"

"Father!" cried Ephraim.

"Then be good enough to draw down the blinds. . . . What business is it of theirs who your guest is? Let them attend to their

own affairs. . . . But they wouldn't be of 'the chosen race' if they didn't want to know what was taking place in the furthermost corner of your brain. You can't be too careful with them . . . you're never secure against their far-scenting noses and their sharp, searching eyes."

It was now broad daylight. Ephraim drew down the blinds.

"The blinds are too white . . ." Ascher muttered, and moving a chair forward, he sat down upon it with his back to the window.

Ephraim proceeded to wind the phylacteries round his arm, and commenced to say his prayers softly.

His devotions over, he hurriedly took the phylacteries from his head and hand.

Ascher was still sitting immovable, his back to the window, his eyes fixed upon the door.

"Why don't you ask me where I've left my luggage?" he suddenly cried.

"I'll fetch it myself if you'll tell me where it is," Ephraim remarked, in all simplicity.

"Upon my word, you make me laugh," cried Ascher, and a laugh like that of delirium burst from his lips. "All I can say, Ephraim, is, the most powerful giant upon earth

would break his back beneath the weight of my luggage!"

Then only did Ephraim grasp his father's meaning.

"Don't worry yourself, father . . ." he said lovingly.

"Would you like to support me, perhaps!" Ascher shouted, with cutting disdain.

Ephraim's heart almost ceased to beat. Then movements were heard in the adjoining room.

"Have you anyone with you!" cried Ascher, springing up. His sharp ears had instantly caught the sounds, and again the strong man was seized with violent trembling.

"Father, it's only dear Viola," said Ephraim.

A nameless terror seemed to have overpowered Ascher. With one hand convulsively clenched upon the arm of the chair, and the other pressed to his temple, he sat breathing heavily. Ephraim observed with alarm what a terrible change had come over his father's features during the last few seconds: his face had become ashen white, his eyes had lost their lustre, he seemed to have aged ten years.

The door opened, and Viola entered.

"Viola!" cried Ephraim, "here is our——"

"Welcome!" said the girl, in a low voice,

as she approached a few steps nearer. She extended her hand towards him, but her eyes were cast down. She stood still for a moment, then, with a hurried movement, turned away.

"Gudule!" cried Ascher, horror-stricken, as he fell back almost senseless in his chair.

Was it the glamour of her maiden beauty that had so overpowered this unhappy father? Or was it the extraordinary resemblance she bore to the woman who had so loved him, and whose heart he had broken? The utterance of her name, the terror that accompanied the exclamation, denoted the effect which the girl's sudden appearance had produced upon that sadly unhinged mind.

"Viola!" Ephraim cried, in a sorrow-stricken voice, "why don't you come here?"

"I *can't*, Ephraim, I *can't* . . ." she moaned, as, with halting steps, she walked towards the door.

"Come, speak to him, do," Ephraim entreated, taking her hand in his.

"Let me go!" she cried, trying to release herself. . . . "I am thinking of mother!"

Suddenly Ascher rose.

"Where's my stick?" he cried. "I want

the stick which I brought with me. . . . Where is it? I must go."

"Father, you won't . . ." cried Ephraim.

Then Viola turned round.

"Father," she said, with twitching lips . . . "you'll want something to eat before you go."

"Yes, yes, let me have something to eat," he shouted, as he brought his fist down upon the table. "Bring me wine . . . and let it be good . . . I am thirsty enough to drink the river dry. . . . Wine, and beer, and anything else you can find, bring all here, aud then, when I've had my fill, I'll go."

"Go, Viola," Ephraim whispered in his sister's ear, "and bring him all he asks for."

When Viola had left the room, Ascher appeared to grow calmer. He sat down again leaning his arms upon the table.

"Yes," he muttered to himself: "I'll taste food with my children, before I take up my stick and go. . . . They say it's lucky to have the first drink of the day served by one's own child . . . and luck I *will* have again, at any price. . . . What good children! While I've been anything but a good father to them, they run hither and thither and take the trouble to get me food and drink, and I, I've brought

them home nothing but a wooden stick. But I'll repay them, so help me God, I'll make them rich yet, but I've got nothing but a wooden stick, and I want money, no play without money, and no luck either . . ."

Gradually a certain thoughtfulness overspread Ascher's agitated features, his lips were tightly compressed, deep furrows lined his forehead, while his eyes were fixed in a stony glare, as if upon some distant object. In the meantime Ephraim had remained standing almost motionless, and it was evident that his presence in the room had quite escaped his father's observation. With a chilling shudder running through his frame, his hair on end with horror, he listened to the strange soliloquy! . . . Then he saw his father's eyes travelling slowly in the direction of the old bureau in the corner, and there they remained fixed. "Why does he leave the key in the door, I wonder," he heard him mutter between his teeth, "just as Gudule used to do; I must tell him when he comes back, keys shouldn't be left in doors, never, under any circumstances." The entrance of Viola interrupted the old gambler's audible train of thought.

Ephraim gave a gasp of relief.

"Ah, what have you brought me?" cried Ascher, and his eyes sparkled with animation, as Viola produced some bottles from under her apron, and placed them and some glasses upon the table.

"Now then, fill up the glass," he shouted, in a commanding voice, "and take care that you don't spill any, or you'll spoil my luck."

With trembling hand Viola did as she was bidden, without spilling a single drop. Then he took up the glass, and drained it at one draught. His face flushed a bright crimson; he poured himself out another glass.

"Ar'n't you drinking, Ephraim?" he exclaimed, after he had finished that glass also.

"I don't drink to-day, father," Ephraim faltered, "it's a fast."

"A fast? What fast? I have been fasting too," he continued, with a coarse laugh, "twice a week, on bread and water; an excellent thing for the stomach. Fancy, a fast-day in midsummer. On such a long day, when the sun is up at three already, and at eight o'clock at night is still hesitating whether he'll go to bed or not . . . what have I got to do with your Fast-day?"

His face grew redder every moment; he had

drunk a third and a fourth glass, and there was nothing but a mere drain left in the bottle. Already his utterance was thick and incoherent, and his eyes were fast assuming that glassy brightness that is usually the forerunner of helpless intoxication. It was a sight Ephraim could not bear to see. Impelled by that natural, almost holy shame which prompted the son of Noah to cover the nakedness of his father, he motioned to his sister to leave. Then *he*, too, softly walked out of the room.

Outside, in the corridor, the brother and sister fell into each other's arms. Both wept bitterly; for a long time neither of them could find words in which to express the grief which filled their souls. At length Viola, her head resting upon Ephraim's shoulder, whispered: "Ephraim, what do you think of him?"

"He is ill, I think . . ." said Ephraim, in a voice choked with sobs.

"What, you call *that* illness, Ephraim?" Viola cried, "if that's illness, then a wild beast is ill too."

"Viola, for Heaven's sake, be quiet; he's our own father after all!"

"Ephraim!" said the girl, with a violent outburst of emotion, as she again threw herself into

her brother's arms . . . "just think if mother had lived to see this!"

"Don't, don't, Viola, my sweet!" Ephraim exclaimed, sobbing convulsively.

"Ephraim!" the girl cried, shaking her head in wild despair, "I don't believe in the *Sechús!* When we live to see all this, and our hearts do not break, we lose faith in everything. . . . Ephraim, what is to become of us?"

"Hush, dear Viola, hush, you don't know what you are saying," replied Ephraim, "I believe in it, because mother herself told us . . . you must believe in it too."

But Viola again shook her head. "I don't believe in it any longer," she moaned, "I can't."

Noiselessly, Ephraim walked toward the door of the front room; he placed his ear against the key-hole, and listened. Within all was silent. A fresh terror seized him. Why was no sound to be heard? . . . He opened the door cautiously lest it should creak. There sat his father asleep in the arm-chair, his head bent on his bosom, his arms hanging limp by his side.

"Hush, Viola," he whispered, closing the door as cautiously as he had opened it, "he is asleep. . . . I think it will do him good. Be careful that you make no noise."

Viola had seated herself upon a block of wood outside the kitchen door, and was sobbing silently. In the meantime, Ephraim, unable to find a word of solace for his sister, went and stood at the street-door, so that no unbidden guest should come to disturb his father's slumbers. It was mid-day; from the church hard by streamed the peasants and their wives in their Sunday attire, and many bestowed a friendly smile upon the well-known youth. But he could only nod his head in return, his heart was sore oppressed, and a smile at such a moment seemed to him nothing short of sin. He went back into the house, and listened at the door of the room. Silence still reigned unbroken, and with noiseless steps he again walked away.

"He is still sleeping," he whispered to his sister. "Just think what would have happened if we had still had that bird. . . . He wouldn't have been able to sleep a wink."

"Ephraim, why do you remind me of it!" cried Viola with a fresh outburst of tears. "Where is the little bird now, I wonder? . . ."

Ephraim sat down beside his sister, and took her hand in his. Thus they remained seated for some time, unable to find a word of comfort for each other.

At length movements were heard. Ephraim sprang to his feet and once more approached the door to listen.

"He is awake!" he softly said to Viola, and slowly opening the door, he entered the room.

Ascher was walking up and down with heavy tread.

"Do you feel refreshed after your sleep, father?" Ephraim asked timidly.

Ascher stood still, and confronted his son. His face was still very flushed, but his eyes had lost their glassy stare; his glance was clear and steady.

"Ephraim, my son," he began, in a kindly, almost cheerful tone, "you've grown into a splendid business man, as good a business man as one can meet with between this and Vienna. I'm sure of it. But I must give you one bit of advice; it's worth a hundred pounds to one in your position. Never leave a key in the lock of a bureau!"

Ephraim looked at his father as though stupefied. Was the man mad or delirious to talk in such a strain? At that moment, from the extreme end of the *Ghetto*, there sounded the three knocks, summoning the people to evening prayer. As in the morning, so again now the sound seemed

to stun the vigorous man. His face blanched and assumed an expression of terror; he trembled from head to foot. Then again he cast a frightened glance in the direction of the window.

"Nothing but knocking, knocking!" he muttered. "They would like to knock the most hidden thoughts out of one's brains, if they only could. What makes them do it, I should like to know. . . . To the clanging of a bell you can, at all events, shut your ears, you need only place your hands to them . . . but with that hammer they bang at every confounded door, and drive one crazy. Who gives them the right to do it, I should like to know?" He stood still listening.

"Do you think he will be long before he reaches here?" he asked Ephraim, in a frightened voice.

"Who, father?"

"The watch."

"He has already knocked next door but one."

Another minute, and the three strokes sounded on the door of the house. Ascher heaved a sigh of relief; he rubbed his hand across his forehead; it was wet with perspiration.

"Thank God!" he cried, as though address-

ing himself, "that's over, and won't come again till to-morrow."

"Ephraim, my son!" he cried, with a sudden outburst of cheerfulness, accompanying the words with a thundering bang upon the table, "Ephraim, my son, you shall soon see what sort of a father you have. Now, you're continually worrying your brains, walking your feet off, trying to get a skin, or praying some fool of a peasant to be good enough to sell you a bit of wool. Ephraim, my son, all that shall soon be changed, take my word for it. I'll make you rich, and as for Viola, I'll get her a husband—such a husband that all the girls in Bohemia will turn green and yellow with envy. . . . Ascher's daughter shall have as rich a dowry as the daughter of a Rothschild. . . . But there's one thing, and one thing only, that I need, and then all will happen as I promise, in one night."

"And what is that, father!" asked Ephraim, with a slight shudder.

"Luck, luck, Ephraim, my son!" he shouted. "What is a man without luck? Put a man who has no luck in a chest full of gold; cover him with gold from head to foot; when he crawls out of it, and you search his pockets, you'll find the gold has turned to copper."

"And will you have luck, father?" asked Ephraim.

"Ephraim, my son!" said the old gambler, with a cunning smile, "I'll tell you something. There are persons whose whole powers are devoted to one object—how to win a fortune; in the same way as there are some who study to become doctors, and the like, so these study what we call luck . . . and from them I've learnt it."

He checked himself in sudden alarm lest he might have said too much, and looked searchingly at his son. A pure soul shone through Ephraim's open countenance, and showed his father that his real meaning had not been grasped.

"Never mind," he shouted loudly, waving his arms in the air, "what is to come no man can stop. Give me something to drink, Ephraim."

"Father," the latter faltered, "don't you think it will harm you?"

"Don't be a fool, Ephraim!" cried Ascher, "you don't know my constitution. Besides, didn't you say that to-day was a fast, when it is forbidden to eat anything? And have I asked you for any food? But as for drink, that's quite

another thing! The birds of the air can't do without it, much less man!"

Ephraim saw that for that evening, at all events, it would not do to oppose his father. He walked into the kitchen where Viola was preparing supper, or rather breakfast, for after the fast this was the first meal of the day.

"Viola," he said, "make haste and fetch some fresh wine?"

"For him?" cried Viola, pointing her finger almost threateningly in the direction of the sitting-room door.

"Don't, don't, Viola!" Ephraim implored.

"And you are fasting!" she said.

"Am I not also fasting for him?" said Ephraim.

With a full bottle in his hand Ephraim once more entered the room. He placed the wine upon the table, where the glasses from which Ascher had drunk in the morning were still standing.

"Where is Viola?" asked Ascher, who was again pacing the room with firm steps.

"She is busy cooking."

"Tell her she shall have a husband, and a dowry that will make half the girls in Bohemia turn green and yellow with envy."

"Then he approached the table, and drank three brimming glasses, one after the other. "Now then," he said, as with his whole weight he dropped into the old armchair. . . . "Now I'll have a good night's rest. I need strength and sharp eyes, and they are things which only sleep can give. Ephraim, my son," he continued after a while in thick, halting accents . . . "tell the watch—Simon is his name, I think—he can give six knocks instead of three upon the door, in the morning, he won't disturb me . . . and to Viola you can say I'll find her a husband, handsomer than her eyes have ever beheld, and tell her, on her wedding-day she shall wear pearls round her neck like those of a queen, no, no, like those of Gudule, her mother." A few moments later, he was sound asleep.

It was the dead of night. All around reigned stillness and peace, the peace of night! What a gentle sound those words convey, a sound akin only to the word *home!* Fraught, like it, with sweetest balm, a fragrant flower from long-lost paradise. Thou art at rest, Ascher, and in safe shelter; the breathing of thy children is so restful, so tranquil. . . .

Desist! desist! 'Tis too late. Side by side

with the peace of night, there dwell Spirits of Evil, the never-resting, vagrant, home-destroying guests, who enter unbidden into the human soul! Hark, the rustling of their raven-hued plumage! They take wing, they fly aloft; 'tis the shriek of the vulture, swooping down upon the guileless dove.

Is there no eye to watch thee? Doth not thine own kin see thy foul deeds?

Desist!

'Tis too late. . . .

Open is the window, no grating noise has accompanied the unbolting of the shutter. . . . The evil spirits have taken care that the faintest sound shall die away . . . even the rough iron obeys their voices . . . it is they who have bidden: "Be silent; betray him not; he is one of us."

Even the key in the door of the old bureau is turned lightly and without noise. Groping fingers are searching for a bulky volume. Have they found it? Is there none there to cry in a voice of thunder:—"Cursed be the father who stretches forth his desecrating hand towards the things that are his children's?" . . .

They *have* found it, the greedy fingers! and

now, but a spring through the open window, and out into the night. . . .

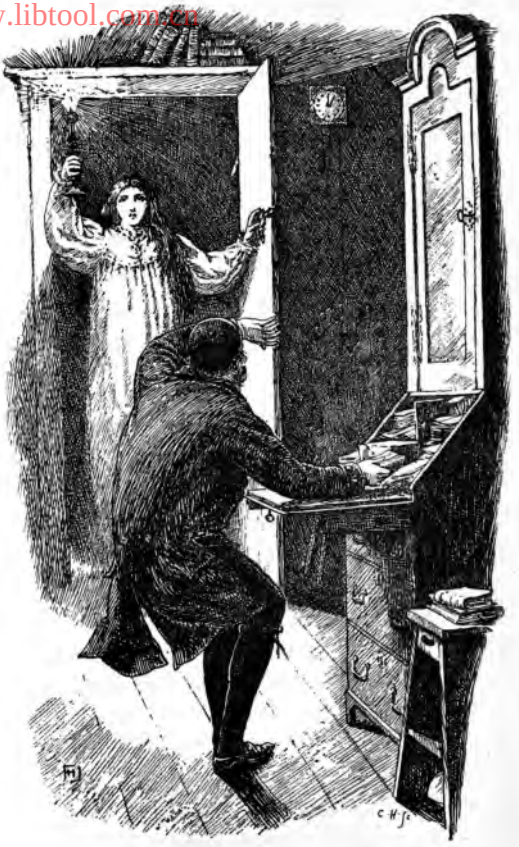
At that moment a sudden ray of light shines through a crack in the door of the room. . . . Swiftly the door opens, a girlish figure appears on the threshold, a lighted lamp in her hand. . . .

"Gudule!" he shrieks, horror-stricken, and falls senseless at her feet.

. . . . . .

Ascher was saved. The terrible blow which had struck him down had not crushed the life from him. He was awakened. But when, after four weeks of gruesome fever and delirium, his mind had somewhat regained its equilibrium, his hair had turned white as snow, and his children beheld an old decrepit man.

That which Viola had denied her father when he returned to them in all the vigour of his manhood, she now lavished upon him in his suffering and helplessness, with that concentrated power of love, the source of which is not human, but Divine. In the space of one night of terror, the merest bud of yesterday had suddenly blossomed forth into a flower of rarest beauty. Never did gentler hands cool a fever-heated



brow, never did sweeter voice mingle its melody with the gruesome dreams of delirium.

On his sick-bed, lovingly tended by Ephraim and Viola, an ennobling influence gradually came over the heart of the old gambler, and so deeply touched it, that calm peace crowned his closing days. It was strange that the events of that memorable night, and the vicissitudes that had preceded it, had left no recollection behind, and his children took good care not to re-awaken, by the slightest hint, his sleeping memory.

. . . . .

A carriage drew up one day in front of Ascher's house. There has evidently been a splendid crop of oats this year. Uncle Gabriel has come. Uncle Gabriel has only lately assumed the additional character of father-in-law to Ephraim, for he declared that none but Ephraim should be his pet daughter's husband. And now he has come for the purpose of having a confidential chat with Viola. There he sits, the kind-hearted, simple-minded man, every line of his honest face eloquent with good-humour and happiness, still guilty of an occasional violent onslaught upon his thighs. Viola still remains his "little spit-fire."

"Now, Viola, my little spit-fire," said he, "won't you yet allow me to talk to my Nathan about you? Upon my word, the boy can't bear the suspense any longer."

"Uncle," says Viola, and a crimson blush dyes her pale cheeks: "Uncle," she repeats, in a tone of such deep earnestness, that the laughing expression upon Gabriel's face instantly vanishes, "please don't talk to him at all. *My* place is with my father!"

And to all appearances Viola will keep her word.

Had she taken upon herself a voluntary penance for having, in her heart's bitter despair, presumed to abjure her faith in the *Sechûs* of her mother? Or was there yet another reason? The heart of woman is a strangely sensitive thing. It loves not to build its happiness upon the hidden ruins of another's life.

"DEBBY AND HER DOOR"

A GHETTO DRAMA

It was the "Sabbath of Repentance," as it is called, the day which heralds the approach of the "Day of Atonement." The synagogue was crowded, and the aged Rabbi was about to preach the sermon. For the last eighteen years the old man had been in the habit, on that day, of addressing his flock, in order to prepare them for the "Great and Awful Day" —*the Yom Kippur*. But first, he must replace the *Torah*—from which the weekly lesson had just been read—in the Ark; for on this occasion the Rabbi was assigned the honour of "bringing out" and returning the parchment scrolls to their resting-place.

Slowly he ascended the steps; already he had partly withdrawn the heavy velvet curtain which veiled the Sacred Ark, when he stumbled, the scroll slipped from his arms, and with a heavy thud he fell upon the steps.

A cry of horror rang through the building. Several men ran forward; they raised the old man to his feet. It was feared that he might have sustained some grievous injury, but it was found that he, fortunately, had met with no hurt whatever.

Then the wild alarm which had seized the whole congregation, and more especially the occupants of the women's gallery, subsided somewhat. One of the congregants replaced the scroll in the ark; the Rabbi motioned his flock to be silent, and took his stand at the white-draped lectern which stood in front of the ark. A solemn hush fell upon the worshippers. Then the old man opened his lips to speak, but his voice failed him! He bowed his silvered head upon the lectern, and wept. Never before had such bitter, heart-wrung sobbing been heard within those walls. The sound of it, the spectacle of that old man, who wept because he could not preach, stirred all present with deepest emotion.

"Do not speak, Rabbi," cried one, down whose own cheeks the tears were rolling. "Do not speak; spare yourself! We have heard and seen enough!"

He raised his hoary head; his venerable

features were of a deadly pallor. With one hand he supported his head, with the other he re-arranged the *Talith* (prayer-scarf) which had slipped down from his shoulders. His lips twitched nervously, and it was evident that he was striving his utmost to recover his speech.

"Woe is me!" he cried at length, with a supreme effort. "Woe is me! I have been young, and I have grown old, and never has the Word of God ceased to dwell within my heart or upon my lips, neither by day nor by night. But now my time has come, and I must give place to others. No longer may I hold the *Torah* in my arms. Woe is me! What have I done that I must fall down like a lifeless form of clay?"

Then he covered his face with his scarf, descended the steps with slow but steady gait, and returned to his seat.

It was a strangely disturbed Sabbath-day; the oldest inhabitants of the Ghetto could not remember one like it Wherever one turned, nothing but looks of sadness met the eye; it was as though every bosom heaved with suppressed sobs—as though the mishap which had befallen the old Rabbi upon that sanctified spot had

touched everyone in the tenderest corner of his heart.

On the evening of that day three young girls, still dressed in their Sabbath best, were seated in front of a house in the Ghetto singing a Bohemian song, but in soft, almost timorous tones, as though they feared that the echoes might carry the sounds farther than they cared. The pale crescent of the new moon had risen in the sky. In the Ghetto all was silent.

Suddenly one of the girls ceased her singing. "Girls," she cried, "let us stop! Perhaps it isn't right of us to sing a Bohemian song on the 'Sabbath of Repentance.' And besides, you remember what took place in synagogue this morning."

One of her companions, a strapping, well-built girl, with strongly marked eyebrows, burst into a ringing laugh:

"I have always said so," she cried, with a shake of her curly head, "one of these days you'll marry a Rabbi. Out of sheer piety you'll throw me over, just as my cousin Pearl did."

"Don't joke about such matters, you wild thing!" the other exclaimed, placing her hand upon her companion's lips, in a vain attempt to silence her.

"*Will* you let me speak!" cried the vivacious girl, in a loud voice. "Where's the harm if I do discuss your brilliant future as a Rabbi's wife? He can have *me* if he likes, all men are the same to me; *I'm* not afraid of any one of them."

"Quiet, quiet, Eva!" urged her friend.

"On such a day as this you mustn't talk in that way."

"I'll talk as I like!" said Eva, with a mocking, deprecating movement, "and we've nothing to repent about, neither you nor I. Perhaps we *shall* have, when we're married. But there's time enough for that. What do *you* say, Dora?"

The girl thus addressed had up till now taken no part in the conversation. The pale moonlight had imparted to her features a dreamy expression. She was about sixteen years of age, but at that moment she looked much younger.

"I shall fast," observed Dora, with an alarming seriousness of manner.

"On your wedding-day, I suppose," retorted Eva, with a saucy smile. "Upon my word, it's strange how we Jews take our pleasures. Once a year my father has to fast for his son, because he is his first-born. And on the day when my father's daughter takes her stand beneath the marriage-canopy, she, too, must fast, and

can consider herself lucky if she gets anything to eat later on in the afternoon. Why must there always be something to mar our pleasures? Can you tell me, Dora?"

The girl sat gazing in front of her with a wrapt expression.

"I shall fast forty days, as it is written," she repeated, "Mondays and Thursdays the whole day, the other days, with the exception of Sabbaths, half a day; for I have always heard, that when a Scroll falls, the whole congregation, old and young, must fast, and I am no longer a child . . ."

"*You?*" interrupted the light-hearted Eva, with a metallic re-echoing laugh, her white teeth gleaming in the uncertain light.

At the same moment the three girls started with affright. On the opposite side of the narrow street a window was flung open with an impetuous movement, and a strident voice shouted:

"You shameless hussies! Who gives you the right to talk about such things on the holy Sabbath of Repentance? No wonder that a Scroll fell to the ground this morning!"

"Run, girls, run!" cried Eva, in pretended alarm: "'Debby and her door' stands no jesting!"

And, Heigh Presto! the girls vanished from the spot as though they had been mere phantoms of the imagination; the liveliest of them had taken refuge in a house, the door of which stood wide open, while the other two flew in opposite directions down the street.

It will have been apparent to the reader that the aged woman, who bore the singular soubriquet of "Debby and her Door," was not a personality regarded with much affection. And indeed, it was generally felt that some degree of personal courage was necessary to encounter her. Old Debby was only a poor widow, deriving a meagre subsistence from a little piece-broker's store; yet her power was feared throughout the Ghetto, and around her individuality there hovered an importance which was not conceded even to many a wealthy and high-placed dame. She was what one would call *a champion of God*. Whenever and wherever any wrong had been done, it was Debby, with her cutting tongue, who stood up for the injured; fearlessly, and without hesitation, she would tell people the plain truth to their face, and, strangely enough, scarcely an instance was known in which her right to speak had been challenged. Old

Debby was the advocate of all who suffered, and when passing sentence upon anyone, it seemed as though consuming flames leapt from her mouth, to turn all who opposed her into dust and ashes. In short, she was the conscience of the Ghetto, and when her tongue was silent, it might safely be assumed that nothing had occurred to outrage its moral or social code.

Some of the older folks could still remember Debby's husband, whom she had lost in the prime of his life. He had been a kind of steward, or master of the ceremonies; no wedding or festive gathering of any kind was considered complete without the invaluable services of Gerson Blitz. Such an occupation as he followed demanded, above all, a suave and courteous manner, and hence it was that Gerson Blitz, humble and polite as he was towards everyone, had much to contend with from his young wife Deborah, in whose eyes these qualities seemed but the outward expression of a servile and fawning nature.

"Gerson," she used frequently to say, "*your* name was also proclaimed from Mount Sinaï, and even if you *are* what is really nothing more than a superior waiter, who knows but what your

father's fathers may not have been the lineal descendants of King David. I, for instance, am the daughter of a *Cohen* (one of the tribe of Aaron), and my father, as you yourself well know, was as poor as poor could be; and yet I am continually saying to myself, that God only knows how many years ago my father's ancestor officiated as High Priest in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. It is *that* thought which upholds me in my dignity . . . and when anyone, be he the greatest man in the community, wrongs or slights me, I think to myself: what is he better than I? Perhaps his forefathers chopped wood for the High Priest from whom I am descended. . . . But *you*, you go through the world as though you and all your family had never been anything but waiters, and if to-day anyone were to say to you: 'Gerson, lie down on the ground, I want to walk over you,' I wager you my soul you would lay yourself down, proud to be singled out for such an honour. A waiter you are, and a waiter you'll remain."

But all these reproachful speeches were of no avail. Gerson Blitz remained the courteous, gentle-mannered man, whose duty it was to entertain the wedding guests, and to accept with grateful thanks the gratuities bestowed upon him

for services gracefully rendered. In fact, he failed entirely to comprehend the "singular pride" of his wife, who beheld her equal in every person she met, while he was firm in the conviction that the inequalities of human society existed by virtue of Divine dispensation, and were therefore not to be tampered with.

One day Gerson was summoned to a neighbouring town. It was in the depth of winter, and terribly cold, and his wife's inflexible spirit rebelled against the idea of permitting the delicate little man to brave the rigours of the weather.

"Gerson," she said, "show me that *all* sense of dignity is not yet dead within you. Must you risk your life, so that rich people may enjoy a well-arranged wedding-party? Stay at home, Gerson, and let the world wait upon you, for once."

But Gerson Blitz considered himself in honour bound to carry out his engagement; and this conscientiousness cost him dear. When he returned from the wedding, he bore within him the germs of a mortal disease from which he never recovered. On the day of the funeral everybody was amazed to see the wonderful change which had come over Debby. People had always doubted whether Deborah *could* weep, and now they saw her bathed in tears; the most

touching lamentations fell from her lips, and again and again she wailed forth the name of the deceased, whom she styled "the Crown of her Life." Never had there been a more thorough gentleman, but alas! the world had failed to understand him; *she* alone had known how to appreciate him. . . . Thus she wept and lamented, and but few suspected that beneath that rough and repellant exterior was concealed a rare wealth of feeling, which kept guard with a jealous fear over its own outbursts.

But before long the old inflexible spirit reasserted itself. Every offer of assistance made to the lonely widow was declined with haughty scorn; indeed she almost insulted the well-meaning people who were bold enough to approach her. Thus, wrapt in her proud retirement, she lived on for many years, until one day the event occurred to which she owed her soubriquet—"Debby and her Door."

In the Ghetto there resided two brothers: quiet, unassuming men, about whom hardly anyone troubled himself. They were pedlars by occupation, and were often away for weeks on their village rounds. They traded in partnership, and no one had any idea what their

earnings were. Silent and reticent, neither of them ever betrayed, by so much as a single word, how matters stood with them; hence they were regarded as a pair of hypocritical humbugs, trying constantly to hoodwink the world. Especially did Samuel, the elder brother, come under this suspicion. For once, in an unguarded moment, he had given utterance to the determination that he would not rest until he had succeeded in re-purchasing his dead mother's seat in the front row of the women's gallery in the synagogue, which they had been obliged to sell owing to their poverty. Since that declaration, years had passed, but the seat still remained in the possession of a stranger.

For the rest, the two brothers continued leading their toilsome, simple lives in mutual affection. Never was one seen without the other; in the synagogue they occupied a pew in common, together they went on their journeys, when the Sabbath had terminated. In speech, in tone, in gesture even, they were remarkably alike, and never did a discord enter into their brotherly harmony. Once, so the story ran in the Ghetto, Joseph, the younger of the two—a widower—was ill for a week because his brother Samuel had omitted to wish him "good Sabbath." One thing,

however, was evident, Samuel was the leading partner; his influence completely overshadowed his younger brother, and Joseph never dreamed of suggesting such a thing as an examination into the mutual accounts. Indeed, Joseph's confidence in his brother's superior wisdom went so far, that he never saw the necessity of keeping accounts. Not that he trusted entirely to his memory either, for he *did* take note of his credit account with Samuel. But it was not entered in a book; the door of his sitting-room was his ledger. Upon that door he inscribed a number of unintelligible signs and figures, and instead of ink, he contented himself with a piece of chalk.

. . . . .

One day, a dying man was carried into the Ghetto. It was Joseph. While on one of his tours in a mountainous part of the country, he had missed his footing, and fallen down a steep ravine, where he was found, by some peasants, terribly mutilated. When brought home he was still alive, and in full possession of his faculties.

Old Deborah's spirit at once rose to the occasion. Joseph's pitiful plight, and still more, the

desolate condition of his child,—a little girl of four—touched her deeply. Unbidden, she took her place at the poor man's death-bed, vying with Samuel, who never left his stricken brother for a moment, in solacing his last hours.

The Sabbath had come. The sun poured its friendly rays into the little room, where lay the dying man. Samuel was at synagogue. Deborah noticed that suddenly the sufferer's features became painfully convulsed, and his eyes protruded from their sockets.

"The door!" he cried, spasmodically, "the door!"

The old woman did her best to pacify him, but Joseph's agitation increased with every moment.

"The child has nothing . . . nothing . . . without the door!" he muttered between his teeth, making a painful attempt to raise himself in his bed. Then he closed his eyes, and for some moments he lay immovable. Suddenly he again looked up. "Deborah," he said, and his voice sounded strangely clear and firm, "Deborah, you'll not forget my child. I place my trust in you; 'tis not for nothing that they call you 'God's Champion.' Above all, don't lose sight of that door. . . . I

have been greatly wronged . . . that door." . . . And before he could complete the sentence, he expired.

Despite her strong nerve, old Deborah felt something like a cold shiver run through her frame. But she was not the sort of woman to allow herself to be overcome by emotion. Enough for her that an appeal had been made to her self-constituted position as "God's Champion," and that over the lips of the dead there still hovered the words which had linked her life with the fate of a helpless child.

It was to that child therefore that she turned; taking it in her arms, she drew near to the death-bed.

"Have you ever recited the *Shamah Yisrael?*"[1] she asked, as she gazed straight into the child's great eyes.

"Twice every day," answered the little girl, staring with surprise at the stern, hard-featured woman.

"Say it now, then!" Deborah commanded.

Without hesitation, the child repeated the usual formula, word for word.

"That's right," said Debby, "now you have

[1] Declaration of the Divine Unity, which is pronounced by the bedside of the dying, and also forms part of the daily prayers.

done something to please your poor father; for perhaps he has still heard how well you know your prayers. He'll never hear you again. But *I*, I shall be your mother, and you shall be my child, and if you will follow me, and obey me, and look upon me as your mother, you shall never feel that your father and your mother are lying in the 'Good Place' yonder. Although I don't know but that it were better for both of us, if we too were dwelling out there, you with your parents, and I with my good Gerson."

Her words seemed to frighten the child: she began to cry bitterly, and Deborah felt *her* eyes, too, filling with tears. She soon, however, recovered herself.

"Yes, *you* can cry," she said, as she put the child down gently in a corner, "but what have *I* to do with weeping? My head must be strong and clear, so that I don't forget the task which your father (peace be with him) has imposed upon me. It is a heavy task, and I'm not sure that it won't be beyond old Deborah's strength; but if *I can* prevent the name of God from being desecrated, is it *my* place to rebel against His will, or to ask the living King of Heaven why He has not chosen someone stronger and better able than *I*

to carry it out?" But at that moment, even while she was talking to the child, the brave woman's eyes had discerned the star which was destined to guide her future footsteps. A dying man had appealed to her to repair an injustice; *him* she could no longer serve; but he had left an orphan behind him, and an injustice—whatever its nature—done to an orphan was to her simply a "desecration of the Ineffable Name."

To the mind of old Deborah this phrase was fraught with a depth of meaning which we, in these far-off days, can scarcely fathom. "A desecration of the Ineffable Name!" What a world of import was conveyed by these words? How applicable were they once held to be to every vicissitude of life. Did a man betray his neighbour—did a wife break the holy bonds of chastity—did discord rear its head amongst the members of a family, there ever remained the imperturbable determination that the "Name" must not be desecrated; and straightway, without anyone's bidding, rather in compliance with nature's law of self-preservation, the word passed from mouth to mouth in the Ghetto that the ugly wound which was festering in its vitals must be hidden at any cost, so that the outside world should not learn how the name of the

God of Vengeance had been desecrated within the walls of the Ghetto.

Like a gigantic girdle these words encircled the inner life of the Ghetto. They were handed down from generation to generation, and our old Debby, too, had received her part in the legacy.

At a loss how to act, or at which point to commence, the old dame could at first do nothing but conceal within the inmost recesses of her being what she had heard at Joseph's death-bed. Once only did she ask Joseph's child:—

"Pearl, my darling, do you know anything about a door?"

The child stared at her in amazement.

"Did your father (peace be with him) never speak to you about a door?"

The child, quite at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the question, answered in a decided negative.

"Well, from *you* I'll certainly find out nothing," Deborah grumbled, thrusting the child from her with some irritation. But the next moment she lifted her into her lap and covered her face with kisses. "I *must* and *shall* see you righted yet," she cried with passionate emphasis, "even

though I have to wander through half Bohemia with that door on my back!"

At the conclusion of the *Shiva* (week of mourning) Deborah took the child to see Samuel, for to *her* it had been a source of much wonder and concern that, during the whole seven days, the man had not troubled himself about his brother's orphan-child.

It took them some considerable time to reach Samuel's dwelling—a poor little house which stood at the extreme end of the Ghetto. Samuel had just concluded his prayers, and was removing the phylacteries from his left arm. When he beheld Joseph's child, his eyes filled with tears, and in loving tones he cried:—

"What a dear little pet! what eyes she has, just like Joseph's!"

Then he lifted the child in his arms and patted its pale cheeks.

"You will love your uncle Samuel, won't you, Pearl, my dear?" he asked, in gentle tones.

"Well, Samuel," said Deborah, after a while, "what do you propose to do for the child?"

"What do I propose to do for her?" repeated Samuel, hastily putting the child down. "What can *I* do? I don't know how you can ask me.

You ought to know I can't do anything."

"I don't understand you, Samuel," said Debby.

"You have had children yourself, Deborah," said Joseph's brother, "and so you must know."

"I never had children," the old woman cried, with bitterness.

"Well, anyhow that has little to do with it," said Samuel. "But you must know, that when a man has six children of his own, and all of them hearty and strong, there are enough mouths to feed without adding a seventh."

"*I* wouldn't take account of one more or less," resumed the old woman. "My opinion is that when God has granted us blessings with our daily bread, it is not for *us* to complain that we have not our fair share of them. So it is with children. As *you* count, so God counts after you, and before you can look round, one of them may be taken from you for ever."

"God save and protect us!" exclaimed Samuel, in great alarm. "How can you talk like that, Deborah? What puts it into your head that my six children are too many for me?"

Old Deborah had heard enough; her path lay now clearly before her.

"Come, Samuel," she said, "you may as well confess it. Your brother's orphan is a burden upon you. You have enough to do to provide for your own."

Samuel's eyes were brimming with tears; he snatched the phylacteries from the table.

"Deborah!" he protested, "by the lives of my six children, I swear to you I am a poor man."

"God in Heaven!" cried Deborah, greatly agitated, as she gripped his arm, "am I your judge, that you should swear to me?"

"But you won't believe me, Deborah," he said.

After a while the old dame began to make preparations for leaving, but when, once more, she took Joseph's child by the hand, she felt weary and sore at heart.

"Well, then," she said, with her hand on the door-knob, "*I'll* keep little Pearl. I see that it is the will of the Supreme that old Deborah shall know before she dies what it means to be a mother. Therefore I will be as a mother to this little one. Are you satisfied, Samuel?"

"Deborah, your deed shall yet meet with its reward. When you are no more generations to come will remember your kindness to an orphan."

Deborah was about to leave, conducted to the door by Samuel. Then only did it occur to her that she had not yet spoken to the child's uncle about the principal object of her visit. The words came with difficulty to her lips.

"Samuel," said she, "I have still something to say to you. A few moments before his death, your brother Joseph mentioned something about a door, exclaiming that a great injustice had been done to him and to his child. I can't help thinking that he had something more to say, something that concerned the future of his child. Why should he have persisted in talking about a door if he didn't mean something by it? Perhaps he had written down on that door some debt due to him, and if so, it is your duty to see that his child is not deprived of the money."

Samuel smiled.

"How foolish you are, to be sure, my dear Deborah," he said quietly, "to trouble yourself about such things as that. Don't *I* know best how matters stood with him? Precious little in the shape of money could be owing to my brother. Joseph was a poor man, as I am myself, and if I were to die to-day, who would trouble about my six children?"

Old Deborah was quite at a loss what reply

to make. She felt that Samuel spoke the truth, and yet, somehow, his words seemed to affect her with a strange revulsion of feeling. Again she felt herself impelled to revert to her former ideas.

"And yet he spoke so persistently about a door," she said, "and at that moment he was perfectly conscious, and as clear in his ideas as you or I. There must be *something* connected with that door, I shall maintain *that* until I have succeeded in solving the riddle."

"Take my word for it, Deborah," returned Samuel, still with that little smile on his thin lips, "you did not know my brother Joseph as well as I did. His head was never very strong at the best of times, so you can't be surprised that it was no stronger a few moments before his death. May be he *did* write something on the door. But what could it have been? Perhaps he noted the dates of his parent's death, so that he shouldn't forget to pray for their souls on the anniversaries, and when the Angel of Death approached his bedside, he may have remembered the door; but thoughts of money debts he had none. For *that* his memory was never strong enough."

Whilst Samuel was speaking it seemed to the

old dame as though a sudden flood of light had burst upon her eyes, giving her a clue to the mystery. *Now* she knew what she wanted to know, now it became clear to her what the dying man had meant, when he spoke to her, with such intensity of feeling about that "door." There, before her very eyes stood the man who had desecrated the name of God. . . .

With every moment the conviction grew stronger within her, that none but a man whose conscience was burdened with guilt could speak with such contempt of his own dead brother, disparaging the memory of him towards whom he had formerly shown a hypocritical affection.

"*He* has solved it," she inwardly soliloquised, "*he* knows what was written upon that door, and all his talking and swearing is in vain. *He's* the guilty one."

But she gave no utterance to her thoughts; she only stared at the man with her searching grey eyes; but the passionate movement with which she clasped Joseph's child closer and closer to her breast did not pass unnoticed by Samuel.

"One word more, my dear Deborah," said he, with his former sickly smile. "I know well enough that the child will be as well cared for

by you as though you were her own mother. But if at any time you should require a dress or a pair of boots for her, you know to whom to come. 'Tis true God has given me six children, but when one has so many to clothe, there will always be something to spare, even if ever so little, for Joseph's child."

Then the old lady could no longer contain herself, and with a vehement outburst of bitter scorn, she cried:

"Yes, Samuel, I will be a mother to this child; and, like a mother, I will keep watch over her; and like a lioness I will stand by my little Pearl, should anyone attempt to wrong her. But this I tell you, Samuel, whoever be the man upon whose conscience rests the responsibility for your brother Joseph's dying injunction, to *him* that door will be as a great iron-bound gate, barring his entrance into Paradise."

From that moment old Deborah's life was governed by two equally-powerful opposing forces, which were continually struggling for mastery,—the force of hatred, and the force of love. While with one unsparing hand she lavished her affection upon the child, with the other she poured forth the full measure of her wrathful scorn upon Samuel.

In the eyes of the Ghetto it seemed natural enough that Deborah should adopt the destitute orphan. In her old age—so opinion ran—she felt the need of a little brightness in her surroundings, and this the presence of the little child would ensure her. But there were some who declared that having tormented her husband to death, she now desired to subject the poor orphan-child to the same treatment. But when, at times, the old woman happened to hint, in a mysterious way, to the mission which Joseph's death had imposed upon her, namely, the solution of the "door" problem, she met with no other response than a pitying glance, or oftener still, a mocking laugh, and before long her soubriquet of "the Champion of the Oppressed" was replaced by that of "Debby and her Door."

But Deborah gave herself no rest. She was incessantly searching and making inquiries here, there, and everywhere, and when, by any chance, her eyes caught the faintest glimmer that promised to shed some light upon her quest, she set to work with an energy that was nothing short of marvellous in one so aged.

Cautiously and with feverish haste she followed onward in pursuit of her object, which, however, seemed to be constantly eluding her

grasp. Did she ask anyone whether he knew if Joseph had left any money, or if anyone owed him anything, she always received the same answer.

"Why do you ask *me*? Ask his brother Samuel, *he'll* be able to tell you."

"Samuel knows nothing about it," she would then observe, with a somewhat threatening manner, "and he is a poor man himself."

Strange! Convinced as she was in her heart that Joseph's brother was guilty, yet her lips feared to give utterance to the suspicion which burned so fiercely within her.

"What can Samuel have to do with it?" people would say to her. "Samuel is a pious man; would *he* be capable of doing his brother's orphan an injury? The fact is that a man with six children must be a poor man, and you can see with your own eyes how he has to toil and slave to provide bread for his family."

Yes; *that* old Deborah certainly did see. Every Friday afternoon, when she was standing in front of her little shop, Samuel came passing by, bent almost double under the heavy load of merchandize upon his back, and wiping the perspiration from his brow. How worn and

troubled he looked, the very personification of the misery that characterizes the life of the rural hawker. Whenever Deborah saw this her heart beat tumultuously, and covering her face with her hands, she wept bitterly.

"But he's done it all the same!" the implacable spirit within her would again urge, "*he* has done it, and no one else, for he has insulted the memory of his dead brother."

One day, when little Pearl came home from school, she asked—

"Why do they call you 'Debby and her Door'!"

"Who gives me that name?"

"Uncle Samuel's Eva, who sits next to me."

"Oh, so *that's* what they call me at your uncle's house!"

Deborah said no more then, but when at night she had laid the child to rest after reciting the customary prayer with her, she sat down by the bedside, seemingly wrapt in thought. Suddenly she said—

"Pearl, dear, I have something to say to you yet. Don't go to sleep."

Old Deborah's voice, usually so steady, now trembled with agitation.

"Shall I tell you, Pearl, why they call me 'Debby and her Door?'"

The child, tired and drowsy though she was, opened her big glistening eyes, and fixed them enquiringly upon her foster-mother's face.

"I'll tell you now, Pearl," Deborah resumed, "and I'll try to make myself understood. Your father—peace be with him—was a poor man; but one day he found something,—a piece of gold, I think, and so as not to lose it he put it away in some hidden corner, and afterwards he took a piece of chalk and wrote upon the door where he had hidden it, in case he should forget the place where the treasure was. Do you still remember the room in which you used to live, and the door there?"

The child nodded her head in the affirmative.

"Well, when your father—peace be with him—was dying, he told *me*, in strict confidence, that the place where his piece of gold lay hidden was marked down upon that very door. But when I went to that door to see what your father had written upon it, would you believe, Pearl, my dearie, that I found . . . nothing, nothing at all—everything had been rubbed out, and . . . then your father died."

The solemnity of Deborah's manner held the child spell-bound.

"And because I am constantly searching for the place where your father hid his treasure, and because I do not leave off asking people if they can tell me what was written on the door, and because my heart is breaking under it, and because my brain labours, and labours in vain, to grasp the meaning of your father's last words,—*that* is why they call me 'Debby and her Door.' And now you know all about it."

"Yes, and what else?" asked the child, thinking that the tale was not yet ended.

"That's the whole of the story," answered Deborah, in a dull voice.

But after a while she exclaimed, with great vehemence—

"Pearl, dear, don't go to sleep yet; I have something more to tell you."

The child sat up once more to listen.

"Who was it that called me 'Debby and her Door?'"

"Uncle Samuel's Eva, who sits next to me at school."

"Well, then, you must no longer sit next to your Uncle Samuel's Eva. You must not speak to her any more, and whenever you hear her call

me by that name, you can lift up your hand and strike her. . . . No, no, don't strike her. There is One who dwells in the Seventh Heaven —He also will one day call me 'Debby and her Door.' . . . But then my soul will laugh with joy, and will say—'I have done that which was right. I took *Thy* child to my bosom, for are not orphans Thy most dearly beloved children?"

Big tears rolled down the old woman's sunken cheeks. The child, frightened by her foster-mother's mysterious words, no less than by the vehemence with which they were uttered, hid her little head in the pillow, until again Deborah said—

"Pearl, don't go to sleep yet."

The docile child instantly raised her head.

"Are you fond of Uncle Samuel's Eva?"

"I love her!"

"I am sorry to hear it, Pearl, my darling, for I can't help you. You *must* tear that love out of your heart, however it may pain you. *You* never heard the agonized voice in which your father—peace be with him—cried, 'The door! the door!' . . . You must tear yourself away from your cousin Eva, and if she is angry with you, and beats you till you bleed, go away quietly, and say nothing. A time will come!

. . . But, for the present, we must both keep silent!" . . .

Two years had passed since that night. To Deborah this period had been no more than a passing shadow, and her eyes had scarcely noticed that, during that time, the young orphan had budded into a fair flower, upon which the eyes of the Ghetto loved to dwell. As before, every Friday afternoon Samuel passed her shop, bending under the weight of his heavy pack. As before, his appearance was wretched and poverty-stricken in the extreme. And when she saw him thus, the thought would rise to Deborah's brain—was she right, or was she wrong? *Who* was it that had effaced the poor dead man's writing from that door? Was it Samuel? And if in very truth it was he who had done it, why did circumstances combine to shield the man whose conscience was stained blacker than the darkest night?

"Great God in Heaven!" she sometimes exclaimed, in her mental anguish, "hast Thou chosen me to stand as a protecting shield by the side of the wronged, that now in my old age I should stagger along like a drunkard, unable to distinguish truth from falsehood? Why dost Thou let me grope thus

in the dark? Was it wrong of me to have listened to Joseph's last words . . .?"

One Sabbath Deborah came to synagogue very early; the service had scarcely commenced, and most of the seats in the women's gallery were still empty. Gradually, however, they were filled by women in their holiday finery.

Suddenly a silken-clad figure came rustling in and brushed past Deborah.

"Who is that?" she asked her neighbour.

"Don't you know?" was the answer, "that's Samuel's wife."

"What! *She* in a silk dress?"

The blood rushed to Deborah's head. But, amazed as she was, she was to have further cause for wonder. She saw Samuel's wife; she heard the frou-frou of her silken garment, as she made her way between the rows of seats, and sat down at last in the foremost row, just behind the grating, among the richest women of the Ghetto.

"How does *she* get to such a place?" Deborah asked again.

"Deborah, how you *do* talk!" said her neighbour, shrugging her shoulders, "why, anyone would think you had just come from America!

Don't you know that Samuel bought his wife that seat for two hundred gulden, cash down? It was his mother's once."

"Can he afford to do such a thing as *that?*"

"Why *not?* How can you ask, Deborah? They say he'll shortly open a big shop in the market-place."

Suddenly, in the midst of her talk, the woman uttered a piercing shriek,—Deborah had fallen into a swoon!

A number of women rushed forward; one of them produced a bottle of eau de Cologne, with which she sprinkled Deborah's face.

The moment she had regained consciousness, she cried:

"The door! the door!"

"How did she become possessed of that idea, I wonder," whispered one of the younger women.

"Don't be a fool," said an older woman, with a mysterious gravity of manner, "it's a disease, that's what it is, and no one knows how she caught it."

When she had recovered somewhat, Deborah asked to be taken home. She could no longer breathe the same air—even in the house of God—with a woman who decked herself out in a dress that did not belong to her station in life, a

woman who occupied a seat which had been purchased with the stolen inheritance of a poor orphan.

Left alone with Pearl, she bade her foster-child approach her. The girl looked at the old dame's drawn and pallid features in wild alarm.

She was seated in an old easy-chair, her arms hanging limp by her sides, a feverish light burning in her grey-browed eyes.

"Pearl," she said, in a weak voice, "how old are you now?"

"Don't you know? On the coming Feast of Tabernacles I shall be fourteen."

"And when I took you to live with me, you were a little child of four."

Then a deep sigh escaped her.

"The ways of God are beyond me! For the last ten years, hour by hour, minute by minute, I have been waiting for the time to come, when He,—the Blessed One, Praised be His name—should reveal His will unto me, and help me to the right way. And now, what do I live to see; things have gone from bad to worse, and *I*, I am groping in the dark as before."

Then she was silent for some time, and sat with closed eyes, so that Pearl thought she was asleep. But suddenly she uttered a loud

shriek, and clasping the girl's hands, she cried in terror-stricken tones:

"Pearl, my darling, I think I'm going to die. I feel that death has laid hold of my heart. And then, when I'm gone, you will be alone in the world, and I, I shall lie alone in the dark earth. But I *won't*, I *won't* die yet, I may not . . . for still I wait and wait that God may reveal Himself . . ."

Gradually she grew calmer, and her eyes lost their unnatural brightness.

"Pearl," she resumed, stroking the girl's cheeks and hair, "do you remember that night when I spoke to you about a piece of gold which your father—peace be with him—had found one day, and told you how he had written upon the door the place where he had concealed it?"

"I remember it as though it had occurred yesterday."

"Well, at that time, I told you that search where I might, I couldn't find the place, because someone had rubbed out the writing. Shall I tell you something else now? I *have* found the place, and also the person who effaced your father's writing. . . ."

"And I know it too," said Pearl, in a dull monotone.

"Great God in Heaven! *What* is that you say?" cried the old woman, with all the still latent strength of her powerful nature. She sprang from her chair, and with head erect, with eyes aflame, she menacingly confronted the girl. But Joseph's child betrayed no fear whatever, but quietly remarked: "I guessed it long ago!"

"Silence! Silence!" cried old Deborah, in profoundest agitation, "say not another word. Mention no name, lest you perjure your soul."

Pearl began to weep.

"Didn't I do as you bade me, and break with my cousin Eva?" she said. "Have you noticed me speaking a single word to her since you forbade me?"

The words produced a wonderful effect upon the strange old dame. Her face softened with an expression of which no one would have deemed the grim "champion's" sour features capable. In Pearl's eyes she appeared to have suddenly grown young again, and strangely beautiful even, under the pink flush that suffused her countenance.

"Pearl, my child," she said, and every inflexion of her voice betrayed the tumultuous storm of emotion that was raging within her, "Pearl, dear," she repeated, laying her hand

upon the girl's head, and looking straight into her eyes, "I withdraw my words. Henceforth you can associate freely with your cousin, and you need not trouble about it if she calls me 'Debby and her Door,' or any other name."

"Do you mean this?"

"Deborah never jests, you know that."

Did Pearl suspect to what depth of emotion Deborah's mind must have been stirred ere she could gather strength for such a resolution? For it was with a movement of profoundest veneration that the girl took the yellow, wrinkled hand in hers and tenderly kissed it.

From that day a remarkable change came over old Deborah, a change which did not escape the observation of the Ghetto folk. She seldom or never mentioned her "mission," so they thought she was cured of her mania. Her "championship," 'tis true, re-asserted itself, now and again, with its old masterful vehemence, but her voice had lost its biting acerbity, a certain peaceful calm seemed to emanate from her, and yet ever since that eventful Sabbath the stormy tumult within her had not ceased to rage.

Samuel had opened his "big shop" of miscellaneous goods in the best part of the market-place.

An old school-mate of Deborah's, who called upon her, dilated upon the marvels of beauty and luxury to be found among Samuel's wares.

"Has Samuel had a good door made to his warehouse?" Deborah asked, interrupting her chattering friend.

"A good door? What do you mean?"

The woman's features showed unmistakably that she suspected that Deborah had once more fallen a victim to her diseased imagination.

"I only mean to say," said Deborah, with a significant little smile, "that a strong door is always a good thing to have; one can write one's debts upon it with a piece of chalk; besides, look what a protection it is against thieves."

Another time, when the same old acquaintance came to see Deborah, she remarked, in the course of a lengthy chat—

"Deborah, everyone wonders why you don't get more than you do for your little Pearl from her rich uncle Samuel."

"*More?*" cried the old "Champion," and her eyes blazed again with the fire of former days. "*More?* As if I have ever asked or would have accepted a single thing from him!"

"But they say he has often sent you beautiful things, and money too, for Pearl, but you

refused everything; and now that Samuel has made himself such a position in the community, they think it very ill-advised of you to show such pride."

"Pride! Am *I proud?* Why, I am humbler than a beaten child. I am only waiting until it shall please God to help me to my door."

"You are always coming back to *that*," said her friend, with a furtive smile.

"I am only God's champion," answered Deborah, with emphasis, "and at God's hands alone I receive my daily needs."

"But what grievance can you have against Samuel? Why, to hear you talk, one would think he was a murderer. Is it right, I ask you, to make an enemy of a man who could be of great use to you?"

Deborah smiled.

"You know old Deborah has always had peculiar whims and fancies, and in my old age I certainly won't turn as if I were a teetotum. You leave me to my own fancies."

It was with the bitterest feelings that Deborah's old friend left her. Afterwards, in chatting with her neighbours, she gave expression to her keen regret that Joseph's child should have been allowed to remain with the "Champion;" it

was a reproach to the community; the very worst situation that could be found for Pearl would have been preferable to leaving her to waste her years with "Debby and her Door," and so endangering her sanity. In Heaven's name, she urged, let them bestir themselves, and persuade Samuel to take the girl under his protection; if they delayed any longer, she would come to no good, and an orphan was a human being after all.

And well indeed did the slanderous tongues do their work. The poor orphan's name was on many a lip; some were for going straight to Deborah, and giving her a good lecturing, others even went so far as to advocate strong measures. But when the time drew near for decisive action, 'twas remarkable to see how all this courage and exuberant enthusiasm had evaporated!

And the end of it was that old Deborah remained in undisputed possession of her darling Pearl.

"She can't live much longer," was the reflection with which people solaced one another; "when once she closes her eyes, Samuel will show that his brother's child is something to him after all."

Meanwhile the years had been speeding by. At the coming Feast of Tabernacles, Pearl would enter upon her eighteenth year. At the same time Deborah's strength had been slowly declining; it was with difficulty that she could hold herself erect, and for days at a stretch, she was unable to take her place in the little shop, which provided herself and Joseph's child with a scanty living.

One night she awoke from a dream laughing loudly. Pearl, whose bed was by the side of hers, started up and enquired the cause of that strange mirth.

"Just fancy, Pearl," she said, as her mirth increased, "whom do you think I saw in my dream? None other than my old Gerson. You didn't know him the refined, courteous gentleman, Pearl. I tell you, my child, such people arn't born now-a-days. And exactly as he looked twenty years ago, he sat down beside me in my room, and spoke to me. I still hear him saying: 'Deborah, you arn't humble enough to people, you always imagine everything must happen as *you* want it.' And to hear my old Gerson talk like that made me laugh, and then I awoke."

Then, sitting up in bed, she leaned her

head on her hand, and was lost in deep thought.

"You will see, my child," she said after a while, "that when my Gerson, after being dead these twenty years, takes courage to talk to me like that, it means something. *What* that is I needn't tell you. Don't cry," she continued, sternly, "nor grieve about me. Perhaps I have lived too long already, and a person to whom God has given a disposition like mine is out of place in this world. What good has it done *me* that I have taken upon myself to act as God's champion? Has it brought me joy or happiness? Has the world loved me for it? I lived in discord with my husband as long as he was upon this earth. And why? Because I could not bear to see such injustice, that he, the polished, refined man, had to serve others, and bow and scrape to them; and that is why I embittered his life. And there are none to whom my existence has been of the slightest comfort, for the one upon whose shoulders the burden of God's championship has fallen is never a person around whose head shines the light of joy. Only flames of fire proceed from such an one, consuming all that they find in their way, and at times again the 'Champion's' presence

acts like the grim frost of winter, hardening and freezing all who touch or approach it. One must let the world go as it pleases, like a runaway horse, and not try to stop it. Don't *you* be a fool, Pearl, let the horse run. A 'Champion of God' must be prepared for anything, for ingratitude and wickedness, and in the end she may expect to be laughed at, like a jester whose occupation it is to amuse the world. . . ."

"Don't belittle yourself!" cried the girl, deeply affected. "Think what you have done for *me!*"

"You tell me not to belittle myself!" said Deborah, almost contemptuously, "who has ever thought so much of herself as *I?* Who else has prided herself so much upon her own strength? And what have I done that *you* should think so well of me? 'Tis true, I took you to my heart when you were a helpless child, and gave you food and clothing."

"And why did *you* and nobody else do that?" cried Pearl.

"What do you mean by that, Pearl?" cried the old "Champion," over whose features there came a sudden change. "What do you mean by nobody else?"

Pearl approached her and whispered something in her ear.

"Hush, hush, not another word," cried the old woman, "you know well enough for what reason both of us must keep silent."

It was only at break of day that the old dame had recovered sufficiently from the emotion of the night to be able to say, with some of her accustomed calmness:

"And still I did right, and God also shall one day say I was right. . . . And what would have happened had I allowed my feelings to get the better of me, had I carried your father's door upon my back to the market-place, and had shouted to the people: '*There* is the man who rubbed out the writing, there is he who robbed a poor orphan-child of her patrimony.' Have you ever thought what would have happened then? . . ."

And so the weeks sped by until that eventful Sabbath, when the Scroll fell from the feeble old Rabbi's arms.

In the general excitement which the occurrence caused in every part of the synagogue, Deborah's action remained quite unobserved, and her words were heard by none; and yet in that moment her appearance was truly awe-inspiring.

There she stood in a corner of the women's

gallery, her figure drawn to its fullest height, erect and unbending, her haggard features suffused with a strange glow, her eyes wide open and sparkling, her right hand outstretched, and amid the babel of voices she shouted:

"Thus it *has* come about at last! He fancied, the old Rabbi, because he is pious and good, that sin could not find a habitation in the community. Why does he not know what was done with Joseph's door? And now, without warning, God has led him in the right path, by flinging the *Torah* out of his arms! Thus shall it be with all who wilfully close their eyes to the truth."

She could no longer remain in the synagogue. She left the building, with feelings much akin to those of a soldier before whose eyes there rises, at the end of a well-fought battle, a vision of rich booty.

On her return to her own little house, she called Pearl to her, and after laying her hands upon her head, and pronouncing the customary benediction over her, she related, in a few words what had happened in the synagogue.

"And now, Pearl, my child," she said, and her voice sounded fuller and stronger than the girl had ever heard it, "now it is well with me. Now that the old Rabbi has dropped the *Torah*

out of his arms, I know that my time has come. God has kept me waiting long, very long, but at last the time has come."

"What ails you?" asked Pearl, keeping her eyes anxiously fixed upon her foster-mother's face.

"What ails me? Ask me rather what has ailed me ever since the death of your father—peace be with him. But now, now, it is well with me. Now we shall see what it was that was written upon that door. . . . And that which was rubbed out will now again appear."

Then she made no further allusion to the matter; she remained unusually silent and reserved, apparently absorbed in constant thought.

In the afternoon, as was customary with her, she took her prayer-book and read a chapter in the "Ethics of the Fathers."

"Now I know," she suddenly cried, "what text the old Rabbi ought to have taken for his sermon to-day? There it is. Nothing could be plainer."

The sentence ran as follows:—

"*The sword pervadeth the world on account of the painful delay of justice, and the painful perversion thereof; . . . Ferocious animals overrun the world on account of false swearing and the profanation of God's name. . . .*"

She closed the book; she had nothing more to learn from it.

It wanted only a few days to the eve of the great Day of Atonement. Deborah spent the interval in her room; the little shop was not opened. She partook of food only once a day, for the fall of the holy Scroll imposed upon her a forty day's fast. For the rest, an almost solemn stillness pervaded the little room. When she was not praying, the old "Champion" sat silent in her arm-chair, her eyes sparkling with a strange brightness. On the eve of the Day of Atonement Deborah did not fast; it was necessary, she said, for her to reserve her strength for the heavy task that awaited her. In the afternoon she asked her foster-child for her white cotton dress and a clean white cap, for, said she, once a year one has audience of the King of Kings, and then one must present a respectable appearance. Then she sat down, attired in her festive white garments, awaiting the commencement of the solemn celebration.

When she and Pearl had partaken of the last meal before the fast, she said—

"And now let us go, Pearl, my child."

"So soon? It isn't time yet to go to synagogue."

"I have to go somewhere with you before service commences, make haste."

Pearl felt alarmed.

"What are you frightened about?" asked Deborah, with great calmness of manner. "Before *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) commences, you shall have learnt, once for all, who it was that rubbed out the writing upon your father's door."

Then they both left the house and hurried along the deserted streets of the Ghetto; the young trembling girl by the side of the haggard old woman. In front of a handsome house near the market-place Deborah stopped.

"This is where uncle Samuel lives," whispered Pearl.

Deborah made no reply, but firmly ascended the stone steps, followed by Pearl.

Having gained admittance into the house, they found Samuel, his wife and children, still seated at table. Whether it was the sight of the stern old woman, or whether anything else was the cause, it did not escape Deborah's keen eyes that his face fell when he beheld her.

Springing from his chair, he cried, with a forced smile, "Deborah! What a strange time for you to come to see me!"

Then he told one of his children to place a chair at the table for Deborah.

But the old woman shook her head. "Never mind that, Samuel," she said, "I haven't come to sup with you. I have come to have a word with you in private."

She spoke with the utmost calmness; not a muscle moved.

"What! *now?*" asked Samuel, with apparent indifference, although his left arm, which was resting upon the table, trembled visibly.

"Why not?" said Deborah, with her piercing grey eyes fixed upon his face. "You know it is the eve of Yom Kippur, and if we have anything upon our hearts we must unburden ourselves of the load before that Great Day comes."

Samuel attempted to say something in reply, but his words were quite unintelligible. "Come," he cried, at length, with an evident effort, as he rose from his chair; "I know you of old, you *will* have your way."

"Pearl, my darling, you stay here until I have spoken to your uncle," said Deborah.

Then only did Samuel notice the presence of the young girl, who was shyly standing at the door.

A deadly pallor overspread his features. Having taken Deborah into another room, Samuel asked—

"What have you to say to me, Deborah?"

"First bolt the door," said the "Champion."

Again Samuel's thin lips forced themselves into a little smile.

"Is it such an important matter, then?"

"I have only a single question to put to you, Samuel," said Deborah, seating herself; "but it is one that must be answered before the Fast."

"What is it?" said Samuel, breathing with difficulty.

Deborah remained silent for some time. Then, with a solemn emphasis upon each word, she resumed: "I only want to ask you, Samuel, if you can explain why the old Rabbi dropped the holy *Torah* from his arms last Sabbath in the synagogue?"

"Why do you ask *me* such a question? The Rabbi is growing old and feeble, that is my explanation," remarked Samuel, somewhat re-assured.

Deborah shook her head.

"No, it's not *that*, Samuel," as she rose and drew nearer to him. "*I'll* explain it to you.

The reason why the Scroll fell to the ground is this. Because in this Ghetto there is a certain door, and upon that door, fourteen years ago, something was written, and this writing someone has rubbed out. . . ."

"The old nonsense," Samuel muttered between his teeth.

"God in Heaven, Samuel," cried Deborah, "you call *that* nonsense? In the next room your six children are waiting, they want to ask your forgiveness before you go to synagogue; they will say to you: Father, forgive us for having been disobedient and undutiful towards you during the year that has passed . . . impose upon us any penance that may seem right in your eyes, but forgive us, as a father forgives his children. . . ." The old woman's voice shook with emotion.

"I don't understand you, Deborah," said Samuel, great beads of perspiration standing upon his forehead.

"You *don't?*" cried the old woman, in cutting tones. "Then look me in the face, and answer me: *Who* was it that rubbed out the writing upon Joseph's door?"

"Deborah!"

The cry sounded like that of a man writhing

under the surgeon's lancet, as it probes its way into a freshly opened wound.

"Why do you cry in that voice to *me*. Cry aloud to God," continued the implacable woman —"*He* is your Judge. But this much you *shall* hear from *me*, Samuel? . . . The *man* who rubbed out the writing, the *man* who has gone through life a hypocrite and a liar, the *man* who robbed an orphan of her little all, the *man* whose fault it is that a venerable Rabbi of seventy-eight has suffered the shame of falling down before the eyes of the whole congregation, with the holy Torah in his arms, . . . *that* man now stands before me!"

"Be silent, in Heaven's name, be silent," groaned Samuel, covering his face with his hands.

"Be silent!" cried Deborah, in an awful voice; "haven't I been silent long enough? No, Samuel, no, even if I had to clutch your feet as though I were a wild beast clutching its prey, I shall hold you fast, and you shall not escape me: you *shall* hear all I have to say."

Samuel could not utter a word, and his parched lips twitched convulsively.

"Shall I tell you why I have kept silent so long, why I did not acquaint the world of that which my own heart told me the very day

I was seated at your brother's death-bed? Shall I tell you why? Because I did not want to desecrate the name of God, because I did not want . . ."

"Stop, stop, Deborah. Don't torture me any longer!" implored Samuel, clasping his hands beseechingly.

But the relentless old "Champion" continued:

"And to-night, of course, you'll go to synagogue, you'll beat your breast and cry aloud your confession of sin, so that all men may hear you, and marvel at your piety! Remember that *Yom Kippur* is already here, and before long you will stand before the Presence of God! Let me see, how does it read, that sentence in the 'Confession?' . . . We have done wickedly; we have framed falsehood; we have uttered lies; we have blasphemed . . ."

"Now let *me* speak, Deborah," cried Samuel, recovering himself with a violent effort. Then again he was silent, and it seemed as though the power of speech was denied him. The man's appearance at that moment was truly pitiable; with eyes almost protruding from their sockets, with great beads of perspiration glistening on his brow, with violently heaving chest, from which the breath came in short spasmodic

gasps, he sat, gazing upon Deborah's stern old face.

Then he covered his face with his hands, and remained for a while motionless. When he again looked up, the old woman saw that he wept.

"I did it!" he cried, with a heart-wrung sob, "it *was* I who rubbed out the writing!"

"First have your cry," said Deborah, calmly.

But Samuel, with tears gushing from his eyes, exclaimed—

"No, let me speak now, you righteous soul . . . let me speak, and relieve my conscience of its heavy burden."

"Speak, then," said Deborah.

Again he confessed his guilt; its repetition seemed to calm him somewhat.

"Shall I tell you how it all happened?" he cried. "'Twas my pride that did it, 'twas *that* has made me what I am."

Then once more he burst into a violent fit of sobbing, and in broken sentences, interspersed with cries of grief and remorse, he continued—

"As you know, Deborah, my father was once a wealthy man; but, when he died, it was found that there was not so much left us as would suffice for mother's maintenance. Then we sold everything, my brother Joseph and I. Every-

thing that still remained to us from the good old days, including the house itself, and our mother's seat in the synagogue. It was the sale of that seat which grieved us most, for it was the only thing that still reminded us of our family's former distinction, of the times when our mother used to take her seat right by the railing of the women's gallery among the richest women of the Ghetto. . . . And now her place was at the back near the door, next to the beadle's wife, and surrounded by the beggar-women, who are provided with food and shelter for the Sabbath, for charity's sake. It was *that* which grieved us so sorely, my brother Joseph and I, and *that* it was that broke our poor mother's heart. . . ."

After a while, he resumed—

"Ever since our good mother's death, all my own and Joseph's efforts were directed but to one object, to regain possession of her seat. And our cause must have been a worthy one, for fortune again began to smile upon us both, and we prospered in all our undertakings. The people in the Ghetto knew nothing of this, for we decided to conceal our good fortune from the knowledge of all, until the day came when we could re-purchase our mother's seat, so that

people should say—'That Samuel and his brother Joseph are a wonderful pair.'"

His voice was again broken with sobs.

"I had my brother's savings in my keeping; not a human being, not a book, could tell of their existence—his door alone held the record of them. . . . Upon that door he wrote what I owed him. You know the rest, what his end was, how they carried him, my poor dear brother, shockingly injured, into the house."

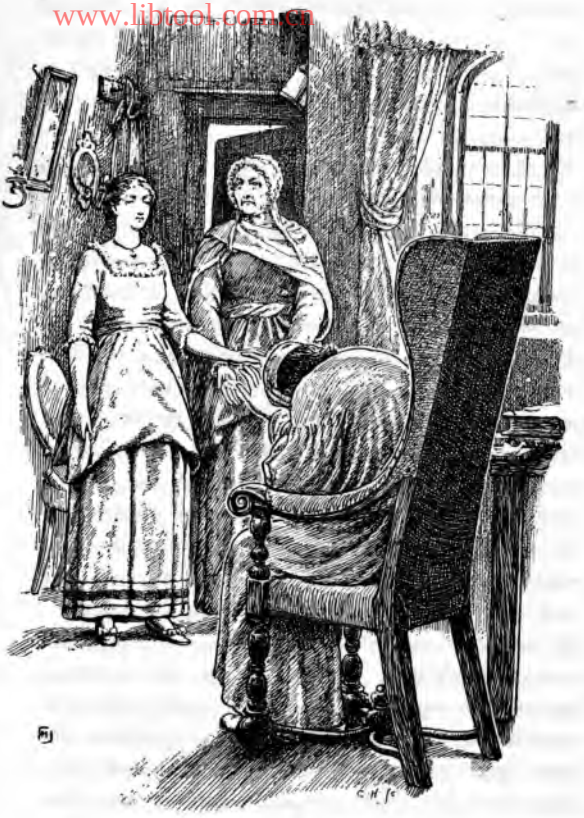
His eyes wandered anxiously around the room, he had arrived at the climax of his painful confession.

"Deborah," he cried, with trembling voice, as once again he covered his face with his hands, "Deborah, to this day I don't know how it was that that dark thought gained the mastery over me; but while I was sitting there at Joseph's bedside, the idea rose up before me, and persisted in haunting me like the shade of the Evil One—you've got three hundred gulden of Joseph's put by . . . that's just the price of mother's seat in synagogue! Not a soul knows about that money. The dumb door alone holds the secret. . . . That thought *would* not leave me; every minute it tightened its hold upon me, until it seemed to fill my very soul, to the

exclusion of every better resolve. . . . And, at last, when my poor brother turned his face to the wall, and slept, I . . . I stealthily crept to the door . . . and rubbed out the record of my debts. . . ."

"Have your cry, first," said the old dame, "and commence again when you're calmer."

"No! Let me continue. When you came to me, and asked me what I intended to do for Joseph's child, I had already prepared my answer, for when a man has once begun to tread the path of sin, the way of deception lies clear enough before his eyes. Before you came, I had planned every word I meant to say to you. And so I lied to you, and deceived you, amid the shedding of many hypocritical tears, and yet with the inward conviction, that your keen eye saw through it all. And in the hope of misleading you and the world, I have for years acted the part of the poor struggling pedlar. For years I restrained my impatience, and refrained from buying my poor mother's seat, and yet, strange to say, blessing and prosperity attended all my acts and undertakings. . . . Do you think I could not have paid the orphan girl what I owed her? I *could*, for I had plenty. But it was *you* whom I feared; I *could* not humble my pride,



before 'God's Champion,' and that is how it happened. . . ."

"Have you finished, now, Samuel?" asked Deborah.

"Finished! Yes, and God also has finished with *me*," he moaned.

Then the old "Champion" rose, and with head erect, and with unfaltering steps, she walked to the door, and unbolted it.

"I am going to call the child."

"What child?"

"Your brother's child."

"I *cannot* look her in the face, Deborah!" Samuel shrieked in agony.

"You must beg the child's forgiveness before the Fast commences."

"Then let her come!" he said, in a hollow, trembling voice.

Old Deborah walked into the adjoining room, and called her foster-child.

"Here is Joseph's child," she said, as she returned, leading Pearl by the hand.

Scarcely had Samuel beheld his niece, when in a choking voice he gasped—

"Forgive me, my child! forgive me!" and utterly broken down, he fell in a dead swoon at Pearl's feet.

. . . . . .

The old Rabbi did not long survive the fall of the "*Torah*." Within the month, although no illness had overtaken him, he passed away. In the Ghetto the story ran that old Deborah, on being informed of his approaching end, dispatched a member of the "Holy Brotherhood"[1] to the old man's house, with the message—"He could now die in peace . . . 'Debby and her Door'—'God's Champion'—assured him that the fallen *Torah* had been raised from its degradation."

Before that year had ended, she, too, was borne to her rest in the "Good Place."

. . . . . .

Some months later a merry wedding was celebrated in the Ghetto.

Samuel's eldest son and old "Debby's" foster-child were the happy pair.

Samuel himself remained a sad-eyed, silent man to the end of his days.

[1] A voluntary organisation which undertakes the last offices for the dying and the dead.

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