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THE SCHOOLDAYS OF YOUNG AMERICAN JEW ***

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THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK

THE SCHOOLDAYS OF YOUNG AMERICAN JEW

BY

GILBERT W. GABRIEL



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The Seven-Branched Candlestick

I

BY WAY OF PROLOGUE

"Years of Plenty" was the name an Englishman recently gave to a book of his school days. My own years of secondary school and college were different from his, by far, but no less full.

I shall only say by way of preface that they numbered seven. There were two of them at high school, one at a military school on the Hudson, and four at our city's university.

Seven in all. Because they were not altogether happy, I have no right to think of them as lean years. For each one of them meant much to me—means as much now as I look back and am chastened and strengthened by their memory. Each is as a lighted candle in the dark of the past that I look back upon. And I like to imagine that, since there are seven of them, they are in the

seven-branched candlestick which is so stately and so reverent a symbol of my Faith.

For it was my school days which gave me that Faith.

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Born a Jew, I was not one. And this I can blame on no person excepting myself. Before my parents' death, they had urged me, pleaded with me to go to Sunday school at our reformed synagogue, to attend the Saturday morning services, to study the lore, that I might be confirmed into the religion of my fathers. That they did not absolutely insist upon it was because they wanted me to come to my God gratefully, voluntarily, considering his worship an exercise of love, of gladness, and not a task of impatient duty. I know that it must have grieved them—I know it now, even if I only half-guessed it then in that distorted but instinctive way that boys do guess things—and yet they said little to me of it.

Once or twice a year they took me with them to a Friday night service. I was too young, perhaps. I am willing to use my youth as an excuse for my falling asleep, or for my sitting uneasily, squirming, yawning, heavy-eyed, uninterested, unmoved ... hungry only to be out into the streets again, and back in my own room at home, with my copy of "Pilgrim's Progress," or "The Talisman," between my knees.

At best, I can excuse myself only because I lived in a neighborhood distinctly Christian. It was on one of those old, quiet streets of the Columbia Heights section of Brooklyn that our house stood. There was a priggish sedateness to it. There was much talk on either hand of "family": the Brooklyn people—of that neighborhood, anyhow—seem to set much stock by their early settling ancestors. Near our house was a preparatory school for girls and another for boys; they were hotbeds of snobbery and prejudice, these schools. The students who attended them had to pass down our block on their way home from school. Often, when they saw me playing there, some of them would stop and make fun of me and tease me with remarks about the Jews. I was a boy without much spirit. I always resented the taunts—but I always lacked the courage to call back ... and if my eyes did blaze involuntarily with anger, I usually turned away so that these bigger boys should not be able to see them.

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My fear was behind it all. I was afraid to fight back. And, being ashamed of my cowardice, I grew quickly ashamed of that which had proved it. I grew ashamed of being a Jew.

Terribly, bitterly ashamed. So mortified, indeed, that it was more than I could do to speak of it to my father. And, usually, I could talk of anything to him. Once he himself mentioned it to me: asked me whether I was not proud of my race, whether I could not look with true contempt and easy forgiveness upon those rowdies who had taunted me. I tried to take that attitude ... but I was not big and strong enough for it. I tried it only once—and then one of the big bullies of that fashionable preparatory school, on his way down the block, grew angry at my lordly unconcern towards his teasing, and hit me with his fist, and cut my lip open. I kicked him in the shins, I remember, and ran swiftly away.

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That didn't help matters. I was as much a weakling as ever. When I went to public school, I used to cry with a snivelling vexation because the toughs of my class made fun of me. One of them had a little sister in the class below us, and I was very fond of her. I remember how, on St. Valentine's day, I stole into her class room at lunch time and, while she was absent, stuck a lacy, gaudy and beribboned missive in her desk. I didn't understand, then, why the teacher tittered so nervously when I asked her permission to do it. But, when my own lunch was done, and I was back at my desk, I lifted the lid of it only to find that same valentine rammed into one corner, crushed and torn almost in half, and scrawled with the word, "Sheeny!"

Nor did the little romantic flight end there. For the next day, after sister and brother had been comparing notes, the former marched straight up to me, pulled my nose, and warned me to keep away, once and for all, from the true American daughter of a true American family, and to confine my sentiments to "some little Jew girl!"

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I knew none of that sort. What few boys and girls of my own race I had met at playtime or at Sunday school, I purposely shunned. I thought, if I went in their company, I should be inviting persecution. I thought my only way to escape this was to escape all Jewish comrades ... to deny my religion, if possible. I was so utterly ashamed of it!

Thus I went, with all of a child's fear and a child's cowardice, into those days which were to mean so much to me. Had I had the pride, the devotion to my religion which is a Jewish heritage, those days would have meant less. Less in sorrow and bewilderment, that is, and infinitely more in the building up of my character.

There are those who go stolidly, brusquely through life without ever needing the comfort of religion. And there are those, like me, who lack the self-reliance ... who cannot be content with a confessed agnosticism, but who must take faith and strength from those rites and codes which satisfy their sense of the mystically sublime. Now that I am grown to man's estate I can know these things of myself—but how could I know it then? How could a romping, light-hearted boy who cared more for baseball and "Ivanhoe" than for anything else in the world recognize, then, his own needs and cravings?

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It was only after those few black, frightful days were over that I realized that something was lacking in my life. But even then I did not know what it was. I only felt the sharply personal loss, the inevitable loneliness and helplessness ... and had not learned in what direction to lift my eyes, to reach up my arms to ask for spiritual succor.

Those days were the ones in which my parents left me. My father was killed in a railroad accident. My mother, about to give birth to another child, was in bed at the time when the news

was brought to her. She never rose again. The shock killed her.

I remember that the funeral services were conducted by the rabbi of our synagogue. They were according to the Jewish ritual, and I thought them dull and unmeaning. They expressed for me none of the sorrow that I felt. The Hebrew that was in them was mockery and gibberish to me. I am afraid I was glad when it was over, and I was alone with my aunt with whom I was to live.

This aunt, Selina Haberman, was a widow. Her husband had been a devout Jew of the most orthodox type. She used to tell me with great amusement how he would say his prayers each morning with his shawl and phylacteries upon him, with his head bowed and a look of joyous devotion on his face. She said she never could understand how a man, as educated and broadminded as he was, could have had so simple and unquestioning a loyalty to these worn old costumes of the past. But she said wistfully that she thought he had died a much happier man because of his religion ... and that was what was hardest of all for her to understand. [Pg 11]

Aunt Selina herself was a Christian. She put as little stock in Christian Science, though, as in Judaism. It was a fad for her, and an escape from the hindrances which connection with the Jewish faith would have entailed. I think she had an idea that people would forget she had ever been a Jewess and would accept her for a Christian without her having to go through the extremer forms of proselytism. Like me, she lacked spirit for either one thing or the other. Like me, she dreaded to be classed among her own people. But in this we were unlike: that her dread amounted to a vindictive and brutal antagonism towards whatever and whoever smacked of Jewry. I think she even objected to adopting me for a while, because my name was a distinctly Jewish one, and because it would leave no doubt in her neighbor's eyes as to my race—and hence, no doubt as to hers. [Pg 12]

Aunt Selina lived on Central Park West in the City. She was full of social ambitions. She had a good many friends from among the intellectuals of Washington square: Christians, of course, most of them. Her closest companion was a Mrs. Fleming-Cohen, who claimed to be a Theosophist. Born with the name of Cohen, she had married a Mr. Fleming who had made necessary, by his conduct, an early divorce. My aunt, Mrs. Haberman, and Mrs. Fleming-Cohen lunched together very often, and I suspect they had a tacit but inviolable agreement never to mention to each other that bond of race and religion which, stronger than their professed tastes, drew them instinctively together.

My life in Aunt Selina's apartment was a lonely one. She was hardly the sort of woman to whom young folks would go for sympathy. She did not mistreat me, of course, but left me entirely to my own devious ways. For the ways of a boy of fourteen—especially of an orphan of somewhat shy and melancholic disposition—are bound to be devious.

I had much to fight out with myself. I lacked any help from the outside—and though I won over my impulses, my doubts and inner conflicts, the struggle left me a weak, shy, shunning boy. [Pg 13]

For the first year of my life with Aunt Selina I went to a nearby public school. There were a good many Jewish boys in my class—many more than there had been in the whole Brooklyn school—but I kept away from them as a matter of course. I made a few friends among the Gentiles—not many, because they were hard to make, and I could always feel, in my supersensitive fashion, that they were fashioning a sort of favor out of conferring their friendship upon me.

"It will be different when I am in high school," I told myself. "It will be different because I myself shall be different. The boys will be older there, will be more sensible and broadminded, and I shall be less nervous about the difference between us!"

The difference ... I did not know what it was, but I felt it all the time. I tried to hide it, to disregard it—but I knew that it was there, in my blood, in my face, in my name ... and it held me apart from my class as if it had been a shame and a lasting disgrace.

So it was that I looked forward more and more eagerly for the change and liberation which I thought high school would bring me. Half a year, two months, a month ... then only a few days ... and then it was over. My public schools days were past. I had graduated into high school with high honors and with an equally high hatred of whatever was Jewish. [Pg 14]

If Aunt Selina had been different ... but no, I am not going to blame it on anyone excepting myself.

The summer after I graduated from public school I went with Aunt Selina and her friend, Mrs. Fleming-Cohen, to a hotel in the White Mountains. It was one of those hotels where Jews are not welcome. The management, if I am not mistaken, had not been able to impress Aunt Selina with that fact. They were constantly raising the price of our rooms, but the two ladies seemed content to keep on paying what was asked for the rare privilege of dwelling in forbidden places.

It was certainly not a pleasant summer. The other guests snubbed us continually, left us to our own devices. I used to have to go walking every morning and sit on the porch every afternoon in the company of the two ladies ... because there was no one else for me to go with. For even among the children there was a rigorous boycotting—and I was the sufferer for it. It made me very melancholy; not indignant, of course, because at that time I lacked entirely the spirit to be indignant—just melancholy, and hateful to myself, spiteful to my aunt, ashamed of the things I should have gloried in, hating the things I should have worshiped. [Pg 15]

Well, I told myself, it would all be different in the fall: it would all be different when I was at high school. For then I was to begin those seven years which were to be my real education. So far it had been naught but childhood's prologue. And what a shabby little part I had played in it!

II

IN THE BEGINNING

Immediately upon our return from the mountains I entered high school. My aunt did her duty by accompanying me to the office of the principal and assuring him that I was an honest and upright boy, aged fourteen.

It had been her ambition to have me attend one of the fashionable boarding schools in Connecticut. I do not think she had me much in mind when she made the attempt to enroll me at the St. Gregory Episcopalian Institute. She told so many of her friends of this intention—and told them it with such an evident pride—that I fear she was more concerned with her own social prestige than with my education. And when St. Gregory, through a personal visit from its headmaster, discovered that Mrs. Haberman had no right to aspire to the exquisite preference which God accords Episcopalians, and later sent us a polite but cursory letter of regret that its roster's capacity was full for the year, she bore it as a direct insult upon her ancestors. (Though, of course, even so sharp a hurt to her pride would not let her admit openly that all of those ancestors were Jews.)

At any rate, I went to the high school as a sort of a last resort. My aunt dreaded the company I might have to keep there—all the public riffraff, she called it. That was really why she accompanied me, that first day, to assure herself that I was going to be placed among a "perfectly horrid set of rude ruffians—ghetto boys, and the like!" and to have something tangible and definite to worry about during the next few years.

The principal, busy with the hundred details of school's opening, gave us as much time and courtesy as he could afford. As I look back upon it, I think he was remarkably patient with my aunt.

She told him her fears in a fretful, supercilious way; it was in exactly the same tone that she ordered things from the butcher and grocer each morning over the telephone. The principal heard her through—in fact, prompted her whenever she faltered, nodded appreciatively when something she said was most flagrantly out of place. When she was finished, he turned to look very steadily at me.

"If you have such objections to the class of boys in a public high school, why do you send your nephew here?" he asked.

"Because it—it is convenient," she stammered.

"I must confess, I wanted him to go to a boarding-school."

"Which one?"

"St. Gregory Episcopalian Institute."

The principal's mouth quivered with the smile he could hardly suppress:

"Episcopalian? The boy is a Jew, is he not?"

Mrs. Haberman sat up very straight. "His parents had Jewish affiliations, I believe. They are both dead."

"I see." And I am sure he really did see! For a moment later he put a deft end to the interview.

"Madam," he said, "this boy must take his chances like any other boy in the school. He must make his own friends from among his own sort. He must fight his own adversaries among those who are unlike him. That is the law of life as well as of every school. If he is attracted to the undesirable element, he would find it and mingle with it at St. Gregory's as quickly as he would here. I have a fine lot of youths here. I am proud of them—even of those who fail to come up to the standards. I won't try to talk to you about the splendid spirit of democracy—because you evidently don't want the boy to be democratic. You don't want him to stand on his own merits as a Jew. If he did that, he would be putting up an honest, spirited battle. I only know that all men and all boys like an honest stand and a fair fight for the things worth protecting. I know that if I were a Jew, I should never—well, that's your business, not mine." He took out of his desk a little leather-covered book. "It may interest you to know that this high school is ranked very high scholastically." He turned the pages. "Also that the St. Gregory Institution is ranked among the most unsuccessful schools in the country in the matter of scholarship." He showed her a table of figures, then closed the book and put it away, smiling. "Also," he finished, "that I am an Episcopalian, and that I should rather send a son or a nephew of mine to prison than to so harmful a place as St. Gregory."

His remarks did not altogether convince my aunt, of course; and he said no more, except to assure her that he would follow my course in his school with much interest, and would do all in his power to make me manly. To Mrs. Haberman, the promise to make a man of me meant little.

She left me at the school door, stepping gingerly across the pavement into her limousine in order to escape the contamination of a group of young Italians who were coming up the steps. As she slammed the machine door and was driven away, I felt somewhat bewildered—very much alone in a hallway of hundreds of boys whom I did not know, but who jostled me, went by me, up and down the stairs with a great hollow stamping of feet, an echoing laughter, a loud excitement of regathering after the summer's recess. None of them paid the slightest attention to me.

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A deep-voiced gong sounded through the hall and up the wide stair-well. It was the signal to disperse to our classrooms.

I had a card in my hand, assigning me to room 7 on the third floor. I climbed the stairs fearfully, my heart beating faster than usual, my knees trembling a little. I was entering a strange and mystic land that I had dreamed of, yet had never seen.

Room 7, third floor. It was a big, bare room, void of almost everything excepting sunshine. There were desks, low and set decently apart. Along the wall, behind gleaming glass, were cases of seashells and botanical specimens. The teacher's desk, at the further end, was on a small, shabby dais. Only a few of the boys had arrived, and the big room rang with the echo of unfilled space.

I heard them telling each other what they had been doing over the summer. One of them, brown and sturdy, was telling of Maine and the camp he had attended there. Another, in ragged clothes, and of a thin, pale face, spoke of the heated city during July and August, and of how he had been swimming when he could get away from his summer job—swimming in the East River. It shocked me to hear that. I had a picture of the East River as I had seen it from the Brooklyn Bridge, a brown, littered flood, choked with scurrying tugboats and the floating trails of refuse. I hated that boy for a long while after I heard his story. But he had a sharp, kindly face, and I wondered to see how popular he was with those who knew him.

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Coming, as I did, from a distant grammar school, it chanced that there were no boys of my acquaintance in the classroom. I was absolutely alone—a stranger to them all.

The teacher, on his dais, tapped with thin, white knuckles against the side of his desk. He was a little, timid man with one of the saddest faces I have ever seen. Mr. Levi, he said his name was.

The boy next to me stirred in his seat. "A Jew for a teacher! What do you think of that!" he said to me. "A Jew for—" Then he stopped short and looked at me. "Oh, gee! You're one yourself, ain't you?"

I felt my face grow very hot. I thought of the words which the principal had only just spoken.... Could I stand up and fight like a man?

I wanted to—I really do believe that I wanted to. But somehow the impulse that came to me to face this seatmate squarely and to tell him that—yes, I was a Jew, too—and proud of it—dwindled away into a gulp and a whimper and a sickly smile.

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This other boy was red-headed, freckled. He was very tall, but I saw a crutch at his side. Later on, when he rose, I could see that he was very lame; also that around his neck (for he wore no collar) was a little leather thong and tab. I did not know then—and I did not learn for many months—that it was the scapular of a Roman Catholic.

He looked at me surlily, but laughing.

"You *are* a Jew, ain't you?" he demanded.

I hung my head, wondering how to evade the directness of the question. The lame boy seemed to be waiting for my reply.

"Well, no—not exactly." I stuttered. But I could feel my face flushing again.

"What d'yer mean, not exactly? What's yer mom and pop?"

"My mother and father? They are dead."

That did not seem to check him. "Well, if you ain't a Jew, you look like one. You look more like one than the teacher does." Whereupon, much to my relief, he branched off the subject. "He don't seem to be such a bad fellow, even with a name like Levi. Oi, oi, oi, Levi!" And he chuckled with delight at the thought of how he would annoy and tease this teacher at some future date.

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There are some boys of whom we can know at a glance that they are bullies and mischief makers. This boy, whose name was Geoghen, was one of them. He used his very lameness as an excuse to boss and bully his classmates. He was very strong, though as I was to learn only too soon—and his size made him an undisputed leader.

There were no lessons this first day. There were only a speech of welcome from the teacher, and an assignment of home work for the next morning.

But when we were dismissed and had started for the door, Geoghen limped up to me.

"So you ain't a Jew, eh?" he chuckled, looking hard into my face.

So as to avoid the retort, I fled from him, down the stairs into the main hall. I was just about to gain the street when the principal, coming out of his office, saw me.

"What's this?" he said in his deep likable voice. "Running away so soon?"

"Yes, sir. We're dismissed for today."

"Oh, I see. Well, I suppose you've already begun to fight like a man, haven't you? I hope so."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

But, as I went, I knew in my heart that it was not true. The whole first day had been false.

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III

FRIDAY NIGHT

Those first days at high school seemed terrible in the intensity of new experiences. Had I but had my parents to encourage me, perhaps I should not have felt so bitterly the loneliness of this new turn in the road.

I do not care how manly and resolute he is, a boy will always need the kind words, the clasp and kiss which only his parents can give him. And I was not half so resolute then, nor half so hardened to battle as I am now.

I worried a good deal about my standing in the class room. It seemed to me that I could not possibly pass each day's recitations creditably. And yet I did, as I remember. It was only that I so sorely lacked self-confidence.

My aunt, Mrs. Haberman, did her duty in taking me to a nerve specialist. He charged her a pretty price to examine me and to assure her that, physically, there was nothing wrong with me.

"Mentally, he is a little too active," was his sentence upon me. "And that is what makes him melancholy. Let him study, let him get out and meet boys of his own age.... Let him find something to be proud of, to be interested in."

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My aunt gave this last a few pettish, impatient moments of thought. After the doctor was gone, and she and I sat opposite each other at the table, where the glass and silver made so ostentatious a showing, she did her best to be practical about it.

"Now, dear, let's see," she pondered, her long white fingers stroking the table cloth, "I'm sure we can find something to interest and amuse you, dear. How about basket weaving? or coloring photographs or something artistic like that?"

I wasn't very polite in my refusals. I declined basket weaving and coloring photographs and even balked at the idea of installing a billiard table in our apartment—which seemed to relieve Mrs. Haberman immensely, since she considered billiards a brutal and vulgar game.

All her suggestions came to naught. Once she spoke of religion, but her eyes fluttered and she changed the subject quickly, as if she had accidentally hit upon the truth and found it unpleasant. It was enough to put an idea into my head.

I did not know then, but I do now, that the thing I needed was Faith. A boy needs it—needs it as much as he needs his parents—and I had neither one nor the other.

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The days retreating into a gloomy background of autumn chills and fogs, left me thoroughly weakened in spirit. Oftentimes—I could not guess why—I came home from high school so exhausted that I could only throw myself upon my bed, behind a locked door, and sob and sigh and shiver as if with the ague. Everything that had happened during the day would come pouring back into my memory with a distorted clarity, tintured with despair, hopelessly somber with a boy's sense of wrong and persecution.

I did actually have enough to contend with at high school. I had begun to feel the racial distinctions, the thoughtless slurs and boycottings which Jewish lads must everywhere encounter. I tried to tell myself that it didn't matter—that these were only rough, ill-bred boys to whom I ought not lower myself to pay attention. But a boy of fourteen finds it hard to argue himself into bravery, and I failed miserably, ridiculously at the task. Years later, I was to learn that it was all natural—that I was passing, as every boy must pass, through the difficult period of adolescence. It was mostly that I was lonely, balked by the unappreciative attitude of my aunt, without guidance or curb.

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If in all this personal recital I am harsh to the memory of my aunt, you will perhaps see that I have the right. I am grateful, truly grateful, for all that she attempted to do for me, but I know that all her care was misdirected. It was, besides, cruelly lacking in all of the finer things which should have been mine; things which my parents would have given me, things that, in my aggravated state, I needed.

Once I was asked by some other Jewish boys at high school to join a little club which they were

forming. I hesitated about it. They were jolly, healthy boys—most of them from the poorer sections of the city—who went up to Van Cortlandt Park on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to play ball or to skate. It would have done me good to be one of them, to join their sports and laughter—and yet....

Well, my aunt did not approve. I knew she wouldn't, long before I asked her. If I was the least bit undecided before, she gave me clearly to understand that companionship with Jewish boys would not be right for me; that I must avoid this stigma of Judaism as I would avoid a crime. She said it was for my *own* good—but I cannot believe it very heartily. She was trying at that time to make me join a dancing class of Gentile boys and girls. She told me she thought their company would counteract the effect of having to endure a high school's rabble.

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There came a night, after a day of niggardly discouragements, when the strange moroseness seemed too heavy to bear. I told my aunt that I did not want any supper—a fact which did not worry her too much, since she was in a hurry to dress and go off to a studio party of some silly sort. And when she was gone and I was alone in the apartment, I could not read or rest or do anything. I tried to study my next day's lessons, but had to give them up.

And at last I put on my hat and coat and went down to the street. The air was bracing, but I was not used to the streets at night—and a white, wraith-like fog was beginning to seep up from the pavements and cluster in misty, yellow patches around the lamp-lights.

Shivering, I went on. I did not know where I was bound. The old, savage loneliness—here in the open, where the dampness brought the scent of withered grass and lean, bare trees—was sharper, more embittering than ever.

I went across the street and into the nearest entrance of Central Park. The quietness of everything there frightened me, called up every foolish, childhood fear and superstition. I went through dark lanes that were branched over with creaking branches. I saw the lake, black, cold, with the stippled reflections of shore lights shining up from its edges. I felt the moist, chilly wind that came across the big lawns and struck my face and chest and shoulders. I felt—I could not help but feel that I must go on, go on and on—in search of I know not what.

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I came at length to the Fifth Avenue side of the park. The huge white stone and marble houses that flanked the street beyond were half lost in the mist. The automobiles that went up and down the pavements, which were wet and shining like the backs of seals, made no noise—went silently, mystically, sweeping blurred trails of light upon the sidewalks as they passed.

Against that white, low horizon of houses I saw one thing that loomed dark and gropingly conspicuous.

I did not know what it was. Not then. But it held my attention: the darkness, the gray curve of it against the sky. There was something about it that was forbidding, deep, sombre. The lower front of it seemed to be arched and pillared—and under each arch the shadows were impenetrably black.

There were automobiles waiting in front of it, at the sidewalk's edge. A long string of them, too, as if many persons were within upon some mysterious business.

Then, softly, as if from far distant recesses, there came from within the soft, resonant voice of an organ—playing.

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Was it a church?

Then I remembered that it was Friday night—and I knew that this was a synagogue—a temple of the Jewish Faith.

At first realization, I moved a little away from it, down the street. A synagogue—and all that it brought to my mind was the memory of my parents. In former years they had been wont to take me with them when they went on Friday nights. And those had been dull, wearisome nights for me—but I had spent them at my parent's side. So that now, in the shadow of God's house, my loneliness for them came back to me in wild deluge, breaking the dam of reserve and doubts and petty limitations.

The music of the organ swelled louder, richer, blending all the majesty of its bass notes with the triumph and fancy of its treble. Louder, richer, louder—and I, who stood outside in the choking fog, felt my heart give way to its pain and my eyes to the solace of their tears.

Until the service was ended, and the organ had ceased to play I stayed there. Once or twice I heard the voice of the cantor at his solemn chantings—and this too brought me a distinct memory of the cantor in our Brooklyn synagogue, and of how I had listened to him with my hands locked in my mother's.

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Outside it was all so dark, so clammy with mist—and in there they—my own sort of people—were worshipping God—my God. And when, soon thereafter, the doors swung open in the black of the arches and bathed the steps below with a great, glad, golden light, I ran forward, almost involuntarily, to gaze within.

I caught a glimpse of rich things, bright and gleaming—of carpets glowing, walls resplendent—of golden tracery and colors. And then people began coming through the doors down the steps, blackening and obscuring my view of the interior.

I saw some of their faces. They were Jewish people, of course—and I heard a man among them talking rather loudly and laughingly. He talked with an accent.

For me the spell was broken. All the old, petty prejudice which circumstance had nurtured in

me sprang up anew. A sense of anti-climax, of disgust came over me: yes, these—such as these were my people—and I hated them.

And I turned and ran away, back through the park, and home.

I did not ever tell my aunt where I had been, nor anything else of the adventure. I knew she would not have understood it. But I did. And, boy as I was, I knew now that I needed some Faith, some link to the company and comfort of God—and that, sooner or later, as Jew or Christian, I must seek and find that link.

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But I knew, too, that my antipathy to my own people had become deep-seated—had grown to be part of my whole life's code.

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IV

THE BOY AND THE SCHOOL

High school's terrors developed for me into a more personal terror of that young tough, Jim Geoghen. A thorough bully, he made me feel always that he was aware of my religion, that he could at any moment disclose it to the rest of my classmates and make me the subject of their taunts. No doubt, they all knew as well as he that I was a Jew—but, for the most part, they paid little attention to that fact. A large number of them were Jews themselves: bright-eyed, poorly-dressed little fellows who led the class in studies, but who mingled little with any other element.

Something stronger than myself made me take up a half-hearted companionship with these Jewish boys. I did not want to: I dreaded being one of them—and yet, for all my aunt's sneers and warnings, and my own perverted pride, I always felt more comfortable with them—more as if, in walking home with one of them after school, instead of with some Christian boy, I was where I belonged. I know it was only self-consciousness that gave me this feeling—but after all, comfort must play a big part in our companionships.

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Geoghen, with his towering, menacing form, his dull, animal's face, his swinging crutch, his mysterious scapular, haunted me continuously. I remember distinctly dreaming of him once or twice at night—and that he stood over my bedside, in those dreams, with his crutch upraised to strike, and his little leather scapular writhing and hissing like a coiled snake.

One day he did strike me. It was during the noon recess when a group of us were in the asphalted yard, eating our lunches. Mine was always an elaborate package of dainties, wrapped in much tissue paper and doilies. Geoghen, on the other hand, had just a chunk of rye bread, covered over with a slice of ham. His glance, long and greedy, betrayed how envious of me he was.

"Eat ham?" he asked with a snicker.

He did not wait for an answer, but crammed a few shreds of it towards my mouth, his dirty fingers striking my teeth. I jumped away from him and he followed after me, hobbling with amazing swiftness.

"Tried to bite me, eh?" he cried.

I denied it—but he did not listen and, raising his crutch, dealt me a stinging blow with the smaller end of it—though, at that, I was let off easy.

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Towards our teacher, Mr. Levi, Geoghen and some of the other boys acted with all the pent-up meanness and savagery of mischievous youth. Mr. Levi's manner invited the twitting, perhaps: his pale, thin face bore always a nettled look, his eyes seemed ever hungry with some dark sorrow, and his mouth was always twitching. There was a fine timidity about his way of handling us. He did not seem to be able to scold or be authoritative.

But when he would be teaching us our Roman History, for instance, and would tell us of the beauties of Italian scenery or of Caesar's centurions lost in the dark, tangled German forests or of how Cleopatra came with purple sails—or of how Cleopatra came to meet Mark Antony in a golden barge with purple sails—then his face would light up with a look that was glorious, and even the rattiest, coarsest of us would thrill and be hushed with the thrill—and know, no matter how dimly, that he was in the presence of a great and beautiful spirit.

But those times were rare; and, as a rule, we made life miserable for Mr. Levi. He seemed to feel, I am sure, the handicap of his religion—to know that the Irish boys of the class, and dark, sullen-faced Italians, were thinking it an insult to be taught by a Jew—and that they were only waiting for the opportunity for an outburst.

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It came at the end of my year in high school. That last month is always a rebellious one. The spring weather, the sense of approaching vacation make gamins of the quietest of us.

Mr. Levi had been absent from the room for a little while. Geoghen in that time had left his seat, hobbled up to the dais and opened the teacher's desk. This bit of boldness drew a crowd of laughing boys to the front of the room. They rummaged the desk, overturning and scattering its papers, tumbling books to the floor.

Suddenly one of them stooped and picked up a book which lay sprawled with its pages open. There was an immediate shouting, coarse and repellent to hear.

The book of Mr. Levi's which they had found, was a Hebrew prayer book.

Geoghen took it from the other boy. He held it open and up close to his leering face. Then slowly, with the others in his trail, he began to march around the room, making believe to sing a heathenish jargon which he must have thought to resemble Hebrew, twisting his face grotesquely to seem like a Jew's, making lewd gestures—breaking off now and again to shriek with laughter at the comicality of it all.

Then suddenly Mr. Levi returned.

He charged into the line, spun Geoghen about and tore the book from his hands. Geoghen reached for it, as if loath to let go of so much fun—his face impudent, grossly humorous—and Mr. Levi knocked him down.

I shall never forget how the teacher looked. His pale face, paler than ever, gleamed as if it were cut smooth out of marble. The eyes flashed with a noble fury. The mouth had stopped its twitching and was drawn taut, and his teeth showed at the corners of it. And when he struck at Geoghen his whole slender tenseness seemed to be thrown into the blow.

The crippled lad lay there for a moment, stunned. Then he got unsteadily to his feet and picked up his crutch. A stream of profanity began to come from his mouth. I don't think any of us had ever heard such talk before. All the obscene things which the lowest scum of humanity can pick up in the course of living years in the gutter, he spat out at Mr. Levi.

But the teacher had gone back to his dais and desk and stood facing him silently, calmly, a look of mild reproach taking the place of the anger in his eyes. He let Geoghen have his miserable say, and then silently pointed to the door and motioned to him to get out. And Geoghen went.

That wasn't the end of it, though. For, within a week the newspapers had taken up the incident and enlarged it, exaggerated it—and Geoghen's father who, it seems, was a political vassal of the alderman of this district, had managed to have Mr. Levi brought before the Board of Education for an investigation.

Mr. Levi had no show in that trial. He told his story truthfully. I remember that, according to the newspapers, he made scarcely any effort to defend himself. He merely explained that he had caught this boy defiling the traditions of the Jewish faith, mocking what was most sacred to him, and that he was indeed sorry that, in order to wrest the book away from his impure hands, he had had to strike and knock down a crippled pupil.

The newspapers called Mr. Levi a dangerous and cruel fanatic, the Board of Education decided that he was incompetent, and Mr. Levi—his face paler than ever, his manner more mild and saddened—announced to us on the last day of school that he would not be with us in the next year.

I felt somehow that I would have liked to say goodbye to him, but I was afraid that he would ask me why I, in his absence on that terrible day, had not prevented Geoghen from doing what he did—and my conscience made a coward of me. I had a foolish idea, besides, that he did not like me. Any man who cared so much for his religion would not be able to respect a boy in my position. It was all very unfortunate—I was sorry for him, to be sure—but I must not sympathize too much with him.

I told my aunt of the affair, of course, and she shuddered with distaste.

"What a fearful lot of ruffians they must be!" she sighed. "And worst of all, a Russian Jew for a teacher!"

I spent the summer at a Y. M. C. A. camp on the Maine coast. There were no other Jewish boys there, but my aunt had managed to have me placed on the roll-call somehow. I was glad enough of it. I did not want another summer at a fashionable hotel in her and other ladies' company.

Of course, I was "Ike" to the boys of the camp. They were a good, rough-and-ready sort who swam well, ran, tramped, sang rollicking songs on weekdays and hymns on Sundays, grew brown and muscle-bound and manly. Such teasing as I had from them was good-natured, and I suppose I should have taken it in the same spirit. But I had none of their assurance, was like a stranger in a strange land—and came out of the summer with a still deeper shrinking from contact with other boys.

High school began again, went on and on from lagging month to month, and soon enough was over for a second year. But this time my aunt had been as much aroused as she could be to the baffling condition of my mind and spirits. I had by no means lost the old loneliness. I had learned to bear it with greater patience, but it still galled and depressed me.

Only, after that evening when I stood outside the synagogue, I had some dim conception of what the inevitable cure would have to be.

At any rate, my aunt called in the nerve specialist a second time. He insisted that I must be sent away. Perhaps he saw into the unsympathetic quality of our home life.

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This sent my aunt into tremors of delight. She had now a legitimate excuse for shipping me off to a fashionable boarding school of some sort. For days she made a feverish study of monogrammed and photogravured catalogues from various schools in the East. It was upon a military school on the upper Hudson that her choice finally fell. And I am sure that this was due to the expensive appearance, the coat of arms and Latin motto of the catalogue's cover.

What ever it was, her choice was made. She talked a good deal of splendid uniforms, of flags unfurled to the sunset—and fired me with a lust for the new chapter in my life.

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V

THE MILITARY ACADEMY

My introduction to military school was hardly auspicious. I was now sixteen years old—nearly seventeen. I did not look that old, however; the commandant of the school, in examining me, took me for much less and assigned me to a room with a boy of twelve.

At seventeen, our age is a most important item. We think so, anyhow. And this incident dampened my spirits most disproportionately. Especially when I discovered that this roommate was to be the only other Jew in the school. It seemed to me a very pointed and personal insult.

He was a meek little boy, though—meeker even than I. And all through that first night he wept aloud, smothering his tears upon his pillow and crying for his mama—and for *kartoffel salat*. It was a Friday night, I remember, and it must have been a Sabbath custom in his house to have potato salad for supper. At any rate he kept me awake long into the night.

And once, taking savage pity on him, I got up and went over to him in my bare feet and nightgown, and told him brusquely how satisfied he ought to be to have a mother at all; that both my father and mother were dead, and I should never see them again, no matter how homesick I grew or how long I waited for their coming. This silenced him on that score, but he went on whimpering for the *kartoffel salat*.

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The next day I screwed up my courage to complain to the commandant. He was a very tall, majestic figure of a soldier who had fought through the Spanish and Boer wars and now, in times of peace, was reduced to teaching the manual of arms and simple drill formations to young sons of the rich. He was the most pompous, mean and utterly selfish man I ever met. One could see it on his handsome face.

He heard my complaint through. Then, because, being an ignorant "plebe," I had forgotten to salute him, he made me perform that act and retell the whole story word for word. But he could not change my room until I had agreed to take a cot in the general dormitory—this being reserved for students who paid less tuition.

"You may write your aunt," he said stiffly, twirling his long mustaches, "that we did all we could to make you comfortable. We purposely put you in a room with young Private Ornstein because we thought it would be more—er, more congenial."

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I saw what he was driving at, and went away miserable. So they knew it up here, too: I was a Jew, and must be separated from the others as if I had the plague! I felt sorry for myself.

I was not particularly homesick, though I had never been able to develop much love for my Aunt Selina. She had not given me the chance. But the unaccustomed severing from all that was mine: my room at home, the street that I saw from its window, the burly, Irish "cop" who stood on the corner and passed me an occasional lofty jest—and a thousand other things, intimate and absurdly unimportant I missed with dull emptiness.

The school was comfortable enough. It was a huge, barn-like affair, built in the previous generation and hardly ever repainted since then, to look at it. The towers at either end of it had tin and battered battlements, and the flanks of steps which went up the hill on which it stood were worn with the tread of the hundreds of boys who had marched upon them, each succeeding year. It was so with the stairs all through the building: each step had a shallow, smooth cup which years of treading had ground out. It gave me a creepy sense of the place's antiquity.

There was a large parade ground at the back of the building. Its grass was brown and mealy, and a flag pole, sagging slightly to one side, jutted up from the center of it like a long, lone fin.

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In the quadrangle where we formed in line to march to the mess-hall, stood a huge oak tree, century-old, with twisted limbs and browning leaves. On one of those limbs, they told me, an American spy was hanged by the British in Revolutionary days—but it may have been only a fable. I have since learned that almost every military school along the Hudson has its Revolutionary oak—but, at the time, it made a deep impression on me, so that I could not bear to hear the creaking of the branches against my dormitory window.

This dormitory, to which I and my belongings repaired, was a long, narrow, whitewashed room, crowded with iron cots and intruding wardrobes. At night, when the bugle had blown taps and the lights were dimmed, there was a ghostly quality to the rows of white and huddled figures that lay the length of the room. There was never absolute quiet. Sometimes some little boy would be sobbing, sometimes two of the older ones would be telling each other the sort of jokes that daylight forbids—and sometimes it would be the heavy, asthmatic breathing of the proctor who was there to keep charge.

Of the boys themselves I could not judge at first. I was too young to judge, at that: but I was not too young that I could not realize they were not of the same sort as I had known in the city. There I had known the pupils of a public school, poor, rough, almost always hard workers, eager for whatever seemed fair and quick and democratic. But these boys were of wealthy parents, most of them. There were only a few of them who held scholarships, and these did jobs so menial and embarrassing that, even under the most ideal conditions, they must have suffered in the opinions of the rest of the school. As a matter of fact, we were a brutal little crowd of snobs, and made life miserable for these poorer scholars who must sweep the halls and wash dishes.

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I do not think all military schools are like the one I attended. I hope not. I gained from my year there much in the way of physical development—but that is all. For every inch of muscle that I put on I lost something worth incalculably more: honesty and cleanliness of mind and what little shred of self-reliance I possessed. Somehow or other, it seemed to me that I had reached the lowest rung of boyhood here—and, as I look back upon it, I know that I was not much mistaken.

I wrote to ask my aunt to take me away. She refused to come to see me—but scribbled a few empty lines to accuse me of homesickness, and to assure me I should soon be rid of it.

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We did much more drilling than studying. Though nearly all of us intended to go to college, our school day was confined to about three hours at the most—and under teachers who were always surly, sneering and uncouth. The standard of work in the classroom was very low. At first I did not have any trouble at all in leading the entire school in scholarship; but gradually, under the careless and relaxed conditions, I grew unambitious, lazy—and found myself failing among a class of boys who, I secretly knew, were my mental inferiors. It is so much a matter of competition, of environment.

Of friends I made few: even of those schoolboy friends who are your "pals" one day, your sworn enemies the next. I had one or two sentimental encounters with a brewer's son—a great, beefy ox of a boy who lorded it over all of us because he kept his own private horse in the town livery stable and had his room furnished with real mission furniture. But he had no use for me when he realized that I was a Jew, and took particular pains to transfer me from the company of which he was first sergeant into the band.

The band, so-called in spite of the fact that it was composed of only fifes, drums and bugles, was a sadly amateurish thing. The little knowledge of music that I had was just so much more than that possessed by any other member of the organization. As a result I soon rose to the magnificence of cadet drum-major, an office which involved a tall, silvered stick and a shako of sweltering bear-skin. Thus, my military training consisted mostly of learning to twirl the baton; and when semi-annual examinations resulted in disaster for me, I was reduced to the humility of a private without having gained more than the knack of sending a silvered rod in rapid circles about my stiff and sorely-trying thumb.

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At that, I was glad to return to the ranks. There had been plenty of criticism of the fact that a "plebe" should have risen so quickly to an officership. And, of course, as Jewish boys always do, I imagined that the demonstration was just another evidence of race prejudice. Undoubtedly it was, to some extent—but I know that I have always been too suspicious in that direction. Had I been braver about it, I should have been less suspicious.

One friend I did make: a lieutenant-adjutant whose first name was Sydney and who was in charge of the punishment marks that were allotted us for our various misdemeanors. Many a time did Sydney, for my sake, forget to record the two or four marks which some crabbed teacher had charged against me for inattention or disorderly conduct.

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He was a big, handsome chap, with the most attractive manners I have ever met. He was a scholarship boy—so that he had begun his school year with a hundred and one unpleasant tasks to perform. But somehow or other he had managed to be rid of them all excepting this dignified one of "keeping the books"—and I am sure it must have been a lucrative one, in a small way, for Sydney's room was full of pictures which had been given him from other boys' rooms, of canes and banners—even of a half dozen pair of patent leather shoes—which may or may not have come to him in return for his apt juggling of those hated punishment marks.

I am not attempting to judge him—and I will tell you much more of him later on—but I must remember him as one of the most wonderful of friends: always smiling, always ready to join in upon whatever lark was planning—a bit of a daredevil, very much of a protector when the bullies of the school were pressing too close for comfort.

During the year, of course, I saw or heard nothing that could remind me of my Faith. We had to go to church on Sunday mornings. I was given my choice, and tried accompanying one squad after another. I went to the Episcopal, the Methodist, the Presbyterian—and it was the last that I finally selected for good. There was a splendid old pastor there; his white hair and trumpeting voice gave him venerableness, even when he spoke of things that seemed to me very childish and obvious.

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Once the commandant, twirling his mustaches, asked me whether I should not like to go to the

synagogue on Friday nights (there was a small one at the edge of the town). I did not care much about the religious inspiration to be gained from the Hebrew service, but I did think it would be jolly fun to be allowed to go down into the town at night. And yet I knew that some of my schoolmates would come to know why I went, and what sort of services I attended, and—reluctantly—I declined the opportunity.

I do not know what the bumptious commandant thought of it, but he pulled his mustaches very, very hard.

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VI

MY STEERFORTH

I wish I could write this episode in quite a different tone from all the others. I wish I could summon all the tenderness of which boyhood has—and which it loses—and put it into the lines of the recital that is now due. Because, then, perhaps, you would have some knowledge and appreciation of what the last few months of my stay at the military school meant for me.

David Copperfield had his Steerforth. Every boy must have one. Certainly, *I* did. And I worshipped him with all the ardor and unquestioning devotion that could come fresh from a boy-heart which had never yet given itself to friendship. Steerforth was a villain; but in David's eye he was always, unalterably, a glorious hero. This is how it was, perhaps, with Sydney—though he was no villain, I am sure.

I spoke of him in my last chapter: told you that he was a poor student, much in favor with the commandant for his good services. I have told you, he was tall, fair-haired, with locks that waved back from his white forehead (as Steerforth's did, as I remember) and merry, blue eyes.

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He befriended me because it was of his generous nature to befriend all the lonelier boys. He used to pal with all the school "freaks," to counsel them, to drill them privately, so that they should be more proficient on parade. He used to make me very jealous of his large circle of small worshippers. I thought that privilege ought to be kept for me alone.

He used to read with me, on spring nights, in the school's dingy library. We read "David Copperfield" together; and would glance up from the page to watch, from the windows, the pale but glowing battle of sunset colors over the hills and mirrored in the darkling stretch of the Hudson. And sometimes, when the story would not give us respite, he would smuggle the book up into the dormitory—and when all was dark there, and the proctor slept, we would creep into the hall and read by its dusky light until long into the night. I have read "David Copperfield" again since then—but not with so exquisite a thrill.

And reading of Steerforth, I used to look up at Sydney and imagine that he was that fine, attractive fellow—and that I, dumb but ecstatic in my pride of friendship, was little David.

It seemed so wonderful to me, especially, that he was a Christian and I a Jew, and yet there had never been any question of difference between us. Other boys who had given me something of their friendship had made such a brave point of telling me that they didn't mind my being a Jew—that there were just as many good Jews as there were bad ones—and all those other stupid and inevitable remarks that we must swallow and forget. But with Sydney it was not like that. He had never mentioned it, and it seemed as if he knew that I dreaded the subject—and so kept silent on it out of kindness.

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Sometimes, when the days were warm and the trees were budding, we went off together on long walks through the country. Sydney taught me to smoke cigarettes, and we would stop on our way at a little village store that lay at the end of a hilly road.

An old man, who was an invalid, owned the store. But he sat all day at his little card table in the dark, untidy rear, playing solitaire; and it was his young daughter who would wait on us behind the counter.

She was a thin, dull-looking girl, scarcely pretty, yet with large, sombre eyes that her lonely task explained. She was ignorant, I am sure, and knew little of what went on in the town at the river's edge or in the big city, fifty-odd miles away. But there was something pathetic about her position—and when Sydney made it more and more a custom to talk to her, to make friendly advances, I thought it only the big generosity of his heart pouring out to succor another such shy soul as mine.

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Once or twice it was not until evening that we could steal "off bounds," and then we would make straight for the little store, as if we knew that, if we did not hurry, it would be closed for the night. And we would have only a few hurried words, but laughing, with the girl—and she would look up at Sydney with a light in those big eyes of hers that I had never seen before in any

woman's. She left her counter, once, and walked all the way home with us; and I saw, in the blue of the gloaming, that her hand was tightly clasped in Sydney's, and that he whispered things to her under his breath, as soon as I was gone a little way ahead of them, and that they both laughed—and she looked up at him as a dumb animal to its master. She came as far as the school gate; and after I had gotten within, they stood for a moment together—and I thought I could hear the sound of kissing. It was only then that I began to be troubled.

Sydney, who was a lieutenant in the cadet battalion, had more privileges than I. He could leave the premises when he pleased. He never had to sign the big book in the hall when leaving and arriving back. He needed never to give account of what he did "off bounds." It was an easy matter for him—and there were many times, now, that he went off alone. No one knew why he used to take that little country road that led up the hill towards a stupid old country store. No one, that is, but me.

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At first I did not think much of the girl's side of it. I was bitterly disappointed that some one else had come between my friend and me. I was jealous of all the time he spent with her, of the hours of reading and walking and jesting that once were mine—and of which the lure of her had robbed me.

But once, when we were at the store, and I stood aside from them, watching the humped back of her old father, bent over his card table, and saw the feeble shaking of his hand, I began to comprehend what it might mean to him if anything should happen. Not that I knew what might happen. I was still very young—but I felt the chill foreboding of tragedy lurking somewhere in the background of it all. The dingy little shop, with its flyspecked glass cases and its dusty rows of untouched stock; the lights dimmed and blackened by clusters of whirling insects; the old father with his bent back—and the two of them standing there and laughing, gazing into each other's faces with the look of youth and the Springtime.

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And I went out quickly and stumbled my way home alone, leaving Sydney to follow after.

When Sydney came in, after taps, I stole from my bed to his to speak to him of it. But the words would not form themselves suitably, and he laughed at my poor stammerings, and sent me off to bed again.

But one night, just before "tattoo," when the fruit trees were frothing with light blossoms and the scent of lilacs was heavy in the air, Sydney sent for me. He was officer-of-the-day, today, and could not leave the premises. He wanted me to go in his place, to meet the girl and to explain why he could not keep his appointment.

I looked at him in amazement. "Do you mean to say, you've been meeting her every night. As late as this? Alone?"

He was playing with the tassel at the end of the red sash which the officer-of-the-day wears about his waist. He let it drop and gave me a quick glance.

"Yes," he said, "and mind you don't tell anybody, either. You'll have to sneak off bounds—but I'll see you don't run much of a risk. You can leave that part to me."

Then, when he saw me hesitate, he began to plead. "Oh, say, you won't go back on me, will you? I've been a good friend to you and done you lots of favors—and now when I ask you to take a little risk for me...."

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I smiled. "You don't understand, Sydney," I said. "It isn't the risk."

"Then what is it?"

"It's—it's the girl."

He stepped back from me, and his face took on a coldness I had never seen before. "Don't worry about that," he exclaimed. "That's my business."

Then, as I hesitated, he burst out: "Hurry up, now, you little Jew!"

I stood very still for a minute. Then I felt my face flush hot and I flung away from him.

It had come at last. He, my best friend—my only friend—he had called me a Jew!

I wanted to scream back at him, to beat him with my fist, to denounce him and curse him. I felt betrayed, degraded as I had never been before. Then I gulped hard and controlled myself.

I said nothing. I merely saluted and set off upon his errand.

But I did not find the girl at the street corner he had mentioned. I went on, only a few hundred yards, to the store. There was a dim blue light in one of its windows, and I crept up and pressed my face against the glass, knowing that she was probably sitting up and waiting.

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Yes, she was there—behind the counter with her shawl still over her head and her eyes fixed on the cheap wall clock. She could not see me in the darkness outside—not even when she turned her head and gave me a full view of her face, so that I could see how strangely pale and set it was, and how deeply lurking in her eyes was the fear of the moment.

I did not go in and tell her anything. I could not. The sight of her and the appeal of her thin, tragic little body sent me hurrying back with my errand uncompleted—and glad, madly glad that it was so.

I crept up to bed as soon as I was "in bounds" again. I wanted to avoid Sydney. Nor would I give him a chance to speak to me the next morning. I felt that I knew now, almost in its entirety, the scheme he was laying—and the climax which was fast approaching. And, after having seen

her, as I did last night, I knew that I could never go walking with him again or have more to do with him, and that I must go back to her, some day soon, traitor-wise, and warn her against him who had been my best friend.

In the afternoon, after school was done, a crowd of us obtained permission to go swimming in a nearby lake. Sydney was among us: the leader of us, in fact. He tried to speak to me—perhaps he was going to apologize to me for having called me a Jew—I do not know. But, though I did not give him the chance, I remember well how tall and brave he looked, and how his hair waved back from his forehead like Steerforth's.

And like Steerforth, too, he was drowned.

Schoolboys are careless of their swimming. We did not notice until it was long too late that Sydney had disappeared. When his body was recovered, the doctors worked over it for fully two hours. But it was no use.

His funeral was held in the school parlor the next morning. But it had been a night of terrors, of whispering groups, of Death's shadow over us all—and we were but children. His empty bed, his dress uniform tossed carelessly over the back of a chair, the knowledge of his insensible presence in the undertaker's shop at the other end of town ... brought fear and wakefulness to us all.

And as for me, I sat all night at the dormitory window and listening to the creak and groan of the old Revolutionary oak in the quadrangle, thought of many things: of the walks we had taken, of the hundred smiling adventures we had shared, of all the glad things he had taught me—and then, of the girl—and of the tragic face of her—as I had seen it last.

And I wished that he had lived only a few minutes longer so that I might have pleaded with him and shown him where he was wrong. And, perhaps, in those few minutes he would have reached out his hand to me, and begged forgiveness for having called me what he did—perhaps he might have done so—and oh, I wanted with all my heart to forgive him and tell him it did not matter—and to wish him God-speed.

But in a few days, when I summoned enough courage to go up the hilly road in search of the little old store, I found it closed. The cracked shades were down before the windows, and a "For Sale" sign was on the door. The father and daughter had moved away, I heard in the town; but no one knew where—or why.

But when I was back in the dormitory, I took the book of "David Copperfield" from under my pillow, and put it back in the library, and did not attempt to read further in it, then.

VII

FRESHMAN YEAR

New adventures must be prefaced by new hopes. My entering college meant the starting of a thousand new dreams, ambitions—and seemed to me an opening gate to a land stronger than any I had yet heard of: a land of real men, virile, courteous and kind, whose thoughts were never petty, whose breadth of mind unfailing.

It was only a few weeks after Sydney's death that I took my college entrance examinations. I had taken the "preliminaries" the year before, and I entered upon these "finals" low in spirit, disinterested, very much aware of how poor a training for them this last year at military school had given me.

Nevertheless, I managed to pass them. Not brilliantly, to be sure, but by a small margin which left no doubt but that I should be accepted in the freshman class of the city's university.

I have not called my alma mater by any other name than this: I do not wish, out of a sense of loyalty, to define it more closely. You will say, before I am through, that I am perverse in that loyalty; perhaps so—but I do not wish to transgress upon it. Suffice it then, that my college days were spent at one of the two universities which New York has within its borders.

I shall never forget how my heart bounded when I received, through the mail, that little leather covered book which college men know as the "Freshman Bible." It is the directory of undergraduate activities issued by the university Y. M. C. A., and is sent to all members of the incoming class. I read each little page and its small, fine print as if my life depended upon its reading. When I came to understand that freshman must wear a black, green-buttoned cap upon the campus, a deep awe of collegiate law and order came over me. When I saw the little half-tone prints of the chapel, the gymnasium, the baseball field, I felt that I was glimpsing, before my proper time, the sacred precincts of a land which would be magical, splendid with an eternal

sunlight, peopled only with a chivalrous and knightly manhood. I suppose that college was to me, as to most subfreshman, a place of green swards and track meets and those musical harmonies which glee clubs can so throatily accomplish.

I was at the hotel in New Hampshire when this book arrived. The very same mail brought me the definite results of my college entrance examinations. I remember that I was just starting to walk down to the lake with my aunt when they arrived. I knew what was in the big ominous envelope—and I was afraid to open it. I crammed it into my coat pocket, careful not to let my Aunt Selina see it, and went on to the boat house, hired a boat and rowed her dutifully around the lake for a full two hours. She remarked upon my silence—but I did not tell her that my fate was in my pocket—and that I dared not look upon it.

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But when I was back at the hotel, I went straightway to my room and opened the envelope, stripped out the blue, bank-note sheet and read—yes, I had passed every examination. And I was a regularly enrolled student at the university.

I told my aunt of it at lunch, as if it were a casual thing—and she treated it as such, too. If I had had any doubts of her lack of genuine interest in me, I knew it now for certain. It was just a matter of course to her—this entrance into college—and to me, in turn, it meant so much: a new work, a new land, a life entirely new and shot through with hopes. I did not tell her that, but let her change the topic quickly. She was intent upon talking fashions with Mrs. Fleming-Cohen.

I had hated to come to this hotel for another year. The people persisted in making things graciously unpleasant for us. I was beginning to be old enough to feel it keenly—and not old enough to overlook. I wonder, for that matter, if Jews are ever old enough to overlook it?

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But Aunt Selina was dictatress of my destinies. She had declared I must either come along to the hotel or else I would not be allowed to enter college. In the face of such an alternative I had yielded quickly. But there had already begun between my aunt and me a chasm that grew daily wider, deeper, more hopelessly incapable of bridging. When one has been away for a year, one returns to find grim truths. I had met other people, seen other lives and other souls since I had been in boarding school: I was not clouded now by my blood relationship to Mrs. Haberman or by day after day of close but unintimate companionship. I saw her as she was: a shallow, flighty woman whose thoughts were always upon that sort of society which spells itself with a capital S, whose petulance found no ease—always restless, always ambitious for petty things, wanting only what she could not have—an idle woman, foolish in her idleness.

In spite of her taking it as a matter of course, she spent the whole day, after she had learned my news, in spreading it about the porch and parlors of the hotel. She seemed to imagine that it would interest every one—even Mrs. Van Brunt, the arbiter of elegance of the mountain clique, who, on hearing it, sniffed, patted her lorgnette with a lace handkerchief, and inquired if a great many Jews did not attend this particular university.

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"Really, I should not think of sending any relative of mine there," she sniffed. "Not that I have a prejudice against Jews, of course—in fact, I consider myself very democratic. I have many Jewish acquaintances. Many of my best friends are Jews."

My aunt, who had undoubtedly had to listen to these catchwords as often as any other Jew or Jewess must, attempted not to understand why Mrs. Van Brunt had spoken them. A few minutes later she made a few unblinking and pointed remarks about having to attend a convention of Christian Science workers in the fall—as if to protest that Mrs. Van Brunt had made a grievous and embarrassing error.

I asked my aunt, a few days later, if I was not to be allowed to live in one of the university dormitories. Whether or not his college is in his home town, every boy wants the full flavor of undergraduate life—wants to live on the campus, to throw himself heart and soul into the college games and customs. I could not see how college would mean anything to me if I were to go on living at home in that dull, comfortless apartment of Aunt Selina's.

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Youth is always eager for emancipation—always a little too thoughtless in its eagerness.

Perhaps I was wrong in forgetting what I owed Aunt Selina. She took great offense at my wish. She spoke, her voice choked with tears, of the many years that she had cared for me, fostered me, guarded me from a world of foreign things—"ruffians and kikes and niggers," was the way she described it.

At any rate, I remember that I spent a whole day in thinking it out for myself upon a lonely walk, and that, at the end of it, I came to tell her that she was right and that I was ashamed of wanting to leave her—that I would live home with her, and try to gain the best of college in that way. Privately, I knew that I could never gain as much—but I had made up my mind not to pain her, confident that it would be worth the sacrifice.

The days lagged slowly to the end of that summer. I was preparing in a hundred little ways for the great adventure: sending for all sorts of stereotyped books on the moral conduct of college men, on the art of making friends, on the history and traditions of my university. I was prepared to be its most loyal son. I could hardly wait for the stupid weeks at this mountain hotel to pass by, for the opening day to arrive.

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And then, when the trees were beginning to fleck with scarlet and the summer heather streaked with goldenrod, we did depart for the city. It was only a week before college would begin.

Then five days, four days, three, two, one. And on the night before registration day, which

would commence the college year, I sat for a long while at my table-desk, dreaming high things—hope and fear mingling with my dreams, charging them with an exquisite uncertainty, making them pulse with the things that were innermost in me.

I was old enough, I thought, to review all the past—to see myself with youth's over-harsh criticism of itself—to realize that, so far, I had made a miserable, cringing, cowardly botch of my conduct and convictions. Some day, soon, I seemed to feel, there would come a moment of crisis—a moment when all the shy, stammering manhood that I knew to be in my heart would fling itself suddenly into the open and make me strong and confident, helpful to myself and many others. I had always longed to be a leader—as every boy does—and so far I had been a slave—slave, most abjectly of all, to my own fears and prejudices. But it would be different at college: there would be something—I did not know what—which would fling courage into me, fill my veins with flame—and it troubled me to wonder what that thing would be. Had any one told me, then, that it would be Judaism, I should have either laughed or been insulted.

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For I was just as much afraid as ever of what hardships my religion might work for me at college. I had as much fear, as much abhorrence of the truth, in that regard. I wanted so much to forget it—to be one of the other sort, little caring for creed in any form, but wishing I were safe in the comfort of having been born into the faith of the majority. As I looked at it then, I was going into these new four years with a tremendous handicap scored against me. It seemed so unfair: I cared so little for Jewish things, yet I would have to be identified with them throughout my entire course. I had learned, by now, that I could not escape them.

I went into college with a deeper sense of the injustice of it all than I had ever had. I was going with the feeling that, come what may, I should have to bow before the inevitable stigma of my race—And yet, I hoped so yearningly that it would be otherwise. I hoped—and dreamed—and laughed at my dreams, and told myself that college men were only boys, after all: boys as bigoted, as cruel in their prejudices as any that I had met at high school or military academy.

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And perhaps I was justified in this last opinion. For, when I appeared on the campus the next morning, headed for the dean's office to file my registration, I was met by a ratty, little sophomore who made me buy a second-hand freshman cap from him at four times its original value.

And when he had my money in his pocket, and was a safe distance across the green from me, he began to laugh and shout:

"Oi, oi! oi, oi!"

So that this was my introduction into college life.

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VIII

WITHIN THE GATES

This initial experience did not frighten me. I came up to the first day of college in the firm and joyous belief that here, if anywhere, that old bugbear of my past school days would be absent. I came into sight of buildings that were new to me, and oh, how stately to my freshman eyes! I came across a campus that was golden with the autumn grass, where red leaves filtered down from old elms, and where, from heights, I caught glimpses of the university's private parks, still green and soft, and of the river beyond—and of the clean flanks of white stone buildings and marble colonnades, half hidden in the trees. It was all so beautiful. It was the promised land and I was within its gates.

The giddy knowledge of it buoyed me up and sent me across the campus humming to myself one of the alma mater songs which I had so religiously learned from that "Freshman Bible." I was on my way to my first class. Directly ahead of me was the broad, lofty door of the recitation building and, a little to the left, a fountain's water spilled itself singingly over into a shallow marble basin.

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Suddenly a trio of sophomores bounded out from behind a clump of bushes. They came about me in a whooping circle, took me by the head and feet and tossed me into the fountain.

I clambered out, dripping, spluttering, but—be it said to my credit—still smiling. I had heard that this was the customary hazing which all freshmen must endure—and I knew enough to take it with as good a grace as they gave it.

I started on my way to the recitation hall again, my clothes leaving a trickling line behind me on the walk. But they pulled me back and thumped me into the water again. It happened a third time before they let me go. And then one of them—a big, stocky fellow who wore a thick, rolling sweater on which the college letter was emblazoned—laughed heartily and thwacked me on the

back and roared that I was a good kid, even for a Jew!

The kindness of his remark was perhaps deeply meant. I've no doubt, he thought to be paying me a compliment—but I went away, wetter than ever, fast contracting a cold—and with a lump in my throat for which the cold was not at all responsible.

In the class room I found a number of my new classmates in quite as damp a condition as I. I was glad to be among them, to know that I had not been singled out—and, being miserable, enjoyed their company. The instructor seemed to be making a point of paying no attention to our wetness. It made me wonder how the faculty felt about hazing. Evidently they shut their eyes to it.

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The class was soon over, since we were only kept for a preliminary explanation of the course and a few words of supercilious greeting on behalf of the young instructor. We came out upon the campus again, locked arm in wet arm, paradoxically proud of what we had suffered.

But some more sophomores were waiting for us. We had to go into the fountain over and over again. My own personal score was nine times. Nor did my good nature—kept at what a cost!—serve to bring me any leniency.

In fact it was only when I showed a trace of anger that the sophomores finally released me and took me over to the gymnasium to give me a sweater and a pair of old pants, much too big for me, to wear until my other suit was dry.

I went home from that first day jubilant, excited, sure of my coming four years. I had proven to myself and to all these others that I was ready to take a joke, to share it and enjoy it even when it was "on me." I had come out of it all with a tame but conclusive triumph of patience and good nature.

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I told my aunt of what had happened, when we sat down to dinner. She was shocked at the recital. She wanted to know what sort of boys these sophomores were—were they of good family and all that? Otherwise, if they were ruffians, common street boys—she was going to write a letter of complaint to the Dean of the university. I had a hard time restraining her from it: I only did succeed by maintaining stoutly that hazing was part of the social scheme, and was indulged in only by "boys of the best families!"

The next morning, when I had traveled uptown to the college site, I was met by more than one sophomore and upper classman who gave me a broad smile or a humorous wink. The story of my dousings had probably gone the rounds of the campus.

That night there was to be a reception given to the freshman class by the college Y. M. C. A. I had arranged with Aunt Selina that I would not be home until late.

There was a baseball game between the two classes in the afternoon. The sophomores won, of course—as I believe they almost always do in that first game. But after that there was a class rush around the flag pole. I was light enough to climb up, stockinged-feet, upon the shoulders of some of the taller classmates. I managed, somehow or other, to reach that silly little flag and to tear it down, and then to dive down into the twisting, jammed crowd below me, hugging the rag to my breast in bulwarked hiding. And when the whistle blew I was still in possession of it.

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Popularity is a heady wine—and I had my fill of it that day and evening. I—little I—had won the class rush for the freshmen. Everybody seemed to know my name, to recognize me, to want to speak to me. At the reception, later on, I was surrounded by a great group of freshmen too shy to stand by themselves. Under ordinary circumstances, of course, I should have been more shy than any of them—but these were not ordinary circumstances. I was a suddenly awakened hero, a wolf who had thrown off his meek lamb's outfit.

As I was leaving for home, full of ice cream, punch and much self-conceit, a junior came toward me hesitatingly. He seemed to be near-sighted, for he groped rather pitifully for my sleeve, and thrust his face close to mine.

"Aren't you the freshman that won the rush?" he asked me.

I told him promptly that I was.

"Well, won't you come around for lunch tomorrow at our fraternity house? We'll be mighty glad to have you."

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I had learned a little of fraternities at school. They had not amounted to anything there; but I knew that college fraternities were different—were big, powerful organizations which could make or break a man's college career. My aunt had spoken to me of fraternities, too; she wanted me to join one which should give me—and her—a deal of social prestige. And I, hungering for new experiences and—as every boy does—for things that are mysterious and secretive, wanted, too, the distinction and glory of making a fraternity. It seemed to my freshman mind the most important thing upon the horizon.

And so, when this upper classman invited me to luncheon, my heart bounded high with expectation. I knew from other college men that an invitation to lunch was but the beginning of the usual system of "rushing" a prospective member: the preliminary skirmish of festivities which would prelude the final invitation to join the fraternity. And I was going to lunch at one of the most influential and exclusive of the university's fraternities.

It is needless to say, I was dressed in my Sunday-best the next morning. And, after my 11 o'clock recitation, I hurried out to find the upper classman waiting for me by the side of the fountain which had been the scene of my yesterday's wetting. I smiled indulgently at the thought

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of it. How changed everything was since then! The upper classman waited for me to come up to him. I saw that he did not recognize me at once, and a tremor of suspicion came over me. What if it were all a hoax—another bit of hazing?

He was immensely cordial; took me by the arm and marched me across the campus, down a side street and into the palatial, pillared house of his fraternity. On the way, his genial face full of a stupid, expansive smile, and his near-sighted eyes twinkling vacantly, he told me of the men I should meet.

Inside, in the magnificent hall, with its weathered oak beams and mission furniture and bronze plaques upon the tapestried walls, I met a host of good-looking, well-dressed men. There was evidently a "rushing committee" of upper classmen, who took me about and introduced me to all the others. There were one or two freshmen, too, whom I recognized; and these were wearing in their lapels a strange, gleaming little button. I was to learn later than this was the "pledge button" which announced that these men had been offered membership to the fraternity and had accepted it.

When we went into luncheon the near-sighted junior sat me next to him. He seemed tremendously embarrassed. Once or twice he leaned over to whisper to other men; then he would steal a glance at me and blush a brick red, his inefficient eyes puckering to squint closely.

The other men, for the most part, disregarded me. A classmate—one of the pledged freshmen—spoke to me now and then, but loftily and as if it were an effort of hospitality.

As I felt the coldness increase, I grew glum and silent. My new-found confidence oozed out into bewilderment. What had I done? What had I said to insult them all, to hurt my chances of election to their midst? I could not figure it out.

They were courteous enough. They were what they claimed to be: a crowd of young gentlemen. But I could sense, electric in the air, the disapproval and amusement which they felt.

And after lunch was over, I did not join the others in the big, leather-walled smoking room. I made a mumbled apology and went. They accepted it blandly, smiling, smirking a little, and let me go.

I had just gone down the steps and towards the campus when the near-sighted junior came after me, redder than ever of face, his eyes, blinking very hard. He hurried up behind me and put his hand on my shoulder.

"See here, 'fresh,'" he said thickly, "I owe you an explanation. I don't want the other fellows to see me giving it to you. Come on, walk along with me."

At the corner, out of range of the windows of his fraternity house, he began his hurried, jumbling speech.

"I could see," he said, "how uncomfortable they made you. They tried to be decent, honestly they did. But they—they've never had—never had to entertain a—one of your sort before, don't you see? We—we don't ever take—well, it's all my fault. I'm so darn near-sighted that I didn't realize. I couldn't see—I didn't know—"

He could not go on, for his dull, honest face was fearfully distressed.

"What didn't you know?" I demanded.

"That you were—now, don't get sore, because I like Jews as much as any folks—and I can't see why we don't take them in our fraternity. Only—"

"Only you didn't realize I was a Jew," I said hotly.

"That's it—I'm so near-sighted that I—"

I did not wait for his stammered finish. I went swiftly away and home, my heart well-nigh bursting.

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IX

MY AUNT AND I

"It isn't true," snapped my aunt, when I told her of what had happened at the fraternity house. "I can't imagine that young gentlemen of such an aristocratic set could act so meanly. You must have done something wrong. You must have insulted them personally, yourself. I'll wager, you're to blame—not they."

I was too sickened by it all to protest. I repeated to her slowly the words of apology which the near-sighted junior had spoken to me at our parting, and, when they did not convince her, gave

up the task and went to bed without any supper. I was old enough to have cured myself of the habit of tears—though, as a matter of fact, no men ever do quite want to cure themselves of it—but I remember that my pillow was damp the next morning, and the grey, foggy sky, through the window, seemed in sad tune with my spirits.

I dressed and went up to college, fearful to meet any of that fraternity crowd again, wondering how they would act towards me, trying to be indignant, but succeeding only in a shriveled self-debasement. Because I was a Jew—that was their one and only reason for showing me the door in so polite and gentlemanly a fashion.

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But when, at the chapel entrance, I bumped into one of the pledged freshmen, he simply did not pay any attention to me at all. He appeared not to know me, murmured an unhurried and general, "Excuse me," and went on. A few yards further on, I met with one of the seniors at whose fraternity table I had been sitting the noon before. He bowed hastily and walked past.

Neither one nor the other of them seemed to be much perturbed by the meeting, nor to notice my own discomfiture. I could not imagine that such incidents as mine of yesterday were common occurrences and yet they seemed to take it so much as a matter of course.

I fought with my pride in the matter for a long while. Then, at the end of a noon-time recitation, I spoke of it to a freshman with whom I had struck up a friendship two days old. The friendship ended there. He seemed scandalized at my mentioning fraternities at all: it was a subject far too sacred for discussion, evidently. He merely snapped back stiffly that he expected to be pledged to another fraternity sometime during the day, and that he did not care to hurt his chances by talking too freely. It made me see the secretiveness of the system from another angle.

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I received no more invitations to lunch. I contented myself henceforth with a humble sandwich and glass of milk at the "Commons" eating hall. It was galling to see classmates being escorted across the campus to the fraternity houses, to overhear them accepting invitations to theater in the evening, to watch the process of their conversion to this fraternity or that one. It was like being in a bustling crowd with hands tied and mouth gagged—and the sullen rage of a disappointed boyhood in my heart.

Aunt Selina did not know how to comfort me. I think she tried to, in her superfluous way. At first she wanted to make light of the fraternities, gibing at them whenever opportunity arose at the dinner table. But she did not feel lightly about it—and her disappointment was too great to be laughed away. She still had a dim suspicion that I had made some fearful misstep—had brought the failure on myself. And so, after a while, she kept silent on the subject, and would not speak of it at all. But her silence was more harshly eloquent than all her foolish talk had been.

It seems that Paul Fleming, a nephew of Mrs. Fleming-Cohen, had belonged to a fraternity at college; and Mrs. Fleming-Cohen was always alluding to it, as if it gave her a social security which my own aunt could never attain. Aunt Selina wanted me to make a fraternity to prove to Mrs. Fleming-Cohen how easy a matter it was. She had implied as much, when we had first come back from the country.

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Our life together as days went by, seemed to be going peacefully and smoothly into some sort of a makeshift groove. I knew well enough that she and I would never grow to be genuinely fond of each other. Our aims were different; and the beginning of college had given me some inkling of what my aims were going to be. I was only eighteen, to be sure; but I was older, more settled than most youths of twenty or more. I blamed myself a little for my impatience with her, for my hasty conclusions concerning those friends of hers who came up from Washington square to eat her meals and to fill her with senseless chatter of art and literature. And yet I could not help loathing them. Whenever they came to dinner, I made an excuse of studying at the house of another freshman for the evening, and thus escaped them.

The first month of college was not yet over when I went, on one of those evenings, to hear an extra-curriculum lecture on the social duties of a college man. I had expected to hear a fop of some sort deliver dicta on the proper angle of holding a fork or inside information as to the most aristocratic set in college. It was that word *social* that misled me.

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Instead, the speaker was a rough, business-like man, rather shabbily dressed, who heaped fiery anathema upon the idle rich. And he spoke of the true social duties. He spoke mainly—because he knew most about it—concerning the opportunities for college men in settlement work.

I had never heard of settlement work before. It was a new thing to me—and perhaps it was its newness that at first attracted me so strongly. I waited until the end of the lecture, and joined a little group of listeners who gathered around the man with eager questions. I had a few of my own to ask, too—and he answered mine as he answered all of them, simply, kindly, directly.

The speaker was Lawrence Richards, director of one of the largest settlement societies in New York. There was something powerful, magnetically enthusiastic about him—and his face was tremendously keen and happy.

He was gathering up his papers to depart when he chanced to remark to me:

"See here, will you come over to my fraternity house with me and talk things over? We can sit in the library, and I'll tell you lots more that I know will interest you. We'll be comfortable—and fairly alone."

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Mr. Richards, it seems, had gone to my university ten years ago. I asked him the name of the fraternity. When he told me it, I shook my head, No.

It was the house at which I had had that memorable luncheon—and whither I was not to be

invited any more.

"Why not?" he persisted. "I want you down in my settlement. I want to show you how you can be of help to us. Won't you come over to the fraternity house?" And when I again declined, he insisted on knowing why.

But I did not tell him. "Perhaps some of the members of your active chapter will tell you," I replied, "but I will not."

He looked at me sharply, and his face grew grim. "I see," he said warmly. "The nasty little cads. Well, it's harder for me to excuse them than it is for you—and I'm their sworn brother!"

So I made an appointment to come down to the settlement, instead, and to take supper with him there some evening. He wanted to show me the splendid organization of things there: the club rooms, the dance hall, the gymnasium and reading room. He wanted to introduce me to the resident leaders. He wanted to persuade me to become a leader, myself: to attend one of the clubs of young boys, to join with them in their meetings, their debates, their entertainments and studies, to help them by friendliness and example.

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"I suppose," he said, when he left me at a subway kiosk, "that you feel mighty sorry that you didn't make a fraternity, don't you? Well, I'm offering you a membership in a bigger and better one than ever had a chapter in a college—the brotherhood of humanity. You'll be proud of it, little fellow, if you'll join. So come along down and let us 'rush' you!"

It was so good-natured a joke that I could not resent it. I had had my eyes opened, tonight, by some of the things that Mr. Richards had told me. I had learned that the city has its poor, its sick and wicked, its boys and girls embroiled in wrong environments, its lonely and unambitious, who must be comrades and wakened. And I had learned that I, young as I was, was able to help, to foster, to do good for such as these.

On the way home, I passed a street corner where boys a few years younger than myself were loitering in obscene play. A little further on I came to a girl, not more than fifteen or sixteen, who was being followed by some toughs. She was a Jewish girl, too, I noticed—and she was crying with fright. I put her on a street car to get her out of harm's way.

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It was of just such as these, both boys and girls, that Mr. Richards had spoken this evening. Perhaps he was right—and what a noble thing to be able to join in the help and companionship which the settlement could give them. I resolved to go down to him the very next evening.

When I reached home, Aunt Selina was just getting ready for bed. She came out into the hall in a pink silk dressing-gown, all frills and ruffles, and asked me complainingly where I had been so long. She was angry at my abrupt departure when her evening's guests arrived.

"I have been to hear a lecture delivered by a Mr. Lawrence Richards," I told her.

"Oh! That settlement man?" she asked.

"Yes."

She almost snorted. "I met him once at a meeting of our Ladies' Auxiliary. He is such a plain, undistinguished fellow!"

I hesitated a moment. "Aunt Selina," I said, "I am going down tomorrow night to have supper with him. He wants me to become a leader in one of the settlement clubs. It would take only one night a week, he says——"

My aunt was so affected by the announcement that I had to run and fetch her smelling salts. "Oh, oh, down into that awful tenement house district? Down among those dreadful people? Indeed, you shan't go. If you do, I shall never allow you to come back! Think of the diseases you might spread!"

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And she carried on so hysterically that, after a while, I gave in and promised I would not go—not for a while, anyhow.

"Why aren't you like other boys of your class?" she demanded. "Why aren't you content to make the best of things and be satisfied with the splendid opportunities you have?"

"That's just what I'm trying to do, Aunt Selina," I told her. "Trying to make the best—the really best of everything that comes into my life!"

But she was unimpressed, and went off sobbing to bed.

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X

THE RULES OF THE GAME

I became rather friendly with that near-sighted junior. He was so genial, good-hearted, apologetic a chap that I could not harbor any resentment against him for the events which took place at his fraternity house. They were not his fault, anyhow.

His name was Trevelyan, and he came from one of the oldest families in New York; one of the wealthiest, too. At college he was considered somewhat of a fool, his never-failing good nature giving justification for the opinion. I don't think that, since that first embarrassing luncheon, I have never seen him unhappy—and even then it was on my account he was discontented, not on his own. And outside of college he must have been respected with all the awe which New Yorkers accord to the Sons of the American Revolution and five or six million dollars. But he was the least lofty, least snobbish man that I have ever known. Most of his college friends thought he was too much of a fool to play the snob; I thought he was too much of a gentleman.

He came to dinner at my aunt's apartment after he had known me for about a month. I do not know who of us was the more proud, my aunt or I—for to me the idea of having a junior and a member of one of the most powerful fraternities visiting at my home was quite as much of a marvel as my aunt seemed to feel it, that a member of the Trevelyan family—the Trevelyan's of Fifth avenue and Sixty-fourth street, don't you know—should be seated at her table and giving gracious attention to her gossipy conversation. For a whole week after his visit Aunt Selina made a great point of it—and of telling her friends of it. The distinction of having a Trevelyan to dinner was a great triumph over Mrs. Fleming-Cohen, who had once entertained a Jewish mining magnate from the Far West—but who had never attained anything like a Trevelyan.

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I think Trevelyan began at first feeling very much ashamed and sorry; he was just trying to square up matters with his own conscience. He had a room in one of the college dormitories. He seldom used it, but when he did he would invite me to stay up there with him and to sit until the wee, quiet hours, talking over our briar pipes, interspacing the layers of blue smoke with argument and stirring plans. Trevelyan had great hopes for me. He had discovered that I was a runner.

As a matter of fact, I had done a little practicing with the track team at military school. I had never amounted to much, had never stood out tremendously in meets. I liked to run, I liked the healthy trim that the exercise gave me, but I'm afraid I never took it very seriously.

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But Trevelyan saw things differently. Here was my great chance. Never mind the college papers, the literary societies and all that tame coterie of lesser institutions. If I made the track team I would be a college hero—and, after seeing me capture the flag in the class rush, he had no doubt of my vim and nerve. I must make the track team. (Trevelyan, by the way, was assistant manager of the track organization.)

So, soon enough, I was out on the windy field in my old school track-clothes, racing around and around with a sturdy intention of proving myself worthy of Trevelyan's friendship. That was my chief reason for "coming out for track," after all.

The coach, a taciturn, gray old fellow, whose muscles were running too fat and whose temper had frayed out in the years of snarling at prospective champions, paid little attention to me until the week before the freshman-sophomore track meet. Then he tried me out at a 44-yard run. That was what I had been used to doing at school. There was only one man in the freshman class who could beat me in this run for certain. There was no reason, said Trevelyan, why I should not be absolutely sure of my place on the class team.

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Three days before the meet the other "44" man sprained his knee. He was out of the race for the time being. There was no doubt now that I would be put in. So said Trevelyan, and so, in surly, semi-official fashion, said the coach.

But we had not counted on the captain of the freshman track team. This was one of my classmates, chosen from among the many candidates by the captain of the 'varsity team. This freshman leader I did not know personally. I had met him almost every day on the field, but he had never recognized me. His track shirt bore the monogram of a noted preparatory school; and it was echoed that he was the handsomest man in the class. He was most certainly the most snobbish. He was thrown into contact with me in various organizations during our four years. I do not remember his ever having bowed to me. In his college world I, and such as I, did not exist.

At any rate, the college newspaper came out one noon to announce the members of the freshman track team, as chosen by its captain. My name was not among them.

In vain did Trevelyan protest to the 'varsity captain, to the coach—I even think he took the matter as high as a meeting of the faculty athletic advisory committee. Nothing could be done. The 'varsity captain shrugged his shoulders, the old coach growled but said nothing, the faculty advisers kept away from the topic as if it were beneath their tutelary notice. And the freshman-sophomore track meet was held with me on the side-lines, among the spectators. I have no reason to gloat over it, but it is a rather amusing point that we lost the entire meet through losing the four-forty yard run.

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"It's a dirty shame," said Trevelyan, his squinting eyes full of rue and anger. "I knew that sort of thing went on in the 'varsity circle—but I didn't think they'd carry it down into the class teams. It's all college politics—and college politics are the meanest, most vindictive intrigue on earth."

I didn't ask him for a further explanation, and I suppose he felt it would be kinder not to make one. But I knew well enough to what he referred—and why there had been this sudden, underhanded discrimination. I made up my mind to forget the whole episode. I had not been so tremendously anxious to make the track team that I would let the disappointment of it rankle and

grow and ruin my year's fun. I put it all behind me, resolving to take my enthusiasm into some other of the college activities where it would be more sincerely appreciated.

I consulted Trevelyan about it. He suggested the college newspaper. But after he had made the suggestion, he began to stammer and make strange protests. I asked him to tell me plainly what was wrong.

"Why, it's the same with that as with the track team. The editor-in-chief of the paper is in my 'crowd.' I'll speak to him—and save you any trouble. If he says yes, then you go out and win a place on the board of editors. But if he says no, I want you to promise me that you won't subject yourself to any more of this puppy-dog prejudice."

I did promise. And two days later I received a postcard from Trevelyan, telling me that it would hardly be worth my while to try for the college paper. He added, in the large, unruly handwriting which his near-sightedness made necessary:

"You may go on breathing, however, if you don't make a noise at it."

He supplemented this, a few nights later, when he and I were at our old places in his room. He threw down his pipe in the midst of talking about something carefully unimportant, and sat up with a laughably angry face.

"See here, 'fresh,'" he bawled out, "you're getting the rottenest deal I ever saw. You know why—so do I. And we're going to show them a thing or two. We're going to buck up against the strongest thing in the world—and that thing is prejudice. We're going to beat it, too. Do you understand? Were going to beat it out! Smash it to pieces!"

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Yes, I understood, I said. I understood it all only too well. So well, indeed, that I knew there was no use trying to fight. I knew that prejudice of race and religion was the strongest shield of the ignorant and mean, that neither he nor I could fight it fairly—and that, if he came into the fight by my side, he would ruin his own chances of being one of the biggest men in the college world when his senior year arrived.

"A lot I care for being a big man in a place of little thoughts," he snapped back at me. "I'm ready to take the consequences, now and forever after."

"Have you thought of what your fraternity brothers might say about it?" I asked him.

"I don't care—I don't—well, if they—." His voice died away in perplexity. I had hit upon his weak spot. He was an easy-going, likeable chap; he hated a rumpus. If he made any sort of fight against the anti-Jewish prejudice, he would have his whole fraternity against him, he would perhaps be shunned by all his sworn brothers, by his best college friends. His enthusiasm became a little dulled, then died down into a great good-natured sigh.

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"I suppose you're right, 'fresh,'" he admitted slowly. "I'm not of the fighting sort. And I have my fraternity to consider. That's the worst of belonging to a fraternity." He took up his pipe again and smoked in silence for a while. "I suppose you think you'll never be happy, now that you know you aren't going to be in a fraternity. Take my word for it, you're ten times luckier in having your freedom. Wait until you're an upperclassman and you'll agree with me."

It seemed a dreadful sacrilege for him to be saying it. Besides, I thought he was blaming his own lack of fighting power on his fraternity in too heavy and unjust a degree. I wasn't any more of a fighter than he—but I was disappointed, somehow, that his pugnacity had died out so readily.

"I can't do it, 'fresh,'" he confessed, with a grin. "I'm not the scrapper I thought I could be. I just want to go through college lazily, happily, respectably—and all that. I wouldn't know how to make a rumpus if I wanted to. But listen here." He pointed his finger at me sternly. "If I were you, I wouldn't rest until I had made the fight and won it. Fight it not only for yourself but for the hundred other Jewish fellows in college. See that they get a square deal. See that they don't lose out on all the things that make college worth while. A Jew is just as good as anyone else, isn't he?"

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"Yes," I answered him only faintly.

"Well, then, go ahead and prove that fact to the whole college world."

But, though I did not answer him, I knew that I was not any more able to make the fight than he. Less able, perhaps, because I was more handicapped. I made myself a thousand excuses as I sat there thinking it over—I was not brave enough, that was all.

But one thing my acquaintanceship with Trevelyan did bring me. He was a dabbler in light verse, and had been elected to the college funny paper. He also contributed to the undergraduate literary magazine at times—though he was a bit ashamed of being taken seriously. At any rate, he encouraged me to go into these two activities.

Whether or not it was due entirely to his influence, or whether these two college publications were broader and less exacting as to the ancestry of contributors, my work for them was welcomed. Before the year was over I had been elected an associate editor of the funny paper, and had four articles accepted by the literary magazine—enough to put me among the list of "probables" for election, next winter.

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At the same time I went through a successful trial for membership in the college dramatic association. I was not given a part in the annual play, however. I made up my mind to consider this a just decision, and that I had no right to impute it to anything other than my lack of talent. The president of the association, however, met me at lunch hour one day and made some rather lame remarks about the embarrassment to which the "dramatics" would be put if I were in the

cast.

"Yer see," he said, "we go on an annual tour. And we get entertained a lot, yer see. And it's big social stunts in every city. And it's the cream of society wherever we go—so, it'd be funny if—well don'tcher see?"

"Yes," I admitted, "I do see. I see further than you do."

I was beginning to wonder if that fight that Trevelyan planned wouldn't be worth while, after all.

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XI

A MAN'S WORK

I talked to Trevelyan, too, of my interest in the work of Lawrence Richards. Trevelyan had heard of him and of his settlement, and was rather at sea to give an opinion about it. He was only mildly enthusiastic.

"What's the use of bothering with things so far away from your college life?" he protested lazily. "Of course, the idea of being useful to people in need is splendid and all that. But somehow, it doesn't fit in with college life."

"Why not? Why shouldn't it?" I argued.

He waved his hand as if to begin some generalization, but made no real reply.

"Wait until you're through with college before you settle down to manhood," he said a little later. "College is just the sport of kids, after all."

It came to me—though I did not tell him so—of how, in the beginning, I had thought of college as a place of full manhood—and of the misgivings I had had, that perhaps, after all, college would be only another stepping stone to that manhood. And so it was: just a stepping stone, through brambles of prickly prejudice and childish pranks. When would it come, that manhood?

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"You know, Trev," I said to him hesitatingly, "I sometimes feel I am much older than most fellows. Almost old enough to do a man's work."

He looked at me and laughed, refusing to take me too soberly. "You are older," he admitted. "Only what do you call a man's work?"

I didn't know, and told him so. He seemed to consider it a triumph for his own argument.

"See here," he said, "what's the use of all this stewing about the slums and the wretched poor and that sort of thing, if you're just aching to make trouble for yourself? If you want manhood, you'll reach it ten times sooner if you'll slip into it comfortably, gracefully, lying quietly on your back and floating—and not splashing too hard. You'll never get anywhere if you insist on getting there with a rumpus."

I admired the studied grace of his similes, but had to confess that they did not impress me as true. But, at the same time, I did not try to explain any further to him how I felt.

That did not end the questioning for me, however. I even broached it to Aunt Selina once, and she threw up her hands in despair. I think I did it somewhat with the idea of seeing her do just that. It was beginning to amuse me, how hopeless she thought I was.

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So that was why I did not tell her of my intention to go, one evening, to see Mr. Lawrence Richards at his East Side Settlement. But immediately after supper, I bade my aunt good night, and answered her suspicious query with the information that I was "bound for a social affair." The answer seemed to reassure her and she gave me gracious permission to go.

I took the subway to Spring street, walked across to the Bowery, and a few blocks on the other side of it, came to the Settlement. It was in the heart of a noisy crowded section, towering high above the shabby buildings like a great, clean, shining bulwark.

Mr. Richards was at supper, I was told. A bright-eyed little Jewish boy, neatly dressed and careful of speech, offered to show me the way to the dining room on the fifth floor.

I had a hearty welcome from the Head Worker when he recognized me. He was disappointed that I had already had my supper; made me sit down beside him and introduced me to all his associates. They were mostly young men, I was surprised to find; one of them told me that he had graduated from one of the New England colleges only the year before.

Mr. Richards showed me all about the place, as he had promised he would. Then he took me with him into his "den" as he called it—a little room, just off the gymnasium, where he had his desk and filing cabinets and books. He sat me down opposite him on a canvas-covered chair, and,

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when he had gone over some reports which needed his signature, looked up at me and smiled.

"Well," he said, "what's the trouble?"

"Oh, I didn't—well, how did you know there was any trouble?"

The smile broadened. "None of you ever come down here unless you are in trouble. Trouble's a sort of bait that lands ambitious youths into doing settlement work—and into coming to me for advice. They say I'm pretty good at giving it. Why don't you try me?"

I did. I told him exactly how I felt: that I was growing impatient of all the tomfoolery of college; that I wanted work more sure of manly results, more broadening, more full of character. Then, too, I told him of what Trevelyan had said, and he laughed at it merrily.

"Trevelyan?" he said. "Oh, yes, I know him. He belongs to my fraternity, doesn't he? I've met him at one or another of our affairs. A good enough fellow—a little too much money, and a little too easy with himself in consequence. But he's a thorough gentleman at heart, isn't he?"

I almost gasped. He had summed up Trevelyan marvelously well in those few words. He saw my wonderment and smiled.

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"I've only met him once or twice," he said, "but I have the faculty of knowing men. It's a faculty I have to have in this sort of work. It depends so much on the human equation. I meet thousands of young men and women every year—meet them, talk with them a little while, give them the best I have to give in that short space—and like to think that, even if I never see them again, I've helped them along a bit. That's all that a settlement can do, after all."

Outside the door, in the gymnasium, we could hear the joyful shrieks of a crowd of young boys playing basketball. From the upper floors came a scraping of feet to tell that the clubs were beginning to meet for the evening. From across the hall came the sound of young girls singing the parts of a cantata—and this was all planned, all created by Lawrence Richards who sat there at his desk and had a smile for each and everyone who came before him.

"Don't think you're different from all the other fellows at the university," he said to me. "You're not. You're all as much alike as a row of pins. Your problems are youth's problems—and you needn't be ashamed to have them, as long as you work them out to suit the best that is in you. You've nothing definite in mind, have you?"

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I said, "No." I only had an idea that he might be able to use me here at the settlement in some capacity.

"There's a good deal in what Trevelyan said," he told me. "While you're at college you might as well give college all that it needs of your time and energy. College will surely pay you back. All the work that you do on a team, for a college paper, for any of the undergraduate organizations, will be just so much of a pledge on the part of your college that she will honor you, give you power and position and the opportunity to do bigger things. Don't you want those honors? Doesn't that power mean anything to you?"

I could not answer him; I did not want to tell him that I thought myself above these little things. He understood me, however, even in my silence.

"They are things worth while," he said. "There is a senior society worth 'making,' if you can. It would be something to be proud of to be the only Jew ever to have 'made' it. But it's more than an honor. That senior society practically governs the student body—molds its thought, holds sway over all campus opinion. Think what you could do if you were a member of it. You could fight for the other Jewish boys, make things easier and fairer for them—could spare them the unpleasant things you had to bear. You could master all snobbery, could make the university a place of real American democracy and gentlemanliness. Don't you think that that's worth while?"

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I admitted it was. I had not thought of it in that way.

"Now, this is what I suggest," he said. "It's getting near the end of the term, and there's no use in your beginning any work down here at the settlement while college is still in session. But when vacation begins, I want you to come down here to live for a couple of months. I'll make you a resident club-leader, and you'll have your full share of the best sort of work." He paused a moment. "Will you come?"

"Will I? You bet I will!"

"Good! And in the meanwhile, take Trevelyan's advice—it's mine, to. Stick to your college work and your college play, and don't bother about the outside world for a while. That is your world—the college. Fight hard in it. The whole world likes a stiff upper lip, and the college world likes it best of all. And, sooner or later, Jew or Gentile, the college world will repay you for all that you give it. If you go through college shunning everyone, afraid of your own shadow, surly to the approach of all who would be friendly to you, you will reap nothing but loneliness and a bitter 'grouch.' If you loaf and play cards and hang about the billiard parlors all day long, you won't make a friend worth having, you won't gain anything worth remembering. If you work at your studies only, you'll gain nothing but Phi Beta Kappa—and, for all its worth, that'll mean nothing to you unless it brings along with it the respect and good will of all the men from whom you wrested it. At college as much as in any business office a smile will beget a smile, willingness to work will reap willingness to reward—and Alma Mater, if only you prove your love for her by working for her, will return your love tenfold."

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He reached over the desk and touched my arm.

"I don't mean to be just rhetorical," he continued. "I have been through the same inner struggle

and wonder and repugnance that you have—and I know how deeply you feel it. Well, I worked blindly ahead at the things that college gave me to work at—the football team and the newspaper and all that—and soon enough I knew that I had been working into manhood by the only right road. Manhood is a matter of disposition, not of work. There's a place for manhood in your little college world. Go and find that place—and give it all that is manly and courageous in you."

I left him, I confess, doubting his words a little to find that place of which he spoke so feelingly.

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Well, perhaps I would find it. Perhaps an opportunity would spring up from out of the sing-song ordinariness of my daily life—and what would I do then?

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XII

THE HEART OF JUDEA

My promise to Mr. Richards brought more than one result. The first of them was a serious quarrel with my Aunt Selina. Her horror at the idea of my spending the summer at a slum-settlement was beyond curbing. She had planned that I should accompany her and Mrs. Fleming-Cohen upon a trip to Europe. They did not need me; they would be in no way dependent on my company ... and I flatly declined. Aunt Selina, outraged at my actual intentions, left for France a week earlier than she had expected—and, in high indignation, gave me leave to do "whatever I pleased by way of disgracing her reputation."

Her letter from the steamer warned me to bathe every day in very hot water, lest I should be contaminated by the filth of that section of the city which I had chosen for my summer home ... and to be sure and give her warmest regards to that delightful Mr. Trevelyan!

I lost no time in moving into Mr. Richards' company at the East Side settlement. I was given a room there which was small, dark, but neat and comfortable enough. College had no sooner closed than I was settled in it, ready for the two months of work which had been allotted me.

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In return for my board and lodgings, the settlement demanded all my time. There was hardly an hour which was not given to some sort of club or class, rehearsal or supervision or gymnastic training. Almost immediately after breakfast the playground work began; by noon I was helping a crowd of little ragamuffins to forget the heat in the splashing fun of the swimming pool, in the basement. In the afternoon there were classes for young boys who needed tutoring—hungry-eyed, eager little fellows who reminded me of what I must have been when I was their age.

I would not have you believe that I was readily sympathetic with every case I met. These boys and girls—though I rarely had to do with the latter—were all Jewish. The appearance of some of them would perhaps have justified my aunt's antipathy to the East Side. Those that were new to the settlement, I noticed, were shabby, dull, rough of speech, surly of manners. It would need a few weeks before I could see how subtle, yet how fundamental, were the changes which the settlement would have wrought in them.

I was shy, too, in the presence of so many boys: shy of their hastily-offered friendship, their rushing eagerness to bring me into all their schemes and boyish dreams. But I was still young enough to know those dreams upon my own account: young enough to feel with little Mosche, a cripple, who wanted so much to become an expert at the swinging of Indian clubs, and who was forever dropping the heavy things in clumsy weakness; young enough to realize how much his mother's love meant to thirteen-year-old Frank Cohen, who had been caught stealing fruit from a corner grocery and was "on parole."

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But the feeling in itself was not enough, evidently. I must try and try to make that feeling eloquent—to make these boys feel, in turn, the sureness and helpfulness of my understanding. Sometimes it was torture. It is harder to conquer shyness than to slap a dragon.

Mr. Richards saw this in me—watched the struggle, appreciated it. He spoke of it to me, once, and I did not hesitate to tell him how I felt. How inadequate, how chagrined and humbled in the face of all the poverty and suffering which life down here disclosed.

"It was the same when I first came down here," he said to me in turn. "But I gained courage. Thank God for that!"

He said it quietly, but there was a good deal of fervor in the tones. It surprised me, somehow, because, I had never before heard him mention the name of the Deity. It gave me a new question to ask.

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"Why is it that you don't lay more stress on religion down here? Don't the boys and girls need it?"

"Need it? Who doesn't?" A shadow crossed his face. His vivacity gave way for a moment before

deep thoughtfulness. "But they get all they need, these kids. They are mostly all of them members of strictly orthodox Jewish families. Religion is given them at all hours in their own homes. Many of them get more of it than they can ever need. They get so much of it that they flee from it, just anxious for the freedom of the streets and the novelty of the bar room and the brothel and the gambling den. I have made investigations. I know that half of the East Side boys who land in the police court have been driven there by the religious strictness of their parents."

"Mr. Richards," I began ... but stopped in dismay. What I had been about to say was no more nor less than a hot, strong denial of his opinion. I felt sure he was wrong—and yet it seemed humorous to me that I, who a year ago, had hated all things Jewish, was now defending all the worth and venerability of its ritual.

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"I do not agree with you altogether," I said lamely. "But ... but still, don't think I am a very enthusiastic Jew. Because I'm not."

"Aren't you? Why not?"

I did not answer—had no answer to make, in fact. I did not want to tell him of my aunt, of her influence, of my own cowardice. But, looking at me, I think he did guess something of the longing I had had ... something of that strange night when I had stood outside the synagogue and heard the music coming from within the depths of its golden haze. For he put his hand on my shoulder and bade me think for a moment why I was not a Jew in spirit as well as in name.

"You're not a snob," he said, trying to help me. "You're not thinking that, because your religion is in the minority in the midst of a Christian land, it is necessarily an ignominy to be a Jew—and to act as one."

My silence held. I let him go on talking. "Anyhow, you need religion. Every man does to a variable extent. I should feel sorry for the man who didn't. And do you mind my telling you—" he paused only for a second—"that you are one of those who need it most?"

I hung my head. He had hit so truly upon what was right, what was most secret in me.... I could not ask him how he had guessed it, I remembered his assertion that he knew men—all men—and saw now that he had not been boasting.

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He went on, presently, to explain that religion was a thing for the fathers and mothers and rabbis to teach to the children—not for the settlement to teach them. He knew that boys needed the guidance of religion ... but he felt that it was supplied in even too large doses already.

"The pity of it is," he said in closing, "that wherever Jewish children turn away from the faith of their fathers, they have nothing to turn towards next. They are at sea ..." he gave me another of his quick, deep set glances ... "and that applies to rich and poor alike. Christians forget their religion when they feel they have outgrown it ... because they have lost interest in it. Jews forsake theirs but never forget it. Under certain circumstances they grow impatient with it, slink from the inconveniences which it entails ... but their hearts are always desperate for the Faith. It is a hidden loneliness, a stifled longing to them."

I thought of Aunt Selina and wondered if she had ever felt that loneliness, that longing, as I had. I could hardly imagine her happy in devoutness to Judaism. It was so comical, I laughed aloud ... and got up and left Mr. Richards, lest he should ask me at what I was laughing.

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It was his remark about Jewish children getting all the religion they need which nettled me the most. I felt that I would like to go out upon the streets and see for myself. The streets are the East Side's parliament, its court of law and high opinion.

They were hot and glaring with the noonday sun when first I appealed to them. Their pavements, white and littered with unspeakable confusion, gave off a dancing wave of heat. Old women, squatting on their doorsteps, their coarse wigs low upon perspiring foreheads, dozed and woke and gabbled to each other and dozed again. Old men, with long grey beards, long, tousled hair and melancholy eyes shuffled listlessly up and down, stopping only to make way for playing children or to pat them on the head. The gutters had their Jewish peddlers, each window its fat Jewish matron who leaned upon a cushioned window-sill and gazed apathetically at nothing. There was a Babel of Yiddish and Russian and guttural English. At one corner there was a crap-game going on in full sight of the policeman across the street. Young men of my age were in it; youths with mean, furtive faces and laughs that were cruel and raucous.

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So this was Judea? This was where religion played too strong a part ... where parents and rabbis taught so fully to their charges the word and the comfort of God? It did not seem so to me. It seemed all hateful, smeared, repellant. And, with the question unanswered, I fled from it.

But the next morning, in the settlement playground, something happened which began the solution for me. It was an accident and I regretted it for a long while, feeling that it was my fault.

I had been teaching little Frank Cohen some tricks on the horizontal bar. Frank, the boy on parole for petty theft, was daring in this gymnastic work. No sooner was my back turned on him than he tried one of the tricks without my help. His fingers slipped, he fell heavily from the bar to the ground. When we picked him up, his arm was found to be broken.

We got him home in Mr. Richards' little run-about, and put the boy to bed. The doctor set his arm and put it into splints. I met Frank's mother here, and, later on, his father who, having heard of the accident, came rushing upstairs from his bakery shop. They were a nervous, frightened pair; and it needed all the talk my lungs were capable of to assure them that their son would soon recover the use of his arm and be out of his bandage.

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As I left their stuffy little flat, they were reciting some Hebrew prayers of gratitude. Tears were on the cheeks of both of them, and their eyes were uplifted to a God I could not know. I went downstairs bitterly conscious of that.

And this was why, when Frank Cohen, pale, his arm in a sling, but the hero of his comrades, came again to the settlement, I sought him out and made an especial friend of him. Of what that friendship should become I had then no plan.

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XIII

CHILD AND PARENT

One hot evening, when the fire-escapes were crowded with hundreds of sleeping children, and the streets were shrieking canyons of heated stone and iron, and men and women lay in the grass of little parks, breathing heavily as if in prayer for coolness, I learned the secret in the heart of young Frank Cohen.

He was sitting beside me in the amateur roof-garden which Mr. Richards had contrived atop the settlement. We had wicker chairs there, a few potted palms and a solitary, tiny goldfish in a small glass bowl. That was the extent of its furnishings; but in the later afternoons the old Jewish mothers would come and sit here and doze in the sun, grateful for the breeze, city-fed and redolent, which might carry relief towards them.

This afternoon Frank's mother had been among them. I had seen her there, a pale, little woman who sat with her sewing in her lap, staring dully out over the roofs below her. I had been detailed to go around among these women and to make them as comfortable as I could. Hardly a one, however, could understand English; and Frank's mother, when I came to her, took no notice of anything that I said or mentioned. She looked at me from under lowered eyebrows. Later on Mr. Richards, who had had her under his attention for some months, told me how frightened she had been by her son's misdemeanor—it had been no more than that, according to the police report—and it was easy to imagine that she looked with suspicion upon every comrade whom Frank followed, now. The fact that I was so much older and was a member of the staff of the settlement workers was not enough to overcome the whole of her distrust.

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And when the evening came, and Frank and I had emerged from one of the club meetings—for he was president of his particular club of boys of his own age—hot and tired from wrangling over Robert's Rules of Order and the wording of a baseball challenge to be sent to a rival organization, he told me the entire story of that misdemeanor. He would not speak of it readily. He too felt the shame of it, differently of course, but no less heavily. He had been in bad company. He had been going for months with some sons of one of the East Side's notorious gamblers—boys who were wise beyond their years and brutal beyond their strength. Cowardly, sneaky, they had prompted him to steal things at the counters of all the shops on their street. He had never realized, under their whispered urgings, how wrong it was—and he had never had a chance to profit by his thefts himself. The petty business had gone on for a couple of weeks, the other boys praising him, bullying him by turn, and dividing the loot between them. And when the inevitable happened and Frank found himself locked for the night in a police court, frantic at the disgrace which the loathsome night exaggerated, these boys informed against him.

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When he told me of this, and how they had come snivelling before the police lieutenant, and had lied to make that fat, gruff, old master believe that Frank had stolen even more than he actually had, and all for the sake of becoming the chief of their "gang"—then his narrow face darkened and writhed with a hate that was too great for him to bear—and presently tears came into his black eyes.

"Were they Jewish boys?" I asked him. "No," he answered passionately. "I think I should have gone crazy if they had been."

I glanced at him quickly. He did not smile as he said it, nor was there anything too melodramatic about his manner.

"Why do you say that? That you would have gone crazy?"

"Don't you see? You're a Jew, ain't you?"

I said, "Yes."

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"Well, I couldn't talk about it to you at all if you wasn't. And if they had been Jews—my own people—and had gone back on me like that, it would've been just a little too much. They were just tough kids—and so they didn't know any better. If they had been Jews they wouldn't have taught me to steal, they wouldn't have done what they—God, my father and mother were right about it, for sure!"

"Your father and mother? Why, what had they to do with it?"

"Oh, you know how parents are. They used to warn me against going with those tough kids. They seemed to know from the beginning that something'd happen out of it. They said—you know, it's like old folks—that Christian boys would never want to go with me unless to gain their own ends—and then to desert me, see? They wanted me to go with the Jewish boys I'd been going with all my life, before then. But I laughed and didn't listen. And—and when I had to pay back for all the things I stole, it was—well, it was the Jewish boys I knew who clubbed together and earned money by odd jobs after school—and if it wasn't for them, I'd be in the workhouse."

"But all Christian boys aren't like the ones you went with," I argued.

"No, I suppose not. But I like to think that all Jewish boys are like the ones on this street. They made a good Jew of me!"

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I turned on him quickly. "Did they? How?"

"They made me proud of being one of them. They made me feel the close something-or-other—well, I ain't much when it comes to speeches but you know what I mean."

Perhaps I did, but I would not admit it to myself. Perhaps I did see the faith reborn in him through the faith that other boys had given him. Perhaps, too, I could picture something of the welling joy that had come to his parents when he returned to the only right path that their simple, unquestioning eyes could see. And how jealously they must be guarding him now, to keep him in that code which was their life's law and had become his daily lesson!

"Don't you see?" he begged. "Can't you? Why, a fellow's just *got* to have a side to fight on—and to fight for. And he's got to believe that his side is the only one, the right one. Life wouldn't be worth living without it. You don't know what it means to be *fighting for the right!*"

From below came the droning of the unquiet streets. A little higher up a hot wind went almost noiselessly among the chimneys, so that we heard but faint sighs. The roof garden was in darkness, naught gleaming but the little glass bowl of gold fish. There was a sense of utter darkness and loneliness—and yet into it had come, like the glad, brave blast of New Year's trumpet, a battle cry of the One God. A battle cry which made throb the heart of a young, rough boy; a battle cry which would be his whole life's secret well of gratitude and bravery.

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"*You don't know what it means to be fighting for the right!*"

He was so slight, so meagre in appearance, that I could not help finding something gently humorous about his utterance. But when I looked at him and saw how his eyes glowed through the dark, and how he stood straight and at full height, his narrow shoulders thrown back, in spite of his bandaged arm, and his face upraised to the summer stars, my smile passed quickly.

There came over me that same queer panging sense of being only on the outside of things—only on Life's outermost border. I was looking straight into the heart of a boy and seeing the gladness which blazed there—and yet I could not have it, as he had it. Here was this sudden, all-forgetting boldness of belief which he had won—and I could only watch it covetously through the bars of my exiled doubts.

No, no, he was right—a thousand times more right than I. If faith in the One God did all of this for him, then that faith was surely justified.

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And if I could only bring myself to believe as deeply, as powerfully as he did—then my whole life would be remade as his had been—and I, too, would fight for what I must believe: would fight—for the right!

I did not let him talk any further, but sent him home. I did not want his parents to be worrying as to where he was, this time of night. I stayed on a little while, looking over the roofs and the white-faced huddlings of the fire-escapes, and then I went to bed, to toss with heat and battle with my thoughts throughout the night.

When the morning came, I went early to Frank's house. The pavements were fresh and damp with the water of a sprinkling cart, and the shops, just beginning to open, had a Sabbath air of cleanliness. It was cooler than yesterday, too, and the street corners were still cleared and quiet.

I had been granted permission to take Frank and two other boys on a picnic to Westchester. He was ready for me when I knocked at his door, and let me into the darkened kitchen.

His mother was there, too, cutting bread for sandwiches which we would take along. Her old morning wrapper and her hastily-shawled head gave her an even more forbidding appearance than ever. But when her sandwiches were packed into a box and wrapped and tied, she wiped her hands on a towel and looked at me steadfastly, not unkindly, for fully a minute.

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I could not understand what she said. It was in Yiddish, and I have never learned that tongue. But here and there I caught a word which gave me enough of her meaning.

She was telling me that Frank had spoken to her of me last night when he returned from the blessed settlement. He always came to her bedside, nowadays, knowing that she would be awake and waiting to hear where he had been. And so he had whispered, while his father slept, of the strange young man who was so kind—a Jew, like them—and yet who had no faith in God.

Then suddenly she began to beg something. "Mutter, mutter," was all I could make of it—and I guessed that she was asking me of my mother, and wondering why I did not listen at her knee as Frank had done at his own mother's. And when I told her that my mother was dead, tears came into her eyes, and this was the finest sympathy I had ever known.

For she put her big, buttery hand on mine and shook her head. "You must learn to know God," I think she said. "He alone can take your mother's place. He made my son what I longed he should be. He will make you what you most desire. In God alone is there happiness."

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And so Frank and I went out and down the dirty, narrow stairs, and came into a street of Heaven itself—a street of early sunlight, and a clear sky above—and morning smiles upon the faces of all passersby. Or so it seemed to me, at any rate.

Because, for once in my life, I had seen the happiness of mother and child swept up into glory that is God's.

And I laughed to think of Mr. Richard's remark that religion works harm among these East Side people.

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XIV

AN UNGRATEFUL NEPHEW

The summer came to an end only too quickly. I had enjoyed every moment of it, every opportunity. I had built up three clubs of which I was personal leader; I had given service in the gymnasium and playground; I had helped in the development of a roof-garden cordiality between the settlement workers and the mothers of children on the street. Mr. Richards, the last night I was there, presented me with a loving-cup on behalf of the other workers.

It was at supper that he did this, in front of them all. He called upon me, then, to describe to them the most interesting experience I had had in the course of the summer. So I told them the incident of Frank Cohen and his mother—but I do not think they saw much that was interesting about it. Mr. Richards may have, perhaps, because he must have remembered that dictum of his which the incident disproved; but even he could guess little of the impression it had made upon my thought and character.

I had had a letter from my Aunt Selina, to tell me curtly that she was back in New York, but intended starting out immediately upon an automobile tour through New England into Canada, in company with Mrs. Fleming-Cohen and some ship-board acquaintances—"personages," she called them in her much underlined letter, which probably meant that she had succeeded in capturing some stray society folk. She bade me go back to our apartment and to have it ready for her on her return. The servants, she said, were already there, engaged in cleaning away the summer's dust. She hoped "I would be able to start the college year without her, and that I would comport myself on the campus in a manner creditable and befitting, etc., etc."

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But in spite of the servants' efforts to make things bright and comfortable, the apartment was a dismal and lonely place. College kept me uptown all day long, of course, but when the evening came and I must return to the big, empty rooms that were our substitute for home, I did not like it. I began to linger more and more about the campus at night: it was truly the most beautiful time to be there, when the autumn moon silvered its lawns and gave the buildings a marble whiteness. There was singing on the fences, then, and all sorts of meetings of all kinds of college organizations. The campus hummed with a hundred undergraduate activities—so that I saw, as never before, how much I missed through having to go downtown each night to live. But so long as my aunt wanted it, I felt I owed it to her to obey, and would not even consider the renting of Trevelyan's suite of rooms in the principal dormitory. Trevelyan had given up these rooms to move into his fraternity house.

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"It's a dreadful bore," he said to me in his lazy, rueful way. "I'd be ten times more comfortable here—but I don't want to insult the brothers. However, you'll come up to the house and see me just as often, won't you?"

I promised him I would, but he seemed to know as well as I that I would not. A sophomore paying nightly visits to a senior in the fraternity house where that sophomore had only a year ago been smiled politely out—no, it didn't seem even probable. And so, when I had helped Trevelyan put his last bit of furniture upon a truck—and had tucked among the rungs of many Morris chairs the bundle of flags and college shields which he had overlooked—I could hardly bear to shake hands with him. We both knew that it was something in the nature of a definite goodbye; at any rate, so far as college was concerned.

"A damned nuisance, this," he said thickly, his short-sighted eyes screwing up oddly. "And if it wasn't for the brothers—" But the brothers did win him, and I lost a friend thereby.

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The home to which I must go seemed lonelier than ever now. I was not expecting Aunt Selina for two more weeks, and so I hit upon the idea of inviting some one to stay with me until then.

Frank Cohen! Yes, I would ask Frank Cohen. He was going to high school now, and the branch

which he attended was not so far from where I lived. It would be convenient for him, and perhaps a happy change from the East Side crowdedness which he had had to encounter all his life.

He was as glad to come as I to have him. I gave him Aunt Selina's room to sleep in, and we sat there, when our homework was done, many evenings until past midnight, talking gently and thoughtfully of many things. He was a boy much as I had been—and perhaps, still was. He was shy to an uncomfortable degree, low of voice, dreamy in manner. But when he was aroused to something especial, he became uncontrollably intense, his eyes flashing and his knees trembling, so that his whole small body seemed but the sheer vibration of his thoughts.

He was hoping to go to college, when his high school days were over. He had not dared mention it at home, though, because he knew how poor his father was, and how much of a help he would be when he could go to work and begin to carry home his weekly earnings. He hated to go into a shoddy little business; he wanted to study further, to take up some profession—perhaps the law. Or if he did go into business, he wanted to have had a few years of college first, so that he might see things broadly and with a mind trained for bigness. But he had only dreamed all this, only longed for it in secret. He would rather forego all of it than urge his father to make the big sacrifice.

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I had come to be so fond of him, it was not long before I decided upon what seemed to be a proper solution. Without a word to Frank, I escaped from college early one afternoon and went downtown to that East Side street where he lived. I found his father in the cellar of the bakery shop which he owned, his beard all whitened with flour dust, his thin, bare arms thick with the paste of dough.

With rehearsed gesticulations I made him understand what I offered. My own father had left me fairly well off; I wanted to lay out the money which would be necessary to afford Frank a college education. They could pay it back when they pleased—not for many years would I need it.

I had a distinct surprise, then. My generosity was taken somewhat aback by the man's apparent anger. He seemed to be resenting any suggestion of charity. I tried to assure him that this was not what I intended, but he did not understand. At length we had to call in one of the bakery's oven-tenders to act as interpreter. And through this third party Mr. Cohen thanked me kindly. He appreciated all I offered, but he had long ago made arrangements for Frank.

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"And what are those arrangements?" I asked anxiously, picturing the boy at work in this dark, mouldy cellar.

"It is a secret," said Mr. Cohen. "But it is time now for me to disclose what his mother and I have planned for him. For ten years we have saved. And we have saved enough to send him to college. He shall go there and we ourselves shall send him." He drew himself up as he said it, so that I had a glimpse of that pride which all Jewish fathers seem to take in hardships which they undergo for their children. "It is so with the son of the president of my synagogue," he said. "It shall be no less so with my son, either. He shall have what his father could not have, though his father starve and slave to give it to him!"

The dull interpreter gave me this in flat, spiritless tones; but I could see the clenched hands and the earnest face of Mr. Cohen, and I nodded quickly.

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"I am very glad," I told him. "And I know it will mean ten times more in happiness to you because you are giving him all this with your own hands. Frank said to me he dared not ask it of you—he thought the sacrifice too great—and that is why I came to you with my offer. Do not think me rude, therefore."

He answered gravely. I was not rude, he assured me, and he owed me deep thanks. He had only one favor to ask; that I should not tell Frank the secret, but would leave it and the joy that it would bring, for him, his father. He would tell him immediately after Frank had returned home from his stay at my apartment.

I hurried home, for it was now nearly suppertime. To my amazement I found Frank sitting in the lobby of the apartment, his old suitcase beside him, his look one of fevered disconsolment.

"What's the trouble?" I asked him.

"Oh, I just wanted to say goodbye to you," he said hurriedly. "I did not want to go without doing that. I've—I've had a pleasant time."

"But why are you going?"

"Oh, I want to be home ... you know, I get a little homesick." But he said it so stumbingly that I was sure he was not telling me all.

"Frank," I demanded, "tell me the truth. Has anything gone wrong? I had hoped you would stay until my aunt returned."

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He laughed at that, and mystified me the more. "Have any of the servants offended you in any way?" I asked, searching my brain for some reason for his change of attitude.

"The servants? Oh, no, of course not!" He picked up his suitcase and started for the street. "Well, goodbye," he said. He stopped as if he wanted to explain, then thought better—or worse—of it, and went on. I was a little nettled by this time, and let him go.

As I went up in the elevator, it seemed to me a mighty mystery. But no sooner had I let myself into the apartment than I was due for a bigger surprise.

For there, blocking the hallway, a figure of offended pride, stood Aunt Selina.

I went to her to kiss her, but she stepped back and glared into my face.

"It's a lucky thing I came back unexpectedly," she said. "The idea of finding a little Jew boy like that in my room—sitting in my own bedroom with his copy books spread all over my directoire desk! A common little boy with an accent!"

I saw it all, now.

"That boy was one of my best friends," I told her as calmly as I could. "Had I thought you would have objected to his presence here, I would never have invited him to stay with me for these weeks."

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"Weeks? What, you have had that little East Side creature here for weeks?" She began to walk up and down the hall in feline fury. "Haven't you any idea of what is proper? Here I go away with some of the most cultured and well-known society people in New York—an absolute triumph—and you use my home as a refuge for nasty little scum of the slums. It isn't bad enough for you to spend your summer in such disgusting company. You have to cap it all by bringing them up into my own home. Think of the disgrace it would mean if any of these new friends of mine were to discover it!"

"I have my own friends to consider," I told her patiently. "And this boy is one of them. What did you tell him?"

"Tell him? What should I tell him?" She made a great show of shuddering. "I told him to get out. To—to get out as fast as he could."

I looked at her evenly for as long a while as she could stand it. Then her miserable pose gave way to pettishness, and she cried:

"And what's more, you'll have to get out yourself, if you insist on trying any more of these outrageous things. I can't bear it, that's all. You'll have to get out before you disgrace me!"

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"I shall," I agreed, and, passing her, went into my own room and began to pack.

We had a silent, sullen supper. At the end of it I told her that my clothes were packed and that I intended moving on the morrow to Trevelyan's empty suite, up at college. I would take none of the furniture from my room, however, since I did not wish to inconvenience her. I would not trouble her at all after tonight.

She may have thought this was pure bragging, she may have been reconciled to it. At any rate she made no answer, and let me go to my room without a word of comment.

And it was only two weeks later, when I was comfortably settled in my room on the campus, that I received a stormy letter from her, calling me a "most ungrateful monster of a nephew."

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XV

COLLEGE LIFE

Across the hall from Trevelyan's rooms lived one of the college "grinds." Now that I had moved there and came and went at all hours of the day, I saw this man often.

Fallon—that was his name—stood fully six-feet four, and had about a thirty-two-inch waist. He stooped until his thin shoulder blades were at directly right angles to each other. He would never talk to any one he met on his way; his nose was always deep in the book which he held outspread. He was the most ferocious grind I have ever known.

Next to Fallon lived Waters, a cheery, well-dressed little person, who had pink cheeks and no disturbing thoughts. Waters was a member of one of the minor fraternities; he spoke longingly of the day when he would be living in his "chapter lodge." Waters was easy company. He had four hundred "friends" around the campus, and when I met him was engaged in capitalizing on those friendships by canvassing votes for his election to a team managership.

That perhaps is why he came into my room so often to sit and chat pleasantly, lightly, about almost every topic known to the college man. He was very much of a type. There were at least thirty other men in that class who were like him, no better nor worse, nor more nor less attractive than he was. Popularity was an end and a means with him. It was all he wanted of college.

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"Well, how are you, old top?" was the greeting that came singing from his room, each time I passed its open door. It was a door perennially open, lest some passerby might escape without the greeting.

"D'you know, old chap," he'd say, sweeping into my room in the midst of a study-hour and slumping down upon the divan with a great show of silk socks and shirtings, "it's high time you

and I did something for that 'grind' across the hall."

He was tremendously interested in Fallon, it would appear. Not personally, he explained to me—but just because Fallon might become a valuable friend in time. A college man needed friends—and he, Waters, had only four hundred of them!

Fallon, however, had something of his own opinion about it. He went about the building with his book before him, bowing neither to me nor Waters nor any one else. It was dreadful to have to speak to him. He could scarcely answer; his big Adam's-apple would go juggling painfully up and down, and finally he would succeed in emitting a barely audible whisper. He would blush, stammer, clap his mouth shut, then hurry away.

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That was Fallon, worst of "grinds." He was beginning to be the butt of all sorts of miserable jokes. Even the freshmen over-stepped the line to make fun of him. For, like Waters and myself, he was a sophomore.

In the guise of helping a classmate, Waters took charge of him. He gave him nightly lectures in cordiality, in self-confidence, in the bettering of one's appearance. Once, when I chanced to go by, I heard him delivering glib advice upon what "Fallon, old top" ought to eat, in order that he might grow stouter and more favorable to look upon. And Fallon sat through it all and clutched his bony knees and grinned the grin of the helpless.

But one day, the story goes, he surprised Waters by finding his voice—and a very full-toned, convincing voice it proved to be, not at all like his usual whisper. And he told Waters to keep out of his room in study hour; he told him that he did not care to have his chances of becoming class valedictorian spoiled through having to divert his attention and listen to such superficial tommyrot. And he told him to keep himself away, now and forever more, from his room and its owner.

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"Oh, very well!" I heard the injured Waters say. A second later he had come across into my room and was pouring into my ear a complaint concerning the beggarly rudeness of that "grind, Fallon, who never would amount to anything in the college world, anyhow!"

He had just returned from a very important meeting, he told me, for the express purpose of having that heart-to-heart talk with Fallon—and the big, uncouth beggar didn't appreciate it at all. No wonder some fellows never did get along in college—and here he was, absent from this most important meeting, with no results at all.

He didn't mind telling me—(here his voice died down into an impressive whisper)—that it was from a fraternity meeting he had come. They were great things, these fraternity meetings. It was really too bad that I had never been able to join a fraternity—but then, of course, I must realize that fraternities had to draw the line somewhere! Now, I mustn't take that as a reflection on me personally—because it wasn't. I was all right, I was—and some day, he was sure, I was going to be a big man in the college world—bigger than he himself ever hoped to be. But Jews were a funny people—and I must admit, if I wanted to be fair, that some of them weren't fit to come to college at all, not to speak of joining fraternities.

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And so he went on, until, thoroughly nauseated by the bland niceness of his speech, I followed Fallon's example and threw him out, though he refused to be insulted at this move, and promised to come around the next night and discuss the question of who should be elected our next football manager.

A little while after he was gone, Fallon came across the hall and knocked at my door. It was a timid, scared sort of a knock, and it needed a loud and repeated, "Come in," before he finally obeyed my summons.

He was pitifully wrought up over the incident. He had wanted to be polite to Waters, but he had had to study. He hadn't wanted to insult him, but somehow Waters never did understand how valuable time was, and what it would mean to Fallon's mother if he could come out a valedictorian at the end of our four years.

"Which would you rather have," I asked him, "a valedictory or a friend?"

He stammered a good deal over it. He knew that Waters was right about that: he did not have a single friend in the whole college—didn't know how to go about it—but he didn't want such men as Waters trying to teach him the way either.

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That began my friendship for Fallon. I had acquaintances enough on the campus, but I was almost as friendless as he—for friendlessness, I think, is not so much a matter of other people's as of one's own habit of mind. And there was something so grotesquely miserable about his loneliness—something so like a grinning gargoyle, solitary in its elevation—that I was drawn to him without much conscious effort.

I began by taking him for long walks. It was the first exercise of any sort, outside of the required freshman gymnasium course, which he had had in college. At first he would not talk at all; would just walk beside me through the city's fringes into the half-suburban roads, his eyes drinking in the green vistas as if they were astounding novelties, his breath coming fast with exertion, his cheeks glowing with new color. Gradually I urged him into talking—and, like all beginners, he talked of himself entirely. It was good for him. The more he spoke of himself, the more highly he thought of himself. He needed pride.

I had already been elected an editor of the college joke paper. I was qualified, therefore, to persuade Fallon to contribute what he could to that periodical. But he had not a jot of humor, and his contributions turned out to be very long and serious bits of verse in studied French rhyme schemes. I did not even risk reading them at a meeting of the board, but always turned them over

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to Trevelyan who could have them used in the coming issue of the other magazine, the literary monthly. This set Fallon writing entirely for the "lit," as we called it—and, as a result, when the elections to that paper were announced in the middle of the sophomore year, Fallon's name and mine stood together.

But the happiest inspiration came to me one Sunday when at noon Fallon and I were resting atop the Palisades, whither we had gone upon an all-day tramp. I watched him pick up a flat rock and sent it sailing out and down through space. His long thin arm gave the toss a surprising power.

I asked him, had he ever seen a discus. He said, "No."

The next day I had overcome all his scruples as to the immodesty of a track costume and had led him out upon the field to practice with the discus. It was hard work, because he was by far the clumsiest man I have ever known. Later on I interested the old coach on his behalf. Before Thanksgiving Fallon gave promise of becoming one of the college's best discus throwers.

When winter began, I took him down to the gymnasium. At first I had in mind only to keep him in good condition; but his handling of the heavy medicine ball gave me another idea. I put him to work with a basketball—and here the training I had given the young boys at the settlement served me in good stead. He was so tall, he need only swing up his arms to drop the ball into the basket. He was the ideal build for a "center," and our 'varsity team needed a center. [Pg 142]

He did not make the 'varsity—not that year, anyhow. But he did make our class team, and won his numerals.

Also when spring came in, he was chosen as one of the track team's discus throwers. Add to this the fact that he had lately been elected to the board of the literary monthly, and it will be seen that Fallon had had a skyrocket rise. No wonder that Waters, the genial, now forgot that autumn affront and paid nightly visits upon his particular friend Fallon. And Fallon, of course, having had his attention diverted into so many foreign channels, no longer cared so singularly for his studies, but was willing to receive Waters and such as Waters with an ever-increasing cordiality.

The inevitable happened. Fallon, exhibiting his latest development—a full-sized, roistering swagger—came into my room one evening and told me jubilantly that he was pledged to join Waters' fraternity. [Pg 143]

"It's not the best in college," he admitted loftily, "but it'll tone up a bit when I get the track captaincy and Waters gets elected to a managership."

"And how about that senior year valedictory?" I asked him.

"Oh, I was a fool in those days, wasn't I?"

He mistook my silence. "Say, old chap," he went on, "this is no time for you to be jealous of me. I know well enough, you ought to be in a fraternity—in the very best one. I wish I could get you into ours—but, say, you know how it is about Jews."

Yes, I knew, I assured him, and gave him the heartiest hand-clasp I could manage.

"You know, my mother's going to be awfully proud of this," he exclaimed huskily.

But though Waters did succeed in winning himself a team managership, Fallon never became the captain of the track team. For his election to that fraternity meant his ruin. He lost his grip upon everything. Perhaps it was his fellow-members, perhaps he had only himself to blame. He began to drink. At the end of junior year he was expelled from college.

And I wondered if the mother, who had wanted him to be the class valedictorian, was as proud of him as ever.

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XVI

THE HUN'S INVASION

So far in my college course I had met with actually little outspoken insult. Once or twice in my freshman year some loutish sophomore had not stopped at making comments upon my religion. There had been that incident at Trevelyan's fraternity house, too. But, generally speaking, the prejudice had been of a negative sort, restricting rather than driving—though none the less offensive and chafing on that account. There was nothing on which I could actually lay my finger to complain. I had no actual proof that I had been kept off any college organization because of my religion. I might have had, had I cared at the time to follow up the favoritism shown in the dramatic society—but that was a small affair, by now, and I preferred to let it rest forgotten.

Otherwise, I was treated with a fair amount of kindness by almost all of the college. The members of my own class, in which I was gradually acquiring such positions as work and merit could win me, had begun to show me a good, clean respect; and those in the class above soon followed their lead. All that I asked was fair play, and the chance to overcome that handicap which I knew existed. This was easier, now that I lived at college, and I gave to the various activities in which I was interested, all the spare time which I could afford from my studies. I was beginning to realize what that preachment meant: "The college will give you back all that you give to it in work."

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Thus, at the end of my sophomore year, when I again went to the settlement for the summer, I was planning big and enthusiastic things for the autumn term.

Mr. Richards placed me in charge of one of the settlement's fresh-air camps, up the state. I had two other boys to help me in my work, and one of them was Frank Cohen. It had taken me a long time to overcome Frank's sensitiveness, after his encounter with my aunt; but we were fast friends again now, and it was good to have him with me where I could help him with his daily noon-time studying for his "preliminaries." When the fall came, he passed them easily—and it was now definitely decided that he would enter my college when I was a senior.

My own return to the university, however, gave me an unpleasant shock. I had arrived a few days late, because I had wanted to help Mr. Richards with some of his coming year's programs. The campus was already alive and crowded, therefore, and the dormitory windows were all thrown open and overflowing with the rugs and chair cushions of autumn cleaning. The campus teemed with a thousand youths who grasped each other cordially by the wrist and went through all sorts of contortions to prove that they "were glad to see you, old man!"

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But there was a difference! The first glimpse I had of it, I called myself a self-conscious fool. I tried to reassure myself, everybody's greeting had been as cordial as I could expect. Everybody had said he was glad to see me—and—yet!

Then, the second day that I was at college, I had my first proof of the truth of my suspicions. I had it through eavesdropping—but I was justified. For I heard little Waters, the genial popularist, talking of it to another classmate in front of the laboratory steps.

"It's a rotten shame," he was declaiming. "Haven't you noticed? I don't see how it could escape you! Jews and Jews! The freshman class is just swarming with 'em!"

"What? Really?"

"Honestly. If there's one Jew in the freshman class, there are fifty. And such Jewy-looking Jews!"

"Gee whizz, it's a disgrace. It was bad enough when they used to come in four or five—or even ten—in a class. But fifty! Are there really fifty?"

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"Oh, easily! Maybe a hundred—I don't know. They are swarming all over the place! Gosh, we'll have to do something to get rid of them. It just simply ruins the college name to have so many of them around."

"You bet! A campaign for ours!"

I watched them going off together, arm in arm, towards "fraternity row"—and wondered what that campaign would be.

It did not take me long to investigate the real state of affairs. There were some thirty members of the freshman class listed in the dean's office under the designation of "Jew," "Hebrew" or "Ethical Culturist." And the faces that I met under freshman caps were certainly Semitic, to a large percentage.

At first it annoyed me. Annoyed me more, too, when the first member of the freshman class to be expelled for ungentlemanly conduct was a Jew. There were one or two others, I noticed, who would sooner or later reach the same end if they did not keep away from the city at night—and from the things the city teaches.

These one or two gradually became scape-goats for the rest of the Jewish boys in the class. They were sons of rich fathers; they paraded their automobiles about the campus—and thus broke the rule number one in the "freshman bible." They had unbridled tongues, and used them ungraciously. One of them, a big, swaggering chap, "went out" for his class football team—and, having been selected to play in a minor game, developed a dying aunt overnight and disappeared for the day. When he came back, on Sunday night, he was caught and hazed. His automobile was dumped on its side in the middle of the campus. His face, when I saw him the next day, was a network of plaster strips. Three days after that he left college—and I, for one, was devoutly thankful for his resigning. He did not belong in our college, had done nothing to fit himself into its environment, had talked loudly, acted the cad and the coward—and had reaped the reward of such a person, Jew or Gentile, in whatever community.

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The persecution—for it had taken on proportions worthy of that name—went forward, however. There was an annual "freshman parade," for instance, when the entering class was dressed in grotesque costumes and sent marching in and out a lane of laughing spectators to the football field. In my own freshman year this was a good-natured affair—and each class, including the victimized one, took it for the boisterous joke that it was.

But this year, when the parade was starting at the gymnasium, and the big, card-board placards were being lifted to the marchers' shoulders, I noticed that all the Jewish boys were

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being put conspicuously into one group. They would march together. And those placards! The sickening succession of them was only a repetition of "Oi oi" and the pawnbroker's symbol—and humor of that high order. And these Jewish freshmen went down the street amid the jeering—and I had to stand by and see them, some with heads high and eyes blazing with pride, others stumbling and bowed, one of them with tears running inanely down his cheeks—had to stand there and watch it all, and curse myself for a coward because I would not, could not, go out into the middle of the road and tear down, one by one, the daubed, cheap jests that they had to carry.

A few weeks later there was another such celebration. There were speeches to be made. The class wits—and what class is without them?—were to have their turn.

And their wit—what did it consist of? One after another, they made blunt, exaggerated references to the "invasion of the Huns," to the "Jews coming unto Jordan," to "the lost Ten Tribes ..." and hoots of applause went up to the night sky like the roar of a Philistine army!

One of the men who spoke was a classmate of mine—a fellow-member of the joke paper's board. I knew him well, for he had been to see me often. It was only a few nights ago that he had told me he was chosen to speak at this celebration, and had promised me he would make no reference to the Jewish influx.

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"I don't agree with you about it," he had said. "You're too sensitive, all you Jews—and anyhow, you know perfectly well we're not aiming this campaign at you personally. It's against this big bunch of them in the freshman class."

"So it's a regular campaign, is it?" I demanded.

He evaded the question—but satisfied me with his promise.

But when I heard him break it—heard him, more than any other speaker, launch one smiling epithet after another against the "sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," I lost all the gnawing consciousness that I had had as to the justice of this remark about Jewish sensitiveness—and I went forward to the cart-end from which he was speaking. I meant to pull him down and get up there in his place, and to speak hotly, straight from the shoulder—I didn't care what I said so long as I put them all to disgrace!

But when I was within a few feet of him in the jostling, laughing crowd, I could go no further. I tried to cry out, but that was denied me. My courage gave me only the power to glare and sneer at him—and once, as he spoke, he looked down and saw my face, I think. For his own grew paler in the light of the gas lantern which flared windily beside him, and he faltered in his speech.

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Later on he came over to my room and asked to speak to me. I heard him through; listened to his smooth explanation about the committee of arrangements demanding that he put something into his speech about the Jews—and he was sorry he had broken his word to me—only, of course, I was to consider myself an exception to all this sort of thing. Everybody knew I was a good fellow and was doing bully work for the name of the college—and what right had I to class myself with these insignificant little Jews in the Freshman class? and he didn't want it to break up our friendship, because he thought the world of me.

And so I showed him the door.

The next day I began to pay for that stroke of arrogance. The classmates who belonged to that man's fraternity snubbed me on the street.

It didn't matter much, I thought—but in reality, it did. Because these men, as it happened, had been my closest friends. I was beginning to worry myself into a maudlin state, and no doubt did attribute hostility to altogether too many of the undergraduates. But it is hard to choose and distinguish surely in a land that is generally hostile and strange. I began to stay more and more within the shelter of my room, working at my studies and at those activities which had already given me recognition. I wanted to be plucky about it. I wanted to keep on smiling—but there were times, I must confess, when I wished that I were through with college and all its rough-and-tumble boyishness.

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I did not care so much myself. There were all these freshmen who were probably ten times lonelier than I was, ten times more bewildered and disheartened by the welcome they had had. I tried to visit as many of them as lived in dormitories. I wanted to talk things over with them, to help them in some possible way. But it wasn't much of a success—I could make no progress out of condonement and asking them to wait patiently until the foolish campaign had dwindled away.

Then, one day, as I crossed the campus to a first recitation, I saw that the brick walls of the oldest of the dormitories had been adorned with huge painted letters:

"OUT WITH THE JEWS."

I went into a telephone booth and called up the house of one of the professors with whom I had become friendly. He was a kindly, well-meaning man, and an alumnus of the college.

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His telephone line was busy when I called it. I heard him talking with some one. I was about to ring off when suddenly I heard my own name mentioned.

The professor was an alumnus member of one of the college fraternities. And this other man—evidently an undergraduate, though I never tried to identify him—was asking the professor what he thought of offering me an election to this fraternity.

And I heard the professor sigh in his patient way.

"I like him—I like him very much, mind you," I heard him say, "but—er, er—I do think it would

be disastrous—nothing short of disastrous to elect a Jew to any of our fraternities in the present situation."

I rang off. It was something to know that I was even being considered for membership—but it was disastrous, that was all—disastrous!

When I was out upon the campus again I saw that painters were already at work obliterating the sign. They had whitewashed the "*Out With the*" away, and there was nothing left upon the wall but a huge, red

"JEWS."

And thank God, I could laugh at the incident!

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XVII

MANY IMPULSES

Fair play comes first—and reasoning follows it. For fair play is always an impulse. It comes when least expected.

That is how it was at the university. The incident of the big, painted sign was practically the last demonstration against the influx of Jewish boys. Waters, who made capital of everything, attempted to found a formal organization dignified by the title of the Anti-Hebrew Collegiate League, but when, at the first meeting, he was not elected to the presidency, abandoned the project with bitter complaints against the ingratitude of his fellow members. A little later on, when the tide had turned in the opposite direction, he became the head of the Helping Hand League, and was atop the wave of contrition.

For the tide did turn. Men are always afraid to carry their propaganda beyond the point of the ridiculous. When tomfoolery turns to foolishness its perpetrators are only too anxious for a chance to abandon it.

It was impossible to keep the thing out of the newspapers. The day after that sign incident, there was a lurid story to be read at each of the city's breakfast tables and in the evening subways. New York took it up and made it a matter of shocked debate for a day and a half. The president of the university, in his quarterly sermon in chapel, spoke fervently of toleration and the gentle spirit.

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The reaction was almost as hysterical as the movement itself. The little Jewish freshmen—timid, frightened little mice, who had been going about their classroom work and scurrying home and out of reach for so many months—suddenly found themselves lauded as martyrs, as the best of fellows.

One evening a deputation of them were waiting for me when I came in from supper. They had formed a Jewish fraternity, and wished me to join with them. Appeal to a Jewish philanthropist had brought them enough money to lease a house near the campus. They were sure that they would have sanction and support from the rest of the college, now that the prejudice had abated. And since they could not join any of the other fraternities, why should they not have one of their own?

I thought it over carefully. I wanted to be fair to myself as well as to them. That same old repugnance of being identified with a distinctly Jewish propaganda troubled me and made me turn from them. And yet it wasn't only that, either. For when I thought it out, I knew that, according to my point of view, theirs was not the proper solution. Fire can fight fire, perhaps—in proverbs, anyhow—but discrimination is not to be overpowered by a like amount of secularity. If Jewish college men objected to that unwritten rule of fraternities; if they contended that fraternities should be democratic; if they wanted equal rights in those fraternities ... how, then, were they justified in standing apart and founding a fraternity of their own—a brotherhood which should be open only to Jews?

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That is what I thought. I may have been wrong—and the excellent records of the Jewish fraternity chapters in various colleges and universities do perhaps prove me wrong—but I could not bring myself to join them. I was heartily glad the whole heated question of race and race prejudice was abated. I asked, for myself, only that I be given something of the fair-play that other men had. I was working hard for the college. I was doing all that my talents enabled me to do and I was sure that, sooner or later, there would be the reward.

This reward did come, definitely. It came at the end of May when, at the height of the reaction against the whole year of prejudice, I was chosen for the college senior society. It was a public election, held on the afternoon of one of the most important baseball games. There were crowds to watch the ceremony—students and graduates, young girls and parents ... so that the memory

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of the green campus and the banks of pretty gowns and parasols, the sunshine and the cheering will be with me till I die. I remember that there were tears in my eyes as I was chosen ... and that there came to me, with all the cool freshness of the spring winds, the thought that this was the end, the salvation from out of all the year's mean, squalid troubles. Here was I, a Jew, raised above all the other Jews who had ever entered this college ... raised among the highest, to be a power in the land, to be the champion of all those who had suffered, the winner through hardship and handicap, a vindicated Dreyfus, an example to all the lower classes.... For, at twenty-one, alas, we are our own best heroes, and none can take our place!

College closed in a blaze of glory for me. There was even a note from Aunt Selina Haberman, wishing me well of this new honor and informing me that "Mrs. Fleming-Cohen, when she heard it, was green with envy!" Aunt Selina wanted to know, was I going to be a wicked boy, however, and stay away from her all next year, too. She was sure that, now I had won out, we could get along much more smoothly than we had.

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I fear I began to think a little too highly of my position in the community. I was now capable of going to no less a person than the dean of the college and talking over with him, as if man to man, the possibility of an anti-Jewish agitation, the next year, and demanding in none too deferential tones that, should it come, the college authorities must do their share to stamp it out.

"Really, Mr.-er-er,—what's your name?"

I told him very slowly, but it did not mean much to him. I rather pitied the old gentleman for not paying more attention to the undergraduate contests and triumphs.

But he did hear me out, and gave me information which I thought worth acting on. The large majority of the Jewish boys in the freshman class had prepared for college at one school—a large private preparatory school in New York City. Perhaps it would be as well, suggested the dean, for me to go to the principal of this school and talk things over with him.

"Do you mean, I should warn him against sending so many of his boys to our college?" I asked.

The dean appeared dreadfully shocked. "Oh, no—dear me, no. That wouldn't do at all. Only—well, it seems that this school caters almost entirely to the sons of wealthy Jewish men—and that this principal is very fond of our college ... and so he grievously sends us all the boys that he can. You know, so many boys don't know where to go to college—and the principal often has a chance to suggest one, don't you see!"

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The dean had a very sober face, but his eyes were twinkling. It relieved me to know, he was not taking this principal's bad judgment too seriously.

"So you think it would be wiser if there weren't so many Jewish boys in next year's entering class?"

"Precise—oh, no, I shouldn't dare say that, even if I thought so. Remember, I am in an official capacity here. But come around to my house tonight, when I've doffed my scholastic robe and am in my shirt sleeves—and perhaps I'll tell you, then, the name of that principal."

I did not even bother to do this. Without waiting for further advice, I went down to this school to beard the foolish principal in his den.

It was a hard matter to work my way into his presence. He had an office and inner office, and stenographers to guard them both. I wrote on my card, however, that I wished to speak to him regarding affairs at my college, and evidently piqued his curiosity to the extent of his giving me the interview.

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In that inner office I found a youngish man whose face was adorned with a heavy black beard. He seemed strangely familiar, but I could not place him.

"Come in," he said, looking hard at me. His restless eyes did not leave my face all the while I was talking.

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked me when I had given him some stumbling hint of my mission.

"I think you ought to keep Jewish boys out of my college," I told him. "It—it isn't altogether fair, and it would only provoke a renewal of the prejudice, if there should be as many freshmen next year as there were this."

"You are a Jew yourself," he said accusingly.

"Yes, I am. But don't judge by me.... I have always been an exception to all that prejudice."

"Oh, have you? I wonder why?"

I resented his tone, but went on to explain how I had entered college long before the antagonism had broken out; had worked hard, with Christian friends to help me, until I had won honors which assured me immunity from any unpleasantness.

"I congratulate you," he said dryly. "You no doubt deserve these honors. Your sort always does."

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I stood up angrily and looked him square in the face. Then suddenly I recognized him.... Pictures of my public school days came up before me.... The class room and the big, crippled bully, Geoghen.... That finding of the Hebrew prayer book when the teacher was out of the room, and the hooting and mocking ... and then the teacher's return—and the fight.

It was Mr. Levi.

He smiled when he saw that I knew him, now. "I remembered you more readily," he said. "You have no beard to change your appearance." But it was more than his beard: there was a complete change in him from the dreamy, pale young man who had learned so harsh a lesson in those old days. There was a bitter twist to his mouth. His lips were set sternly, his eyebrows were lowered, his brow crossed by scowling lines.

"There's one thing about you that I remember," he snapped at me. "You were a Jew—and yet you stood aside and let those little cads take the book of God and make nasty fun of it—and never raised your hand or even your voice to stop them. That's the sort of boy you were. And, I suppose, you're still the same. It'd seem so, anyhow. You probably won all your college honors through standing aside. And now you have the audacity to ask me to do the same, lest you be made uncomfortable by the number of other Jewish boys at your college. You want me to stand aside, do you? Well, I wish I had a thousand Jewish boys to enter into your college's next year's class!"

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He glared at me. "If you want to know the truth, I can't get a single boy in my school to go to your college, now. I wish I could. Because I'm training them to fight like men. They aren't the sort who win honors by allowing themselves to be classed as exceptions...."

As for myself, I knew that he was half wrong, half right—and that there was nothing more for me to say. I had learned what I came to learn. So I got up to go.

"And if there's another such demonstration, next year," he sneered, "you and your precious honors will have to stand aside again, eh? It must keep you very light on your feet!"

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XVIII

I STAND—BUT NOT ASIDE

Thus it happened that only five Jews enrolled in the entering freshman class. One of them, of course, was Frank Cohen.

Mr. Levi's accusations had stung deeply. My anger at them was all the more intense because my heart admitted half their truth. Nevertheless, I was glad to see that there could be no possible aggravation this year: surely, with only five Jewish freshmen, the percentage would be small and unnoticed. It was all very well, that venom of Mr. Levi's—but it was unreasonable. I would be glad if the Jewish question would never again be mentioned during my college course.

The opening of the senior year found Frank Cohen and me on the Palisades, talking eagerly of what his college course would mean to him. He made me smile, his dreams were so like my own had been when I, too, was a freshman. Made me wonder, too, how much I had fulfilled those dreams. Something accomplished, yes—and as much unfulfilled, disregarded, left undone. Well, perhaps, in this last year, I would have the chance again—and would not flinch.

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The chance came just two days after the opening of college. It came when Frank Cohen burst into my room about nine o'clock at night, in company with another Jewish freshman. The other one was dogged, frightened, and, when he was behind my closed door, began to cry noiselessly. As for Frank, who was made of stronger stuff, he sat silent in his chair, grasping its arms and trying to control the intensity of some revulsion which had come over him.

They told me quickly what had happened. They were just from a meeting of freshman candidates for the college newspaper. The meeting had been called in order to instruct these candidates in the rules and qualifications of the competition. All men who cared to enter the competition had been invited. Two men had made speeches: the editor-in-chief and the managing editor of the paper, Sayer and Braley by name.

These had been cordial speeches, urging all men present at the meeting to work hard in this competition. There had been speeches of encouragement, in glowing colors—and then, at the end of it all, in front of the fifty-odd youths who were assembled there, Braley had closed his speech with this:

"We wish to say that any Jew who may have it in mind to enter this competition might as well save himself the pains. We shall not even consider the election of a Jew to the board."

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Immediately a gasp, then a snicker had run through the roomful; then necks had craned and heads turned to catch looks at Frank and the other freshman who stood, flushed and humiliated, in their midst.

Then the meeting had broken up, and the other candidates, taking their cue from Braley's speech, stood aside to let Frank and his companion pass down through whispering, giggling aisles. They had tried to go calmly, unconcernedly, as if the shock of the insult meant nothing to them. But the other Jewish freshman had broken down, and Frank had to put his arm around him to keep him up and straight upon his path through the crowd's midst, out upon the campus and

over to my dormitory.

I sat a little while silent after I heard them tell of it. I was as much stunned as they—and sickened too. I had thought all that sort of thing was done with. I had hoped it was all past, even forgotten—and here it was, leaping up again to confront, to threaten, to jeer at us. I had only dimly imagined the possibility of it. I had no plan, no hint of how I should go about it.

Two years ago, if this had happened, I should not have cared one way or the other. I should have crawled away into a corner and buried my face to hide my fear's approach. I should have waited to see how others acted, how others fought—and then, at best I should have fought along in a half-hearted, half-dreading fashion. Even now, I had nothing to fight for. I knew what Judaism was—and that it was for the God and the people of Judaism that I should be making my little fight—but—

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I turned about and saw the eyes of the two freshmen glued upon me. Frank's especially—and they were beginning to fill with a troubled distrust which I had never allowed to be there before. I could not fail Frank. I would do what I could.

"All right," I said, drawing on my coat. "Go ahead home and get to bed. I will see what I can do."

I went with them across the campus to the other freshman's room. Frank would sleep there for the night, though he usually went back to his parents. I think he did not have the heart tonight to face them, and when they asked their usual breathless questions of the day's work and play, lie to them and hide from them the galling incident. He did not seem to feel the insult for his own sake; he was thinking, rather, of his mother and of how she would feel, should she ever know.

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"Good night," said the other freshman soberly.

"Good night," said Frank—and I felt in his voice all of the cheery obligation of friendship. He was expecting wonders of me.

Walking on alone, across the open gloominess of deserted paths and night winds in the shrubbery, a thousand foolish fears tramped by my side and sang into my ears. I had hidden my empty spirit from those two boys—but I could not hide it from myself. I wondered what sort of a fight was ahead of me, and how long it would last, and what would be the final result. Those two men, Sayer and Braley, were among the most influential of the class. They were members of my senior society. They could hold me down by sentimental ties of brotherhood, much as Trevelyan had been held down by his fraternity mates; failing that, they could use their popularity, their clinch upon college opinion to force me literally into silence. They could run me out of college, if they pleased. I knew this, did not deny it to myself as I went forward to the first skirmish.

Once I turned around and almost retreated to my rooms. But the remembrance of the sting that was in Frank's reproachful look would not let me do that.

So I came to the steps of the big Y. M. C. A. building. They were many, these white stone steps, and they shone in the moonlight with a mottling of hazardous shadows. I mounted them and went into the huge assembly hall on the first floor. I heard the awkward, self-conscious benediction and adjournment of the meeting—for they were all young fellows, and had not yet learned to be entirely glib towards their meetings—and stood aside to let them pass out. As the first of them went through the door and out upon the campus, they burst into the giddy laughs which moonlight conjures—and I heard them singing foolish glees—snatches of song that were utterly pagan and gleeful, and far from the heated stuffiness of their prayer meeting. They seemed to have found their Kindly Light more easily in the open.

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The man for whom I now waited had always been the leader of my class; this year, he was the idol of the entire university. Captain of football, a 'varsity baseball man, he had the finest, sincerest character that I had ever known. He was not merely popular, in our undergraduate sense. Underclassmen worshipped him from afar, and upperclassmen, who knew him and the life that he led, loved him and respected him with a love and respect which few men can ever win.

He and I had become friendly, lately. It was due, perhaps, to the fact that we now belonged to the same senior society. Before, I had worshipped from afar; now I knew him well and warmly—and, as I look back upon my college life, I am amazed to realize how much of his influence went into the making of it.

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As he came out, I noticed how his broad shoulders filled the doorway and blocked out its light completely. But his face was above the shadows, and I had a sudden sense of comfort from the resolute kindness that shone upon it.

"Fred," I said, "I want your help on something."

As president of the Y. M. C. A. he had a room allotted him in the building where he might sleep. I knew that he had a suite in his fraternity house, too—but he preferred to stay here, for some reason, in this smaller, simpler place, where he would be nearer his duties.

When he had me in the plain little den, sitting before the miniature wood fire which he heaped with broken twigs, he sat me down and gave me a few minutes of tactful silence. I was thinking it all out. I wanted to tell it to him fairly, concisely, with no imprecations, and yet with no weakening of attitude. Then I did tell it, simply, just as the two boys had told it to me.

I saw Fred's face grow troubled. Before I was through he had begun to walk up and down the little room with a nervousness that made his pace almost such a jog as football players use when they come out upon the field.

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"You're right," he said when I was done. "You're so right that everything else connected with the incident is wrong—and that's the hardest part for me to admit. You deserve to fight this out alone—it belongs to you. I wish I had a fight like yours to make. But if you'll let me help you—?"

"Let you? Why, I *need* your help!"

"Then you'll have it. I'll be glad—mighty glad to chime in with you—"

He stopped short, his tremendous frame red-lined in the fire's glow, his cheeks above his square jaw as bright as the flames themselves.

I could not answer him sentimentally. My comfort and gratitude were too deep, my suddenly gained encouragement too surging for the narrow outlet of words. But after a while we began to plan. We would fight it together—and immediately.

When I got up to go, his Bible was lying open at the beginning of the New Testament, with a ribbon and tiny silver cross to mark the place. When Fred saw me looking at it, he must have felt some part of the strange, shivery misgiving which had come over me. For he took the ribbon in his fingers, so that the cross lay gleaming in his palm.

"It is Christ's symbol," he said. "It is the sign of one who suffered—and who was a Jew."

Then, as if he must leave me no doubt of his meaning in my mind:

"Don't worry. The cross won't stand between us. Though—" His eyes travelled slowly to the shelf above the fireplace. "Look! There's a symbol of *your* religion, too."

So I looked. Gleaming brass, its seven uplifting arms gracefully curved, stood a—Menorah!

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XIX

"BATTLE ROYAL!"

I awoke the next morning to an insistent knocking at my door. I sprang out of bed and opened it. In the hall, their dress showing signs of much haste, stood Sayer and Braley. They did not wait my invitation, but strode at once into the room and, throwing the rumpled covers from the bed, plumped down upon it.

"See here," said Braley, without prelude, "what's this talk about Fred's calling a special meeting of the senior class for tonight? Do you know anything about it?"

I smiled my way out of a pajama top. "Really?" I exclaimed. "Well, I did hear Fred say something about it last night."

"Oh, so you talked it over with him? Did you ask for the meeting?"

I had thrown on a bathrobe. "Yes, I did. Why?"

"That's what we want to know. Why, why?"

I looked up from tying the cord about my waist. "That's just what I'm not going to tell. Not until the meeting."

"Well, perhaps we know."

"You probably do. You deserve to."

"What do you mean by that?" Sayer jumped up and towards me. He was doing his best to fight, I could see—but I would not give him the chance—not prematurely!

Braley waved a conciliatory hand. He was a large, stoop-shouldered fellow with long, light hair and an enormous forehead. He had the most important and sumptuous manners I have ever met.

"See here, now," he said, "you really must tell us all you know about this thing. You really must." He was very earnest about it. They were both uneasy, it was easy to see.

"I'll tell you nothing," I said. "You will have to wait until tonight, and then——"

"Threatening us, are you?"

"No. I'm kind enough to warn you, that's all. I don't want you to go to the meeting unprepared."

"Oh, so it has to do with my remarks to the freshmen candidates, has it?"

"And mine?"

"I've given you all the warning that fair play demands," I said. "Look to your consciences for means of defense." And, flinging a towel over my shoulder, I darted away for my morning shower, leaving them in possession of the room. When I came back, a few minutes later, it was apparently empty, and I thought them gone.

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I was almost dressed when I went into the clothes closet to select a tie from the rack I had there. There was a sudden rustle and movement of the clothes at the back of the dark little place. Two men closed in on me, dragged me into the depths of the closet. I reached out blindly, furiously. My fists hit only against the rows of my own clothes hanging there. A couple of coat-hangers clattered down. I stumbled and fell over my satchel. Then the door slammed shut. As I lay there, stunned, in the darkness, I heard the key turning in the lock, from the outside. They had sealed me in.

I had no doubts but they had been Sayer and Braley. Though I had never imagined they would go as far as this—and the fools! what did they think they could accomplish by locking me up for the day?

It was easy enough to breathe in the tiny, black square. I was in no danger. I groped my way to the suitcase and sat down on it for a few minutes. My head pained me terrifically. My forehead was hot. I put my hand up to it and felt a fast-swelling bruise. My fingers grew wet with something warm. It wasn't just perspiration.... I knew that—and that, in the struggle, I must have hit my head against one of the hooks. Or had one of them hit me in the dark with some sharp thing that he held in his hands?

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I stood up again unsteadily, found the door handle—yes, it was locked. I was in my stocking feet; I could not kick through a panel. I reached along the wall, found a hook. I flung the clothes from it, gave it both my hands and all my strength in a sudden pull. It gave way with a spurting of loosened plaster.

It was a large, heavy hook. It made a good ram. I crashed upon the two upper panels with it. One of them split at length—and when I rammed the ugly iron thing against it again, it broke into splinters and my arm went through it. Light came through dimly—and, three minutes later, I had knocked out the whole panel, climbed through and staggered out into the room.

The mirror showed me a bad cut over my right eye. I staunched the flow of blood as best I could. It was so humorous an incident—like one of the famous adventures of Frank Merriwell!

I played it out, though. I did not go out of my room the whole day. In the afternoon I telephoned Fred, the class president, about it. He came over to see me—and he didn't treat it as lightly as I did. He wanted me to have a doctor, for one thing. I promised I would see one, as soon as the meeting was over, that night.

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"You'd better," he said. "That cut is mighty close to some of the most important nerves of the eye."

It was evening when I ventured out. Over in the big assembly hall the meeting of the senior class had already begun. I stole across the campus with my coat collar turned up and my hat far down to hide my face. I did not want to be recognized until I was ready. I hung about outside the ruddy windows of the hall, watching the crowded groups that sat within. They were listening intently to someone on the platform that I could not see—but I knew that it was Fred, presiding. Fred—and he was explaining it all to them, perhaps, in that deep-voiced way of his.

Then, as I watched, I saw how the heads of all who sat within the scope of my spying craned suddenly towards the side of the room. I knew what that meant, too. It meant that either Sayer or Braley had risen from his seat to make reply to the president's accusation.

Then, amazed, I heard applause and laughter. The muffled clapping of hands went on for minutes. So they approved these things that the two editors had done, did they? So they could laugh and clap to hear how Sayer and Braley had crushed the spirit out of two young Jews in front of fifty other freshmen?

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I grew too angry to wait. I was not going to dawdle idly in the background, waiting for a foolish, theatrical entrance cue—I wasn't going to "stand aside" a moment longer!

I hurried into the building, up stairs and around corners until I was at the very threshold of the hall. The big mass of men there, the lights, the noise of their clapping, ten times louder from within—all of it gave a tightening to my throat. My knees began to tremble violently.

It was Braley who was speaking. He was waving his hand with his usual sense of the grandiloquence of his remarks. I heard, I suppose, only the last of them—but that was enough:

"I regret, of course, that I should have had to give pain to these two poor little kike freshmen. I regret that I have thereby offended no less a person than the president of the class. But there is the broader way of looking at this thing: that of the interest of the whole community. And I believe, as every man in this room believes, that it would be ten times better that all Jews be debarred from our college. If not that, then certainly from all our college activities, in order that real Anglo-Saxon fair play may prevail! If any man, including the Jew who has instigated this protest against Sayer and myself, wishes to refute this, let him step forward now or be forever silent."

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He sat down grandly, amid huzzas.

I do not know whether he or Sayer actually meant me to be incarcerated during all that day and night, while the meeting went forward so famously. Probably they had had it in mind when they played the vindictive little prank, and had been ashamed, when in better senses, to come back and release me. Certainly Sayer, who sat close to the door, turned pale when he saw me now.

I went slowly to the front of the room. My eyes pained me and I was nauseated. But I had

ceased to tremble and was calm with a fury that checked all nervousness.

"The Jew who instigated this protest is here to back it up," I said slowly. "He is here to appeal to the 'real Anglo-Saxon fair play.'"

I could feel in the air the antagonism which I must down. I knew, as never before, how bitter and insensate was the prejudice which I must conquer by fifteen minutes of quiet words.

What I said doesn't count: I hardly remember most of it, anyhow. Before me, as I talked, the faces swam away into a dim and meaningless strip. I was not talking to these raw, swankering college boys. I was talking to something beyond—to something that was infinitely brighter and more glorious than I had ever known before. I was talking to something beyond all earth—to Someone....

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And I was appealing, was summoning, calling Him down to my aid. I was speaking His words, in the spirit of His ancient fighting prophets. I was fighting His fight. The calm frenzy in my heart was of His instillation. For years I had sought Him. For years I had shunned Him, knowing my need of Him. For all the days of my life I had borne the fierce justice of His words as a lonely burden—and now, now....

"And I shall fight and fight," I cried, "in the name of God—the God that is over all of us, of whatever race, creed or color—for the things that are fair and right and just. I shall have justice for a little East Side Jewish freshman as you shall have it, too."

Then suddenly, as if blinded by the refulgence of what I saw, my eyes began to water and grow dim. I stood there, tense, and did not mind the pain that was in them. But I could speak no more.

And slowly the men rose and went out, quietly, strangely—looking back sometimes to where I stood—not comprehending everything, I suppose, but moved beyond all common approbation. They had been conquered.

Braley remained alone with me in the deserted hall. I looked at him across a row of seats and began to laugh.

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"You didn't even say a word to them about that rotten trick we played on you," he said, shamefacedly, his glib manners gone.

"I didn't have to," I replied. "Besides, I forgot."

"Well—er—thanks! You could have had us expelled!"

But the pain and dizziness were beyond standing now. I tore off my hat, so that he had a glimpse of the long, sullen cut over my eye.

"Look out!" he cried, leaping up on the platform, to hold me—for I was falling to the floor.

I remember laughing again, long but weakly. "I didn't have to! I didn't have to!"

And after so much light, there came the darkness.

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XX

THE CANDLES ARE LIGHTED

When I rose from a hospital bed of fever and darkness, ten days later, it was with a feeling of rebirth—as if, in the dripping delirium of threatened blindness, the last doubts had sloughed away.

And when the bandage was taken from my eyes, and I had, for the first time in so long a while, a short and tempered bit of sunshine that came through the shaded windows and across the clean, white floors, it was as if I saw things, now, as I had never seen them—face to face.

I must not return immediately to college, the doctors said. There must be another fortnight of convalescence, with absolute rest for my eyes. They gave me my choice as to where I wanted to go—and I chose the settlement. I should be among friends, down there; I should have the sunny roof-garden to loiter in—and Jewish faces everywhere about me.

It was good old Trevelyan, squinting and stuttering and strangely moved, who called for me in his car and took me away from the hospital. He had wanted me to go to his Adirondack lodge, instead, and resigned me into Mr. Richards' care at the settlement as if he were consigning me reluctantly to one of the Inferno's inner limbos.

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It was then the second day of the Jewish New Year. The whole teeming neighborhood was in holiday garb and mood. From the roof that night Mr. Richards and I stood watching the streets and their carnival crowds, swarming indistinctly under the lamps and about the corners.

"The little people," quoted Mr. Richards, "God and the little people...."

"They are not little when they have God," I answered.

He nodded. "I was wrong in what I said in that argument of ours. Do you remember? I said they didn't need their religion—that it was working more harm than good among the younger generation. I've learned, now.... There isn't a person on earth that doesn't need it—all that he can get of it—and these little people of the East Side most of all."

From below there rose to us the clang and clatter of traffic, the indescribable rustle of the crowd, the shriek of a demon fire engine, many streets away. But, above it all, we heard singing, on the floor below us, of a solemn chant in rehearsal. It was the settlement Choral Society, singing the plaintive "Kol Nidre"—and when the parts swelled into unison, all other sounds seemed suddenly engulfed in the rich, melancholy texture of the harmony.

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Mr. Richards smiled. "There it is, you see: the grim, sad faith of the Jewish people. It is all they have had in all their wanderings—but it is everything."

The cut across my forehead healed quickly. Resting from all tasks, my eyes regained their strength without relapse.

I had visitors. Several of the men from college came down each day. I had not known there were so many persons who cared. Braley was among them, once—and he sat and twisted his hat and said nothing. Whether or not his friendship is worth anything to me, I have made a friend of him. Once or twice, since then, he has tried to speak of the trick which he and Sayer attempted, but I have stopped him. There is no need of going over *that*.

Only, a few days after I went to the hospital, there was a long and flowery retraction published in the college newspaper, inviting all freshmen "of whatever race or creed to enter the editorial competition, with the assurance that the most democratic principles would prevail."

At any rate, when Frank Cohen ran in to see me, on his way home, a few days later, I advised him to re-enter the contest. Frank, with a freshman's capacity for hero worship, leaped to act on my advice.

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"And hurry up back to college," he said, with a little catch in his voice. "There are twenty other Jewish underclassmen who want the same sort of counsel from you. You see—they didn't know they had a leader—and they do need one!"

It is not part of the tale, perhaps, but I cannot help intruding the fact that Frank was the first freshman to be elected to the editorial board of the college paper—and that, in his senior year, he became its managing editor.

My aunt came, too. I had been secretly expecting her—hoping, perhaps, for no especial reason, that she would come.

She wept a little at the sight of my healing scar. It was a long while since I had seen her, and it shocked me—she looked so worn. She clung to my hand for several minutes before she would speak.

"I read about it," she sobbed. "It was in the papers—and they said the nicest things of you.... But I didn't come sooner because—because I didn't know whether you wanted—you wanted—"

"Yes, Aunt Selina, I am very glad to see you."

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She drew a deep sigh. "It has been so long—and I am growing old. I'm just a lonely old woman, boy. And there's no comfort in old age."

I looked at her. She had changed much, I thought. "But you had so many friends," I remonstrated. "All those intellectual society folk!"

"I don't know—they don't seem to interest me any more. I'm growing old. That's all—old and lonely. And they are such fools, every one of them—almost as foolish as I am—and hypocrites, all."

Her hand went tighter about mine, and her rheumy eyes sought mine and searched them. "You seem so happy, boy—so changed. What's the secret of it—can't you tell me?"

I shook my head. It would be of no use, I thought.

"I want it," she begged. "The comfort of it—I did not know I should need it when I was old—and when all else fell away."

So I reached for a book which was on a table nearby, and gave it to her. It was an old Union Prayer Book.

She took it with the barest flicker of lashes. "It's—it's Hebrew," she protested. "I don't know how to read it."

"There is always an English translation on the opposite page," I showed her. "You will be able to read that. Perhaps it will help you."

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"Perhaps," she said after me, her thin voice quavering.

"Read it all. You will come at any rate to a better understanding of your fellow Jews."

Her head went down, as if in shame of some unpleasant reminiscence. "Perhaps—I will try,

anyhow—and perhaps—"

"Aunt Selina," I told her hastily, "I am coming home to live with you at the end of this college year. We shall begin all over again."

Then her tears began afresh. "I did not dare ask it—but oh, if you could only know how I have wanted it—and for how long! I would have prayed for it—yes, really, prayed for it—if I had only had someone to pray to!"

And then, as if suddenly remembering, she hugged the shabby leather book to her breast, and smiled.

But, before she left, I opened it up to show her why I prized this particular copy. For, on the yellowed flyleaf in old ink, was the name, "Isidore Levi." And below it, newly written, these words:

"To a Jew who could not stand aside."

He had sent it to me immediately after he had learned of that last incident at college. And he did not need to explain where I had seen this prayer book last.

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Yom Kippur was my last day at the settlement before returning to college. I went with Frank Cohen and his father to the service of their orthodox congregation. The little synagogue, just off the Bowery, had had to be abandoned, for once, in favor of a huge bare hall that usually served political meetings. But, large as it was, it was packed tightly; and from the gallery, where I stole once to look on, it seemed a vast black sea—wave upon wave of derbies and shiny top hats, with the flicker of white prayer shawls for froth. The prayers and the chantings came up to me almost like mystic exhalations. The great, drab, smeared walls had the splendor of the afternoon sun upon them; the cheap chairs, the improvised altar, the temporary gilt ark behind it—the long gray beards of the patriarchs, the wan faces of the fasting children—everything, every one had been gradually drenched in the glory that poured through the windows.

It was the setting sun upon Israel—and Israel prayed and sang in the gold of it.

I went back to college the next day. Mr. Richards and I had breakfast together, so that we might say slowly and easily the last things that were to be said.

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"I'm glad you're going to finish it out," he began. "You've proved what I once told you; that college isn't all child's play. Some things about it are, of course." He paused a moment, a little embarrassed. "Trevelyan phoned me last night, after you'd gone to bed."

"Yes? About me?"

"Well, in a way. He'd just come from one of our fraternity meetings. He wanted to tell me that, when you are back, they will probably offer you an election."

"What? To your fraternity?"

"Yes." He paused and watched me amusedly. "It doesn't seem to thrill you."

I smiled back at him. "No, not the way I would have in freshman year."

"Yes—that's how I thought you'd feel. You needn't be afraid of hurting my feelings—or Trevelyan's, either—by declining. They're a little too late, aren't they?"

"Oh, it isn't that. I don't want them to think me ungrateful, you see—but I've passed that stage. There are so many other things for me to care about, now." I was thinking of Frank Cohen's remark about the number of Jewish underclassmen who wanted counsel, leadership—and, now more than ever, I was sure of myself.

"I understand," said Mr. Richards, shaking my hand at parting. "Good luck to you—or better still, good faith to you! A man's work and a man's God—you've found them at last."

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That night, in my room at college, I found on the mantle shelf the big, brass, seven-branched candlestick which I had seen in the room of the class president. It was Fred's gift to me.

And, thinking of those years, I lit the seven candles, one by one, and watched them struggle feebly, desperately, until all of them were calm and bright, their flicker ended—until the Menorah, with its uplifted arms, and all the little space about it, shone with a radiance that was firm and beautiful.

Transcriber's Note

Typographical errors corrected in the text:

Page 13 friendship changed to friendship
Page 22 aint changed to ain't
Page 32 is changed to it
Page 43 stifly changed to stiffly
Page 53 Sidney changed to Sydney
Page 54 Sidney changed to Sydney
Page 56 Sidney changed to Sydney
Page 69 "be began to laugh" changed to "he began to laugh"
Page 80 occurences changed to occurrences
Page 115 checks changed to cheeks
Page 123 guesed changed to guessed
Page 182 reluctantly changed to reluctantly
Page 188 embarrassed changed to embarrassed

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK: THE
SCHOOLDAYS OF YOUNG AMERICAN JEW ***

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